



Commentary...

The Military Casualties Myth By Evelyn Gordon

One of the few points of Israeli consensus nowadays is that Israelis cannot tolerate military casualties. This theory dominates defense policy, from Lebanon to Gaza. Yet it suffers from one crucial flaw: The public's actual behavior patently disproves it.

This myth is admittedly widely accepted, crossing all political lines. Last week, for instance, left-wing Haaretz columnist Yoel Marcus declared a major ground operation in Gaza impossible because "as Israel approaches its 60th birthday, the public mind-set has changed. Israelis have stopped believing in victories, with or without quotation marks, for which scores of people have to die."

A few weeks earlier, the conservative Shalem Center warned in the editorial of its quarterly Azure that reluctance to risk military casualties "has already taken root in Israeli public discourse, becoming a near-unimpeachable consensus that guides politicians and commanders alike" - and therefore devoted the piece to arguing that soldiers must sometimes be risked to protect civilians.

Nor is there any doubt that this myth determines policy. Prime Minister Ehud Olmert refused to order a major ground operation in Lebanon (until too late to do any good) largely because he feared Israelis would be unable to tolerate the projected casualties. His current refusal to order a major ground operation in Gaza derives substantially from the same fear.

YET IN FACT, Israelis have shown no reluctance to risk military casualties in what they deem a good cause. To realize this, one need only examine two recent campaigns: Operation Defensive Shield in April 2002 and the Second Lebanon War in summer 2006.

Defensive Shield involved a simultaneous IDF invasion of several West Bank refugee camps deemed hotbeds of terrorism. For years, the army had avoided these densely populated camps, with their narrow, twisting streets, for fear that fighting there would cause heavy Israeli casualties. And this was well known to Israelis who served in the territories, whether as conscripts or reservists.

Yet when emergency call-ups were issued for Defensive Shield, the response rate exceeded 100 percent. Men who had evaded reserve duty for years reported for that operation, and some who had not been called came anyway, begging to be included. This was assuredly not because the reservists, all familiar with the camps' reputed dangers from their prior service, expected the operation to be a walkover. Rather, faced with a terrorist onslaught that had killed 133 Israelis in March 2002 alone, they were willing to risk their lives to protect their fellow citizens.

Nor did sky-high public support for the operation waver when 26 soldiers were killed in less than two weeks. On the contrary: Then premier Ariel Sharon's popularity soared when he defied US President George Bush's demand for an immediate withdrawal. And even today, support for Defensive Shield remains nearly wall-to-wall. Israelis mourn every dead soldier, but the subsequent sharp reduction in terrorist killings clearly justified the price.

THE SAME pattern initially characterized the Second Lebanon War. Once again, the response rate to emergency call-ups approached 100 percent. Again, this was not because reservists expected a cakewalk; Israel had withdrawn from Lebanon only six years earlier, so many had first-hand experience of this front. But they were willing to risk their lives to protect their fellow citizens from Hizbullah's attacks.

And again, public support for the war initially remained sky-high even as casualties mounted: A Peace Index poll conducted three weeks after it started found that 93 percent of Jewish Israelis supported it, even though 33 soldiers (and 20 civilians) had thus far died, and continuing it would clearly cost more lives. Nevertheless, Israelis wanted the IDF to finish the job.

ISRAEL NEWS

A collection of the week's news from Israel
From the Bet El Twinning / Israel Action Committee
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It was only toward the end of the five-week war - as cease-fire negotiations accelerated, and Israelis realized that the government had no plan for either stopping the rocket fire or dealing Hizbullah a decisive blow in the time remaining - that public opinion turned against it. Granted, casualties also mounted during this period. But more important was the finding of another Peace Index poll conducted three weeks after the cease-fire: Fully

68 percent of Jewish Israelis thought the war had weakened rather than strengthened Israel's deterrence.

In other words, public opinion turned against the war not because of the casualties per se, but because the casualties served no purpose.

A HEALTHY society should object to throwing soldiers' lives away for no purpose. But that is very different from refusing to use the army for its intended purpose: protecting the state and its citizens. And for this purpose, Israelis are willing to spend soldiers' lives.

That is why reservists reported en masse for both Defensive Shield and the Second Lebanon War: They were willing to fight, and even die, to defend their fellow citizens. It is why the public initially supported both campaigns overwhelmingly, though it was their own sons, husbands and brothers whose lives were at risk: They understood that this is what the army exists for. It is why support for Defensive Shield remains sky-high, and why even today, 63 percent of Jewish Israelis (according to this month's Peace Index poll) still consider the Lebanon war justified: The former achieved its goals, so the casualties were a price worth paying, while the latter, despite having failed, was nevertheless launched for a proper purpose.

FINALLY, THIS is why a majority of Israelis currently support a major ground operation in Gaza. They are not fools; they know the likely price is dozens of dead soldiers, with their own sons, brothers and husbands possibly among them. But they also know that countries must protect their citizens, so ending the rocket fire on Sderot is the army's duty.

One could make other arguments against a ground operation in either Gaza or Lebanon. But it is past time to take this particular argument off the table. Both in their response to emergency call-ups and in the uncomplaining dedication with which conscripts, reservists and their families endure military service year-round, Israelis have proven their willingness to suffer military casualties to protect their country and their fellow citizens. They deserve better than to have their sacrifices - and their country's policies - distorted by a baseless myth. (Jerusalem Post Feb 20)

Shut Down Orient House By Michael Freund

Another day, another affront. For all the talk of peace and reconciliation, the Palestinians seem to be keeping themselves quite busy these days by finding ways to undercut, undermine, and even insult Israel and its sovereignty.

On Monday, Israel Radio reported that Mahmoud Abbas' Palestinian Authority has chosen to defy the law, which bars it from operating in Jerusalem, by reopening the Orient House.

The century-old structure, which a decade ago came to embody our neighbors' attempts to gain a political foothold in Israel's capital, was closed down by the police in 2001 after it had become a hotbed of illicit Palestinian activity.

But now the Orient House is apparently playing host once again to official Palestinian functions, such as diplomatic meetings. As its Web site states, "the Orient House aspires to develop Arab East Jerusalem as the capital of the emerging Palestinian state."

This is nothing less than a clear Palestinian slap in the face to the Israeli government, which only recently reaffirmed the ban on PA activity in Jerusalem, something to which the Palestinians themselves had agreed in the Oslo Accords.

More importantly, though, it is a slap in the face to the people of Israel, the overwhelming majority of whom cherish Jerusalem and are against redividing the Holy City.

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And that is precisely why the Palestinians are doing it. They understand the power that symbols have to influence, shape and yes, even to alter reality.

Indeed, for years our foes have been methodically focusing on Israel's icons, doing their utmost to tear them down - both literally and figuratively - as a means of advancing their agenda.

TAKE, FOR example, Joseph's Tomb in Shechem (Nablus), the resting place of the Biblical figure revered in Jewish tradition as "Yosef HaTzaddik," or "Joseph the righteous."

It was nearly eight and a half years ago that a Palestinian mob seized control over the tomb, ransacking the Jewish holy site and setting it ablaze. Despite repeated promises to restore it over the years, the Palestinians wantonly desecrated it at will, dumping garbage on its grounds and periodically setting it on fire.

Last month, dozens of Knesset members from a broad range of parties wrote a joint letter to Prime Minister Ehud Olmert demanding that Joseph's Tomb be repaired. "The tombstone is completely shattered, and the holy site is desecrated in an appalling manner, the likes of which we have not seen in Israel or anywhere else in the world," they wrote.

The premier duly conveyed the request to the Palestinians earlier this month, and their response was not long in coming: last week, they reportedly vandalized the tomb and set fire to it again.

This kind of outrage can not be allowed to pass quietly. It would be a grave error for Israel to ignore the Palestinians' wanton attempts to assault the national symbols and collective heritage of the Jewish people and the State of Israel.

And yet that is what our leaders seem only too happy to do. Time after time, they choose to ignore the Palestinian onslaught, which of course only invites still further abuse. Thus, the government has largely stood by and watched as the Palestinian-controlled Muslim Wakf digs up the Temple Mount in broad daylight and destroys priceless Jewish religious and archaeological relics.

There are other examples as well. Two months ago, Palestinians desecrated the tombs of the Biblical Joshua, his father Nun, and Caleb ben Yefuneh, all of which are located in the Samaritan village of Kifel Haress, near Ariel.

The gravesites, which Jewish pilgrims have visited for centuries, were reportedly smeared with animal and human feces and covered with garbage. The vandals also painted Nazi symbols and anti-Semitic slogans on the holy sites.

Yet this disgraceful act was also allowed to pass unanswered.

It is time for Israel to stop looking the other way whenever the Palestinians assail everything we hold dear. If it is a war of symbols they want, then Israel should not hesitate to respond. A good place to start would be to tear down the Orient House in Jerusalem, raze the site, and close it once and for all.

Similarly, the Muslim Wakf must be held accountable for the damage that it causes to the Temple Mount, site of the ancient Jewish temple. If the Wakf is unwilling to cooperate, their authority can and should be taken away.

We simply can not afford to allow the Palestinians to continue to spit in our faces, and then call it rain.

Our foes understand well the importance of symbols. They realize that despite their name, symbols are not merely symbolic, but have substantive value too.

The question is, when will we? (Jerusalem Post Feb 19)

All Together Now By Prof. MK Arieh Eldad

Sderot residents blocked traffic on the Ayalon Highway this month. I published a declaration of support, which expressed the hope that the resultant traffic jams would help Tel Avivians break out of their bubble and become aware of what ties them to the troubles in Sderot.

My e-mail inbox quickly filled with responses from angry, proud Tel Avivians. They reminded me that Tel Aviv has been the site of attacks on coffeehouses and public buses. They pointed out that Sderot's viability derives from the economic and cultural activity of Tel Aviv; that Sderot's economy is not based on the dusty Kassam-ridden industrial zone in Sderot, but rather on the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange and Tel Aviv's major companies. I cannot argue with facts.

The next day, the thoughtful face of Ehud Olmert visiting the Jewish Museum in Berlin peered at me from my newspaper. Behind Olmert, one could see pictures of concentration camp survivors in striped uniforms, smiling and waving hats given them by the Red Army that freed them. I have not been to that museum because I have not been to Berlin; I vowed never to step on that impure land. Olmert was in Berlin. I'm not condemning him for being there, because to speed the construction of special submarines for our navy - it is permissible to go even to Germany. But there he stood, in front of photos of camp survivors - the symbol of a common Jewish fate: haredim together with the non-religious; nationalist Betar youth movement members together

with Communists; and even some who today would not be legally eligible to enter Israel under the Law of Return, but the Germans knew that they were Jews. And they all rose heavenward through the smokestacks.

Out of this abyss of the common Jewish fate, Olmert explained to journalists what he thought about Sderot's residents demonstrating in Tel Aviv: "Every city has had its time to deal with the troubles they are dealing with today."

What were the Tel Avivians whom I tried to shake out of their bubble trying to tell me? What was Olmert saying?

They were saying that in Israel, everyone gets hit in his own time; at some point Kiryat Shemonah and Bet Shean, at some point Tel Aviv, Haifa and Jerusalem. Therefore, Sderot's residents shouldn't come to us waving their Kassam rocket shells and blocking traffic on our Ayalon Highway. Because more Jerusalemites and Tel Avivians were killed in the attacks on the Apropos and Sbarro's restaurants and on the number 5 and 18 bus lines than have been killed in Sderot from thousands of Kassam rockets. We have already suffered, now it is your turn.

Olmert's statement did not reflect a shared common burden. It proclaimed the death of solidarity. And it was made in front of photographs of prisoners garbed in striped uniforms, shirts bloodied by the wild animals who murdered six million. The death of solidarity is Olmert's hope. Only if he divides can he rule. Were the army reservists angry at how poorly the Second Lebanon War was managed to join with the poor residents of Dimona, and those of Sderot with those of Tel Aviv, and those of Kiryat Shemonah with those of Kiryat Arba, and the families who have lost loved ones in wars and terrorist attacks with the families abandoned to the mercy of Katyusha rockets and Kassam rockets - were they all to rise together now, on one day, not each city in its own time when it is beaten down, in shock, burying its dead, and insulted by having been abandoned; were all of them to rise in solidarity, and in full awareness of the common Jewish fate, move to get rid of Olmert, he would not be able to cling to his desk.

People like Olmert survive because he who is not being beaten at a particular moment remains silent. They are stronger than we are when we rise to protest each in his turn; and the rest remain silent, ignoring the others, complacent in their own bubbles, thankful for their good luck that this time it is not them being beaten. The bubble is everywhere.

The Tel Avivians were understandably insulted. Leave the new breed of Israeli alone for a minute, without a nearby attack, and he will erect a bubble around him. These bubbles are made of shares of the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange, of greenhouse gases and same sex parents, of arguments about whether vegetables grown by a non-Jew in the Land of Israel during the Sabbatical year should be purchased, and of virtual-reality television shows. These are the bubbles that allow Olmert to stay afloat and steer our Titanic into an iceberg.

Israeli Army Radio should be praised for deciding to interrupt and stop its broadcasts every time a Red Alert is sounded in the south of the country indicating incoming rockets. All radio and television stations in Israel should do the same. And anyone who wonders what he can do for the residents of Sderot - actually, for himself and, in truth, for all of us - should join the residents of Sderot stretched across the Ayalon Highway or the entrance to Jerusalem. He should block whatever road he is near, or he should drive his car on Friday to Sderot, to do his shopping there, to sit there in a cafe, or just to be there, to talk to people. Solidarity is a value that we need to take out of the mothballs, to shake the dust of cynicism from it, and to don it as a uniform, as one needs to do in a time of war. (IsraelINN.com Feb 18)

Death In Damascus By Hillel Halkin

We spectators of the shadowy war between terrorist organizations and governmental intelligence agencies do not yet know exactly who killed Hezbollah military chief Imad Mughniyeh in the Syrian capital of Damascus last week. It could have been just about anyone, starting with the Syrians themselves.

Improbable? Perhaps. But how can we be sure that Mughniyeh was not romancing some Syrian general's wife, or muscling in on some Syrian politician's drug turf, and that this was not the reason a bomb found its way into his car?

When you're Imad Mughniyeh, who killed many people, there are lots of people who would like to kill you.

Let's assume, though, that Israel was indeed behind the Mughniyeh assassination, acting either alone or in concert with others. And let's assume that, given Mughniyeh's long history of terrorist operations, it was in Israel's justified interest to kill him.

Let's assume, too, that, knowing Israel was responsible, Hezbollah now intends to strike back, not directly at Israel itself, which could trigger yet another Israeli assault on Hezbollah positions in Lebanon, but - as Hezbollah

leader Hassan Nasrallah has implicitly threatened - at targets outside of Israel.

And let's assume again that these targets may be not just Israeli, but local Jewish ones as well, as happened with the Jewish community headquarters in Buenos Aires, blown up in 1994, in a joint Hezbollah-Iranian operation, with the death of 85 people.

The question, then, is: Does Israel have the right to jeopardize Jewish lives in the Diaspora on behalf of its own interests? Is it wise for it to do so?

In one sense, of course, the very existence of Israel may jeopardize Jewish lives elsewhere. Terror attacks on Jewish community centers, synagogues, schools, restaurants, and so on all over the world have been part of the Palestinian war against Israel for decades, and have rarely been occasioned by specific Israeli actions. Moreover, the Israeli-Arab conflict has led to a worldwide increase in anti-Semitism, which itself puts Jews at risk. One can hardly expect Israel to agree to disappear in order to reduce the risk level to zero. Nor can one expect it to make major strategic decisions on the basis of how the Diaspora's Jews might be affected by them.

On the other hand, the Mughniyeh assassination was not strategic. It involved a tactical decision, and the blow it struck against Islamic and anti-Israel terror, however effective, was limited. Mughniyeh will have his replacement, and the damage caused to Hezbollah will be repaired within a few weeks or months. Although Israel has no reason to mourn his death, it also could have refrained from killing him at no great harm to itself. Should it have done so out of concern for Diaspora Jews?

On a purely pragmatic level, the answer might be yes. Perhaps the number of lives saved by ridding the world of Imad Mughniyeh will not equal the number of lives lost to the revenge that Hezbollah will take. But in that case, Israel should have resisted the temptation to kill Mughniyeh out of concern for its own citizens, too. Hezbollah, after all, also will be looking - perhaps primarily - for Israeli targets throughout the world. All Israelis going abroad have been warned of this: Israeli institutions everywhere have been put on a state of alert. If in the end a heavy price is paid by someone, Israeli, Diaspora Jew, or anyone else, it may indeed not have been worth it.

But these are the imponderables of any war. The decision makers make their calculations and take their chances. Sometimes they are right, sometimes they are wrong, and sometimes one never knows. Not only can no one predict what the precise effects of killing an Imad Mughniyeh will be, it may be impossible to sum up years later what the precise effects were. The variables are simply too many, the interrelations between events too complex.

As a matter of principle, though, I do not think Israel need be more concerned about possible terrorist retaliation against Jews or Jewish communities in other countries than it need be about possible retaliation against Israelis. For better or for worse, the Jews of the world have been part of the Israeli-Palestinian and Israeli-Arab conflict since its inception. Some of them have been proud of this and some indignant, but none has been unaffected. This is inherent in Israel's situation as the home of a people that also lives outside of it.

Yet in point of fact, the Jews of the world who might be endangered by the Mughniyeh killing are almost entirely those who identify with Israel and care about it. These are the Jews who attend the synagogues and community centers, and send their children to the Jewish schools, that Hezbollah would be most likely to attack.

For years now, many of these institutions have been obliged to take protective measures against such a possibility. I am not aware of the Jews served by them complaining about this or blaming Israel for it. It is among the Jews who keep away from Jewish life and are not in danger when Jewish institutions are targeted that one finds Israel blamed the most.

By any standard, Israelis bear nearly all the brunt of Israel's wars. This is how it should be. But it is not unreasonable that Jews elsewhere to whom Israel is important should also sometimes be asked to run a small risk. Imad Mughniyeh, after all, was their enemy too. (NY Sun Feb 19)

U.S. AID for Terror

By Dr. Rachel Ehrenfeld and Alyssa A. Lappen

The Bush Administration's search for partners to promote "peace" and "democracy" within the Palestinian Authority (PA) resembles Lord Charles Bowen's "blind man in a dark room looking for a black hat -- which isn't there."

For the first time, the Bush Administration plans to give \$150 million in cash directly to the Palestinian Authority (PA) Treasury, as part of a \$496.5 million "aid" package, including \$410 million for development programs. This added to the \$86.5 million for CIA "security training," which Congress authorized in April 2007.

The CIA has apparently assumed the Palestinian terrorist-training role previously held by the former Soviet Union. Since 1994, the CIA armed and trained thousands of Palestinian "security forces," who subsequently joined

every Palestinian terrorist organization.

CIA Palestinian training success is best described by a member of the PA's Chairman own security unit, - Force 17, officer Abu Yusef: "The operations of the Palestinian resistance would [not] have been so successful and "would not have killed more than 1,000 Israelis since 2000, and defeated the Israelis in Gaza without [American military] trainings," he boasted in August 2007.

Since the Oslo Accords, the PA received some \$14 billion to \$20 billion in international aid, according to a 2007 Funding for Peace Coalition (FPC) report to the British Parliament. Each Palestinian received \$4,000 to \$8,000 per year. In comparison, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), provided \$1 billion in humanitarian aid for 2.5 million Darfur refugees from 2003 to 2006 --only \$100 per person annually. Moreover, of the \$7 billion pledged international aid, only \$5 billion were spent to assist more than 5 million Tsunami victims in more than 15 countries on two continents.

The PA received "the highest per capita aid transfer in the history of foreign aid anywhere," according to former World Bank country director for Gaza and the West Bank, Nigel Roberts. Not surprisingly, hundreds of thousands of Gazans spent more than \$300 million in less than two week shopping spree, after Hamas blew up the border with Egypt. Yet, the Palestinian economy is in ruins, Why?

In March 2007, PA Prime Minister and former World Bank official Salam Fayyad, told London's Daily Telegraph: "No one can give donors that assurance" that funds reach their designated destinations. "Where is all of the transparency in all of this? It's gone." Controlling Palestinian finances, Fayyad concluded, is "virtually impossible."

Palestinian violence has escalated since the 1994 PA establishment and PA officials have produced an unbroken record of unfulfilled promises and outright deception. Yet President George W. Bush in his January 28 State of the Union Address, reassured the Palestinians that "America will do, and I will do, everything we can to help them achieve...a Palestinian state by the end of this year."

Nevertheless, U.S.-favored PA President Mahmoud Abbas, who in 1957 with Yasser Arafat co-founded the al Fattah terrorist group, assumed the role of his predecessor. Like Muslim Brotherhood, Marxist-trained Jihadist Arafat, neither does Abbas "recognize that confronting terror is essential to achieving a state where his people can live in dignity and at peace with Israel," as President Bush declared.

Abbas remains committed to the organization's reason d'etre--destroying Israel and expelling the Jewish people from the region. Despite public Fattah-Hamas leadership disagreements, branding one another "murderers and thieves," Abbas arranged on Jan. 30 to give Hamas \$3.1 billion of \$7.7 billion that international donor community pledged last December in Paris.

Abbas' support for Hamas is not new. In Feb. 2007, He announced, "We must unite the Hamas and Fattah blood in the struggle against Israel as we did at the beginning of the intifada." He stated this en route to Mecca to meet with the Saudi King, and Hamas terror chiefs Khaled Mashaal and Ismail Haniyeh. The Saudis pledged hundreds of millions of dollars in "humanitarian aid"--which, like previous pledges, they failed to deliver.

Rather than \$660 million in annual aid the Saudis promised in 2002, the kingdom donated only \$84 million since then, according to World Bank reports. Other Arab League members, who in 2002 promised \$55 million monthly to foster PA economic development, gave even less.

Meanwhile, however, the Saudis and the Gulf states funneled hundreds of millions of petrodollars--some raised in government-sponsored telethons --to reward Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, Hamas and Palestinian Jihad suicide bombers and fuel the anti-Israel Jihad. Indeed, "Saudi Arabia remains a source of recruits and finances for ...Levant-based militants," said National Intelligence Director J. Michael McConnell, before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, on 5 February 2008.

McConnell should have included USAID on his terror-funding list. A Dec. 2007 USAID audit reported that the mission administering its funds gave money to groups and institutions affiliated with U.S. designated terrorist organizations, including Hamas and Islamic Jihad. It warned: "Without additional controls, the mission could inadvertently provide support to entities or individuals associated with terrorism."

USAID "failure" to prevent funds from reaching Palestinian terrorist is not surprising given U.S. previous Administrations support for Arafat, and now for Abbas, who repeatedly claims: "We have a legitimate right to direct our guns against Israeli occupation," while reiterating his desire for "a political partnership with Hamas."

It is time for President Bush to remove his blinders and stop donating U.S.-taxpayer funds to this murderous partnership. It is also time for Congress to demand a proper monitoring program to oversee the legitimate use of U.S. aid to the Palestinians. (FrontPageMagazine.com Feb 8)

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Condoning Genocide Editorial Jerusalem Post

"Denying historical facts, especially on such an important subject as the Holocaust, is just not acceptable. Nor is it acceptable to call for the elimination of any state or people. I would like to see this fundamental principle respected both in rhetoric and in practice by all the members of the international community." - UN Secretary-General-designate Ban Ki-moon, December 14, 2006

The leader of Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corps, Muhammad Ali Jafari, wrote to Hizbullah leader Hassan Nasrallah this week: "The cancerous growth Israel will soon disappear... I am convinced that with every passing day Hizbullah's might is increasing and in the near future, we will witness the disappearance of this cancerous growth Israel by means of the Hizbullah fighters' radiation [therapy]."

Next, Iranian Armed Forces chief Maj.-Gen. Hassan Firouzabadi wrote to Nasrallah saying that "Lebanese and Palestinian combatants... [will] continue the struggle until the complete destruction of the Zionist regime and the liberation of the entire land of Palestine."

Not to be outdone, on Wednesday Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said at a rally broadcast on state television, "World powers have created a black and dirty microbe named the Zionist regime and have unleashed it like a savage animal on the nations of the region." Speaking of the late Hizbullah terror chief Imad Mugniyah, Ahmadinejad said, "They assassinate pure and pious people and then they celebrate it."

The silence from the nations of the world in the face of this blatant endorsement of terror and incitement to genocide is deafening, giving the lie to oceans of pious rhetoric.

Just weeks ago, for example, the UN noted the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust, established in 2005 by a General Assembly resolution. Once again, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called for "rededication" to "applying the lessons of the Holocaust to our lives."

Just what are those lessons? The late US Congressman Tom Lantos, a Holocaust survivor, said what Ban should have said. Already too sick to attend the UN event, his daughter read his warning: "Just as an earlier dictator pledged to destroy the Jews of Europe, so a new one is threatening to destroy the Jewish state. It is the responsibility of the entire world community... to prevent another Holocaust, wherever it may occur, and to keep the memory of the killing of six million Jewish people alive as the State of Israel faces constant attacks, and must fight each day for its very survival."

This, indeed, is the obvious, yet unspoken lesson for today. Iran openly backs Hizbullah, openly hosts Hamas leaders and openly calls for Israel's destruction. Nor are these genocidal intentions "only" rhetorical. They are already being carried out in practice, in the form of daily missile attacks and other terrorist acts, ongoing weapons buildups and - topping it all off - through Iran's race to full nuclear weapons capability.

The stunning global silence in the face of incitement to and preparation for genocide testifies to a belief that all this is "just" Israel's problem - as if an existential threat to one small state is not of sufficient concern. Yet the eminent Holocaust historian Yehuda Bauer, in a discussion paper on the UN Web site, explains why, once again, a threat to the Jewish people is also a global one.

"World War II... [was] initiated by Nazi Germany, largely for ideological reasons: one, the desire to rule Europe, and through it, the world, and thus achieve a global racial hierarchy... of the Aryan race on top, and everybody else under them... [Two,] they saw the Jews as the Satan that controlled all of Germany's enemies... It is no exaggeration to say that World War II, and the death of tens of millions, the destruction of countries and cultures, the torture and death of children and adults, was caused in part by hatred against Jews," he wrote.

On Tuesday, Israel officially asked the UN Security Council to condemn Iran's "direct and public incitement to commit genocide."

Which nation will stand up and join us? How long will more than 130 parties to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, which explicitly makes incitement to genocide a crime, continue to encourage Iran with their silence? Which leaders and nations will speak out and act - not only in Israel's defense but in their own? (Jerusalem Post Feb 20)

Don't Help Fatah By Ron Breiman

Gaza war that aims to bring Fatah to power, create Palestinian state would be immoral

The basic duty of a government according to the convention between a state and its citizens is to safeguard their security. In exchange for this obligation, citizens accept various limitations: Obeying the laws, military service, and tax payments. Yet when a government fails to adhere to this obligation, it violates the above convention, weakens the citizens' willingness to bear these limitations, and in fact undermines the social fabric essential for the existence of a democratic state. It is no wonder that under such circumstances the rule of law grows weaker, draft-dodging skyrockets, and the government is replaced by non-profit groups and donors who step into the vacuum created.

The current Israeli government, just like its predecessor, shirks its obligation and moral role: Protecting the lives and property of its citizens, as well as safeguarding human dignity and freedom. These are being trampled by the enemy. This should be enough to oust such government from office.

It is unclear how the friendly term "Gaza-region communities," which refers to the town of Sderot and many small communities in its vicinity, was created. There is no sense of community or warmth linking Israel's southern residents and their Gaza counterparts. A visit to the area reveals to the visitor the true and painful state of affairs.

The daily reality is such that area residents sustain a daily dosage of Qassam rockets and mortar shells. When Sderot's children keep on sustaining attacks, and when the detached figures in Jerusalem withdraw to their offices, the enemy understands that it is on the right path and that its methods work. Despite occasional IDF operations, the enemy is able to extend the Qassam range, and soon enough we shall see the Gaza-region grow larger and include the southern town of Ashkelon as well.

The IDF's occasional operations are insufficient. They do not resolve the problem and do not even constitute a fulfillment of the government's minimal moral obligation. Under such circumstances there are grave concerns that an especially lethal Qassam attack that would sow death (among children?) will drag the government from one end of the spectrum to another. From a state of near-indifference to the fate of Gaza-region residents to an impulsive response in the form of war in Gaza, which has become a second Lebanon.

It is very possible that there is no escaping a Gaza war. At the same time, such war must not be embarked on without two pre-conditions. Firstly, an advance risk assessment that was already supposed to be undertaken, which would comprise all the implications of an extensive military campaign on Israel's citizens, on the enemy, on other fronts, and on Israel's deterrent power. It is unclear that such thorough risk assessment was undertaken before the impulsive decision to embark on war in Lebanon in the summer of 2006.

Secondly, we must formulate a clear definition of the war's objectives. The goal should be to shatter the Hamas government's military power and lift the threat on Israeli citizens in the Gaza region. Lifting the threat means, at the very least, a takeover that is not limited in time of the "northern section" of the Strip that in the past was home to the three northern Gaza communities (Elei Sinai, Dugit, and Nisanit,) whose ruins serve as a launching site for attacks on Sderot and Ashkelon.

On the other hand, we must not have a situation whereby the goal of a possible Gaza war would be to risk IDF soldiers not for the purpose of protecting Sderot and vicinity residents, but rather, in order to topple the Hamas government and hand over power in Gaza to Mahmoud Abbas.

There are those who call for refraining from a significant, thorough operation in the Strip and even back talks with the Hamas government to that end, which come with the corresponding diplomatic cost. The truth is that when choosing between the pair of twins, Hamas on the one hand and Fatah on the other, the former is preferable. After all, we are dealing with a declared and open enemy, Hamas, where the rules are clear and the diplomatic cost is low. In the case of Fatah, we are dealing with a wolf in sheep's skin, an enemy whose objectives are similar to those of Hamas, yet the pleasantries it spreads turn into a honey trap for Ehud Olmert and Tzipi Livni, who are willing to pay diplomatic prices that are lethal for Israel. From this standpoint, Hamas is less dangerous.

In any case, IDF troops must not serve as the "silver platter" for the establishment of a Palestinian state. If this is the desired war result, then we are dealing with an immoral war that must not be embarked on. (Ynet Feb 20)

The writer is the former Chairman of Professors for a Strong Israel.
