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Never Again!: **My reflections on** **the Gaza conflict**

By Steve Bakke  June 10, 2024



*Jewish women and children were executed
by the Nazis during The Holocaust*

“Never again,’ simply translated for me means ‘never forget’.....Not 75 years later, but just seven-and-a-half months later, and people are already forgetting.....that Hamas unleashed this terror. I have not forgotten.....” – President Biden’s comments at the May 7, 2024, U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum Days of Remembrance Ceremony.

Israel’s Knesset established Yom HaShoah in 1951 as Holocaust Remembrance Day. “Never Again” represents the pledge by citizens of the world to watch for signs of genocide so that The Holocaust’s mass killing of 6,000,000 Jews would never be repeated. The October 7th mass killing of 1,200 Jews by the terrorist Hamas organization was one such warning.

Hamas, a terrorist surrogate of Iran, came into control of Gaza during 2006 and 2007 through a combination of politics and violence. Ever since, innocent Palestinian Arabs have suffered greatly in many ways, including enforced poverty and being used as human shields during any retaliatory Israeli military action.

To prevent the flow of arms into Gaza, Israel and Egypt have had to maintain a blockade almost continuously ever since. Nevertheless, tens of thousands of rockets and mortars have been fired into Israel during the last two decades.

Creating two states, with separate Jewish and Palestinian nations, is a popular suggested solution. However, radical Hamas leadership won’t agree to any solution that includes recognizing Israel. It’s happened five times:

- 1) 1936 - The British offered to distribute 80% of the disputed territory to the Arabs, 20% to the Jews. Arab leadership rejected it.
- 2) 1947 - The UN planned to divide the land. The Jews agreed and Arab leaders responded with all-out war by the combined forces of Jordan, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon and Syria. Israel was victorious.
- 3) 1967 – A blockade of an Israeli shipping channel led to a preemptive Israeli attack resulting in Israel defeating Egypt, Syria, and Jordan in the Six Day War. Israel offered to return much of the “won” territories – the West Bank to Jordan, Gaza to Egypt, and part to the region’s Arabs, now referred to as Palestinians. The Arab League refused, declaring there would be “no recognition of Israel.”
- 4) 2000 - After the Camp David Accords, Palestinian leader Arafat turned down Israel’s offer of Gaza and most of the West Bank for developing a Palestinian nation. Terrorist attacks and suicide bombings against Israeli civilians was their immediate answer, killing over 1000.

5) 2008 - Israel tried again by increasing the 2000 offer to include additional land. Palestinian leader Abbas turned it down.

Several times modern Israel has been willing to offer territory to the Palestinian population for establishing a nation. Will Israel ever be willing to repeat that offer?

Hamas official Ghazi Hamad promised this following the October 7 attack: ".....we will do this again and again....." Hamas attacks will continue, but the world still debates the legitimacy of Israel's military action.

What manner of terrorist killing on October 7 would justify Israel's action for its critics? What Israeli "body count" from October 7th would satisfy them? Israel responded to an act of war with a declaration of war - without "proportionate response" constraints.

Israel's actions aren't merely a sudden angry whim. They reflect the sum of decades of attempts and offers in search of a solution. And there have been decades of violent skirmishes and terrorism. Israel is fighting for survival. This fight will have unintended consequences, but so would inaction.

"Proportionate response" constraints were not part of America's response to September 11, 2001, nor following the Pearl Harbor attack. Such concerns didn't weigh upon the heroic boys storming the beaches of Normandy on D-Day. That limitation didn't affect America's bombing of Dresden, nor their decision to drop atomic bombs on Japan, ending WW2. All-out war is commonly carried out to prevent even worse future tragedies.

Israel recognizes the Hamas practice of using Palestinian civilians as human shields for military installations and other assets. It is to Israel's credit that advance warning is given to target areas with civilian populations - an unheard-of military accommodation.

Finally, let's imagine a similar attack on America and evaluate Israel's actions in that context. Imagine that we share a border with an enemy that, for decades, has repeatedly expressed the intention to eliminate the United States. Imagine a recent history of tens of thousands of rocket and mortar attacks across our border.

Imagine also an attack proportionate to that on October 7. Based on relative population, almost 45,000 Americans would be killed, and 10,000 hostages taken. In that situation, I would hope and expect that America would choose to fully engage the enemy and remove the possibility of any future threats.

There are many humanitarian concerns involving innocent Palestinian civilians in Gaza, making it easy to insist that Israel "tread carefully" in their survival battle. Political implications obviously weigh heavily on the President and his administration.

Our President claims to understand Israel's history and its current plight, but then makes contradictory statements to shore up the support of his far-left base. He should remember, and stick to, his words spoken on May 7 that I quoted in the introduction.

Inevitably, much reflection and evaluation is given to all tragic wars. And just as inevitably, the result will show lists of genius and heroism along with excesses and regret.

Ultimately, Israel is responsible for making the final strategic and tactical choices. There will always be a lonely "someone" whose job it is to make a decision and declare, as did General Dwight Eisenhower on D-Day: "We will accept nothing less than full victory."

The Holocaust represents one of history's worst examples of "man's inhumanity to man." History and justice demand that America respect the spirit of Yom HaShoah regarding Israeli's war of self-preservation. Our response should echo Israel's own: "Never Again!"