

Has the Third Gaza War Between Israel and Hamas Ended?

A Middle East Round Table Discussion with Dan Diker, Mike Bates, Eric Tokajer and Jerry Gordon (September 2014)



On Tuesday, August 26, 2014, the thirteenth cease fire in Operation Protective Edge between Israel and Hamas and its terrorist partners in Gaza was declared at 7:00PM local time. The cease fire had been brokered by Egypt was unconditional and without a set time limit. Despite the onset of this latest cease fire, some rockets continued to be launched from Gaza towards Israel past the time set for cessation of attacks. Subsequently, this latest cease fire has held. It is only temporary and there is no definitive peace agreement in the works. The suspicion is that Israel may have exacted significant punishment on both Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad forces who agreed to a tadhiah, a time out, with no hudna, or truce in the offing.

Some quarters in the world media have expressed the opinion that this might be the end of the third war between Israel and Hamas in nearly six years. It has been the longest in the series, 50 days. But it is only a temporary halt and the conflict may be renewed. This conflict was perpetrated by Hamas in June with the kidnapping and murder of three Jewish youths near the West Bank community of Hebron. It was reportedly organized by a senior Hamas military wing operative based in Turkey, Saleh Muhammad Suleiman al-Arouri. He took credit for that on August 20, 2014 at the fourth conference of the World Union of Islamic Sages held in Turkey. Al-Arouri allegedly was speaking on behalf of Hamas leader Khalid Mashal ensconced in luxury in Qatar. Al-Arouri may also have planned what some have called a Mega-9/11 event that would have attacked Israel from the West Bank coordinated with suicide Hamas commandos infiltrating Israel's southern frontier through a network of terror tunnels from Gaza. The IDF and General Security Service, Shin Bet, uncovered arms caches and millions of dollars in the West Bank that could have been used for this attack planned for Rosh Hashanah in late September. That planned attack was evidence of a power play by Hamas seeking to topple Fatah and the PA Leadership in the West Bank, akin to the terror group's bloody ousting of Fatah in the 2007 takeover in Gaza. PA leader Abbas, sidelined in the current Gaza War, allegedly had heated

discussions with Mashal when they met in Qatar in mid-August over the alleged power plot.

This third war between Israel and Hamas firing rocket and mortar barrages on July 6th and retaliatory Israeli air attacks on a command center in southern Gaza. A ground incursion phase by the IDF began following a surprise tunnel attack by Hamas commandos inside Israel on July 16th. More than 4,500 rockets and missiles have been fired at Israel to date during this third war. Israel's Iron Dome System has been effective in taking down several hundred rockets headed for populated areas. Those rockets and missiles have covered virtually 80 percent of the Jewish nation including Israel's populous central and northern areas. Israel's South has been the most exposed since Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) began rocket launches nearly a decade ago. The rain of terror from the skies has targeted communities and cities like Sderot and Beersheba in the Western Negev and Ashdod and Ashkelon on Israel's southern border. Many residents of those most exposed communities have left temporarily for safety elsewhere. Upwards of 16,000 rockets and missiles and untold thousands of mortars have been fired over the past decade at Israel from Gaza. The vast preponderance of those has been supplied from Iran supplemented by locally manufactured short and medium range Qassem and M-75 rockets.

One community on the frontier with Gaza, Kibbutz Nahal Oz, has borne the onslaught from Hamas and the PIJ during all 50 days in this current war. Forty eight hours before this cease fire, a four year boy, Dan Tragerman, who was about to depart with his family for the security of his grandparents' home near Tel Aviv, was mortally wounded with shrapnel in a mortar attack. Israel has no defense against indiscriminate mortar fire. He was the first Israeli child to die in the current war. 70 Israeli deaths have occurred in this third war with Hamas, 66 IDF service personnel and four civilians including young Dan Tragerman. Casualties in Gaza according to unconfirmed reports of the Health Ministry there were 2,100 killed, half of whom Israel maintains were Hamas and PIJ fighters.

Israel scored several hits via air strikes on four senior military wing commanders of Hamas, the CFO for the terror group and may have taken out the elusive overall military wing commander, Mohammed Deir. Hamas reacted by publicly executing 18 Gazans who they contended were Israeli collaborators. Those attacks and Hamas' public executions of civilians may have demonstrated Israeli intelligence prowess in the conflict and its network of local assets in Gaza. Those assets have also assisted in targeting command centers that have been flattened by precision air attacks.

During the ground incursion in a section of northern Gaza City, the IDF uncovered a Hamas

combat manual that revealed a conscious policy of using women, children and civilians as human shields by launching rockets and mortars from homes, hospitals, apartment complexes and schools used as refuge centers. The mortar attack that took the life of young Dan Tragerman came from a position near a school in Gaza, one of the refuge centers for displaced Gazans.

One of the unpleasant surprises for Israel was the more than 35 tunnels crossing the frontier from Gaza into adjacent communities inside Israel. Those tunnels had been built using funds diverted from the hundreds of millions of dollars supplied by Qatar for reconstruction following the eight days Operation Pillar of Defense in November 2012. Qatar may also have supplied sophisticated cyber warfare technology for remote launching of rockets and booby traps in these terror tunnels. In 2006, Israeli soldier Gilad Schalit was kidnapped and held captive by terrorists who abducted him through one of the tunnels. For whatever reason, the military bureaucracy in Tzahal had stymied development of a system to detect tunnel excavation, an effort begun as early as 2004. A successfully tested system may be deployed by the IDF in 2015, too late for this current conflict. Those dozens of tunnels destroyed by the IDF in Operation Protective Edge are only one aspect of the struggle. The other is the several hundred tunnels between Gaza and the Egyptian Sinai through which weapons and cash could be transferred to Hamas and the PIJ. Egypt under President al-Sisi has successfully destroyed over 1,300 tunnels on the Rafah frontier with Gaza. Those Gaza tunnels have been excavated at great human cost. Reports surfaced during this campaign of over 160 children and dozens of adults killed in the terror tunnel projects. Projects allegedly designed with assistance from Hezbollah based on North Korean tunnel excavation expertise.

An ominous new terrorist group has emerged in Gaza, the Islamic State, formerly ISIS that has conquered vast swaths of both Syria and Iraq. The black flags of Islam flown by the Islamic State have been seen at funerals and on other occasions in both Gaza and the West Bank.

Against this background, another in the periodic 1330amWEBY Middle East Round Table discussions was convened.



Mike Bates: Good afternoon and welcome to Your Turn. This is Mike Bates. We are having our periodic Middle East round table discussion and I have with me in the studio Jerry Gordon, Senior Editor of the *New English Review* and its blog the *Iconoclast*. Welcome Jerry.



Jerry Gordon: Glad to be back.

Bates: Also we have Rabbi Eric Tokajer. He is the Rabbi at Brit Ahm Messianic Synagogue in Pensacola. Joining us by telephone from Jerusalem is Dan Diker, former Secretary General of the World Jewish Congress. He is currently a research fellow with the International Institute for Counter-terrorism and Foreign Policy and he is a Foreign Policy Fellow at the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs. Dan Diker, welcome to Your Turn.



Daniel Diker: Good to be with you

Bates: Thank you for joining us. We will begin with what is hopefully good news, a cease fire was announced at roughly 7:00 p.m. Jerusalem time or noon Central time. Dan Diker, what is the cause of that and has it held so far?

Diker: First of all it has held. I am not exactly sure that it's good news. It's certainly news that can be called in two words a time out. There is a tendency in the West to look at cease fires of any kind as a stepping stone towards a peace agreement. This is very different from what a Middle Eastern Muslim/Arab understanding is of a cease fire. This is really in Arab/Muslim terms a *tahdia*, calming down. This is not a *hudna*, truce. This is not a long term detailed cease fire that would be closer to a Western understanding. Israel has accepted it because there are no conditions attached that would have forced Israel under different circumstances to accept impossible demands by Hamas. It affords Israel the opportunity to watch Hamas from the air, sea and ground and to see how it behaves. To see if there are any terrorist troop movements in the Gaza strip. It essentially allows the Israeli Army to see what is happening on the ground from moment to moment without conceding anything substantial.

Bates: How did this cease fire come about? Who brokered it?

Diker: The cease fire was brokered by Egypt and it was unexpected by many in Israel

especially those in the South. They have suffered the most as many know in the United States. A beautiful four year old child, Daniel Tragerman was killed just forty-eight hours ago and then a person was killed today, just minutes before the cease fire went into effect. Many people in the South have fled to Central and Northern Israel to relatives and friends effectively creating a situation which Hamas is publicly celebrating. They call Jewish Israelis who move refugees inside the State of Israel. This is first time that you have had this massive movement away from one particular area of Israel in order to recover from ongoing fire. However, all in all it is a neutral cease fire. Perhaps it joins one of the other twelve cease fires that have come and gone over the last fifty days. I would definitely not hold my breath; my assessment is that this will probably be broken by Hamas. I would not be surprised to see it broken in the coming days perhaps a week, or two. It gives Hamas a much needed chance to lick its wounds, to recover and get ready for the next round of assault against Israel.

Gordon: Dan, there is a strange story out of Israel that the demand for this cease fire came from the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. How did that occur and contrast that with the demands typically that Hamas has been making.

Diker: Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) fighters have been hit really badly in this latest round. We don't know exactly the number of PIJ fighters versus Hamas fighters that were killed. We do know that upwards of twelve hundred terrorists have been eliminated in this latest round but we understand through reports coming from Gaza that Islamic Jihad officials were placing a lot of pressure on their Hamas compatriots to accept this cease fire. The Israeli Army stepped up its policy of decapitating, not in the Islamic State sense, but decapitating in terms of eliminating Hamas command structure from mid to senior-levels. The IDF started collapsing buildings making sure that first of all that there were no people inside. However, fifteen and sixteen story buildings that housed command structures were also the homes a lot of Hamas officials. The terrorist leadership felt that enough was enough for this round and they wanted a chance to pull themselves together.



Tokajer: Is this part of an infighting that has been going on between the Hamas and the Islamic Jihad? How does that fit in with Abbas' new movement to force a vote at the UN on allowing an Islamic Palestinian state in the West Bank?

Diker: Two things. First of all Islamic Jihad is an extension of the Iranian Revolutionary

Guard Corps which is under the direct command of Khamenei. Hamas is not under the direct command of Khamenei and the Iranians at this point. There was a falling out between the Hamas leadership and their Iranian benefactors and sponsors two and a half years ago when Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood fell on the wrong side of the conflict in Syria. The Iranian backed Syrian government expelled Hamas and the Hamas leaders looked for a different home. They are now housed by the Qataris. Yet there is a new courting relationship going on between Hamas and Iran. This is sort of an important test for the Hamas leadership in order to re-engage their former benefactors. Having said that, the Islamic Jihad and Hamas have cooperated, however they have also killed each other. This is not unsurprising in the Middle East. Many people believe that the Sunni Jihadist organizations cooperate with, but usually hate their Shiite adversaries which are not necessarily true all of the time. They cooperate and they kill one another when it is convenient for them to do that. However, these two groups have mostly cooperated in their coordinated assaults against Israel. I would not be surprised if Iran also played a strong role in asking their proxies to agree to a temporary halt in the fighting. This is a temporary halt in the fighting. This is not a long term arrangement.

Oh I'm sorry I didn't answer Eric's other question regarding Mahmoud Abbas and his threat to take Israel to the International Criminal Court. That move is merely a result of Mahmoud Abbas, the Chairman of the Palestinian Authority, feeling irrelevant over the last fifty days. Hamas has taken center stage. Part of this war is really behind the black curtain or hijab. It is a darker war between Fatah and Hamas for control, influence, power and support of the Palestinian people. They work it out by attacking Israel. This is exactly the reason why Mahmoud Abbas actually fell into the arms of Hamas in the very beginning of the current war in order to vie for power and support of the Palestinian people. He felt in the last two months completely irrelevant and powerless. The West has re-empowered Mahmoud Abbas by wanting to dance him into Gaza and to become the new white knight there once the Hamas forces are demilitarized which is the demand that's being made by Israel. He's taken that to the next level; and said if you guys are going to back me anyway I'm going to threaten Israel and try to force them to withdraw to the 1967 line by going to the International Criminal Court. The Palestinian Authority did the exact same thing in the 2008/2009 Cast Lead Operation. They petitioned the International Criminal Court and brought Israel up on war crimes charges that triggered the Goldstone Report. This is not a new strategy by the Palestinian Authority. However it will fail and it will help them commit suicide in their quest for a Palestinian State. The Israeli public will completely reject that and move further away from the Palestinian Authority as any kind of honest and real partner for peace.

Bates: You brought up the Goldstone Report, not all of our listeners are going to be familiar

with that. If you could review what it is and why Goldstone himself ultimately renounced it?

Diker: The Goldstone Report was a grotesquely inaccurate UN sponsored report that was led by South African Judge Richard Goldstone. He made extraordinarily twisted and inaccurate charges against Israel. He charged the Israeli Army with malice of forethought targeting in a premeditated way Palestinian civilians which he himself retracted a year later in either a *Washington Post* or *New York Times* Op/ed in which he wrote that he was incorrect. He had the wrong information and these were claims that Israel was making all along. However, the damage to Israel's image, good name and reputation as a liberal, democratic free country defending itself against radical Islamic terror had already been done. We have seen that the role of the Western media has been particularly injurious to Israel by its largely non-objective reporting. That is due to fear of either being killed or expelled by their Hamas host for reporting what they knew was Hamas' use of children, women and civilians as human shields. Planting weapon factories and weapon depots very near to where the international media themselves were staying in Gaza.

Bates: The accusations are always on page one and the retractions and corrections are always on page 26 if they appear at all.

Diker: Well said.

Gordon: You mentioned cutting off the snakehead of leadership in Hamas. We had the spectacular series of air assaults by the IAF resulting in the killing of significant military commanders and potentially the head of the military wing itself, Mohammed Deif. Can you connect the dots between those events and what occurred prior to the cease fire, public executions of Palestinians or Gazans as so-called collaborators?

Diker: The summary execution of eighteen most probably completely innocent Palestinian civilians over the weekend really strengthens the charge that Hamas is ISIS and ISIS is Hamas, referring to the Islamic State network, was the result of complete desperation in the Hamas leadership. They were absolutely shocked that Israel had completely penetrated their command structure and done it with local informants. Israel has excellent intelligence networks inside Gaza and they had conducted pinpoint operations, many of which were not covered by the press. Israel took out not only leadership but lots of weapons storage and manufacturing depots hitting the homes of Hamas officials and the military structure. They were really freaked out, to use the colloquial expression, that Israel had been able to take out their top three or four commanders and they had to make someone responsible for it. They didn't know quite how to handle it otherwise and they wanted to send a very strong message to Gaza and to other Jihadis

with whom they are competing. Let's remember, they are competing with ISIS for the reality show of who can be the best Jihadi organization in the Middle East. Thus there was a cognitive reason and PR reason to do that. They were just plain desperate.

Bates: Dan you speak of the Israeli intelligence network in Gaza that has been phenomenal and yet Israel seemed genuinely surprised at the extent of the tunnels coming out of Gaza leading into Israel. Was that genuine surprise?

Diker: That's a very good question Mike. It's a very difficult issue for the Israelis. I think one of the better ways to approach the whole surprise over the attack tunnel issue is from an Israeli point of view. Their point of reference was tunnels into Gaza coming from the Egyptian Sinai. Those were the tunnels built over the last fourteen or fifteen years. Their building intensified after the 2005 unilateral Israeli withdrawal from Gaza. Those were the scores of tunnels that supplied the underground economy that was Hamas driven and mostly controlled with some cooperation of Salafist groups in the Egyptian Sinai. Perhaps there were a hundred tunnels from Sinai into Gaza. What happened since the Egyptian government changed through a coup by President al-Sisi was that he shut down those tunnels. Israel had still not paid enough attention to a whole new tunnel network that was being created as attack tunnels.

Even though Gilad Shalit, the Israeli soldier kidnapped in 2006 and held captive for five years in Gaza, was kidnapped and dragged through one of those new types of attack tunnels. Hamas created a major network of these attack tunnels. So yes there was surprise to the extent these tunnels were actually death tunnels, attack tunnels. Some were million dollar tunnels that you could move cars through. These tunnels also provided, much to the surprise of some in the Israeli Security and Defense Establishment, the whole underground city to protect Hamas operatives, senior members and their families. So yes, there is a real serious question as to why Israel did not know the full extent of this massive network. Hamas leadership intended to send hundreds of Hamas operatives through these tunnels simultaneously next month in order to launch a mega-9/11 attack against Israeli cities.

Tokajer: Could you comment upon the drop in support that Bibi Netanyahu is receiving now? I saw polls that said he went from over 80% favorable to down to about 33% favorable currently as a result of these constant cease fires. The Israeli public actually wanted him to send the military in force into Gaza to stop these attacks.

Diker: That is correct. It is ironic, because it is precisely Netanyahu's strategy of staged attacks against Hamas using Hamas' breaking of the cease fire to create additional legitimacy abroad and support at home for the Israeli army to take the next military step. That has

backfired on his local support. There has been a very large amount of support from the Israeli public for the Israeli Army to go into Gaza in a full-fledged multi-divisional ground assault against Hamas. They wanted the IDF to get rid of all of Hamas' weapons and demilitarize Gaza. Netanyahu chose not to do that, ironically in order to maintain more legitimacy. He felt that the perceived price as discussed by the media in Israel, was pending large IDF Israeli casualties from a massive ground operation. He thought that would please the Israeli public to keep things done from the air. I will say this. It was noted in Israel that he did not launch a ground operation even though it did reflect in lower public support numbers ended up forcing Hamas into an unconditional cease fire without sending in ground forces. The jury is still out as to whether that decision was right or wrong. However, there was a big outcry by many in the public, especially in the South that wanted to finish this problem. They have been dealing with this for years in the South. They have been getting hit by Hamas rockets and mortars for fourteen years and they said enough is enough. No country in the world would put up with it and Israel shouldn't put up with it either. Therefore, they wanted the government to finish the job even if it took another three, four or five months and that didn't happen. The public wants certainty. Number two, the public feels uncertain as to what the government strategy is. The example of that is this unconditional cease fire that nobody really understands what it means. My assessment of this, it is just a calming down. It's a seventh inning stretch. It's just a momentary cease fire before Hamas starts firing again.

Gordon: There was a heated discussion in Qatar last week between PA President Abbas and Hamas leader Khalid Mashal who lives there in luxury. What was that all about and what is the connection to this current war?

Diker: Behind this current war has been the well known enmity between Fatah and Hamas. It was recently reported that the Israeli Security Services uncovered a plot by Hamas to launch mass casualty attacks from the West Bank and at the same time engineer a coup against, Fatah for control in the West Bank and take over the PLO. The Hamas/Fatah competition for control of the PLO has been the Arab/Palestinian narrative that has governed these very bloody relationships between Fatah and Hamas. The Israeli Security Service in searching for the kidnapped and ultimately murdered Israeli teens used the help of the PA, against Hamas. Hamas has positioned Mahmoud Abbas and Fatah as essentially stooges of the Israelis and the United States. Hamas sees itself as the true inheritors of the PLO throne. Further, they have been taking violent actions in order to topple Fatah. We saw an example of that in 2007 in Gaza when Hamas took over. Remember Fatah used to control Gaza until 2007 so this has been a bloody war. The attempts in Qatar were to try to broker the existing shell of unity between these two unfriendly factions. They cooperate on Monday, kill each other on Tuesday and cooperate on

Wednesday. That's exactly what Fatah and Hamas have been doing to one another.

Bates: Has the funding of Hamas continued out of Turkey and Qatar? Why hasn't Washington been doing more to put pressure on those two nations to reduce or preferably cease funding of the Hamas terrorists?

Diker: That is a really complex question Mike. There was a real brouhaha in Israel when the Obama administration through the auspices of Secretary of State Kerry proposed and backed Turkey and Qatar as the two potential brokers for a long term peace agreement for a cease fire. You remember they gathered in Paris just a few weeks ago and there was real displeasure in Israeli government circles over that as opposed to the Israeli full-fledged support for the Egyptians as much more favorable brokers. It's a matter of public record that President Obama has pursued a strategy of engaging political Islam which translated into support for the Muslim Brotherhood. He supported President Morsi in Egypt. He was not exactly thrilled with the actions of President al-Sisi when he overthrew the Muslim Brotherhood government in Egypt. President Obama has made Turkey a key partner. Turkey is a Muslim Brotherhood supporter as is Qatar. While he has come out in favor of Israel's right to defend itself the American administration has never come out in this current war and said Hamas is a terror organization. It really raises questions. At the same time, one does have to say publicly the United States continues to be Israel's major ally in defense, intelligence and in other matters. However, there are real questions that have gone unanswered as to why Israel and the United States are not completely on the same page. Both countries are facing radical Islamic terror on their borders. I remind Americans that Hezbollah at the behest, funding and backing of Iran is sitting in Mexico today working with Mexican drug cartel groups close to America's Southern border.

Tokajer: How do the Israelis view the United States and the rest of the world the situation from their perspective? They seem to only identify the conflict going on in Israel. For instances, we have the Egyptians, the United Arab Emirates that are involved in Libya now. We have ISIS all over Syria and Iraq. We have these Islamic battles going on with hundreds of thousands being killed. Contrast that with hundreds and low thousands being killed in the Israel conflict with Hamas in Gaza.

Diker: The Israeli body politic feels very much alone at this juncture. There is a strong feeling here in Israel that the American people and Congress embrace the Israeli people. There is, to be a little bit cynical about it, probably more support for Israel in the American Congress than there is in the Knesset if you take all of the parties together. That's just an attempt at humor, to express an idea that's very profound in Israel. They really do feel

embraced by the American people. But on the world stage there is a completely disproportionate view of the world towards Israel versus the Palestinians than the much larger problem of radical Islamic terror in the world. No one can quite understand why people in the West refuse to understand that Hamas, the Islamic State formerly ISIS, Al Qaeda, Islamic Jihad, Hezbollah and Iran are all the same in terms of their ultimate goals. That is to kill Americans, kill Israelis, kill Christians, kill Jews, and kill anybody that is not a Muslim in their image. We do not understand why people are not making the connection to radical Islamic terror and have isolated the Palestinian/ Israeli Conflict as if it were some other sort of conflict other than the Jihad in Gaza. It is the same Jihad that attacked the United States on September 11th and twenty-nine times after that trying to penetrate the borders of the United States.

Tokajer: How do the Israeli people view the world accusing them of disproportional use of weaponry against Hamas? Yet the United States may have used much more weaponry in just a short time against ISIS than Israel has used in Gaza during this whole fifty day period.

Diker: I'm unclear as to what is the charge of disproportional force. As former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg said, "If a murderer comes into your house do you call one police officer or do you call the entire police force to come and save you?" That's what, the understanding here is of disproportional force. The disproportional force is that which is used to maintain security and protect the civilian population of any country. People, either with malice of forethought or people who are just ignorant, do not understand it has nothing to do with international law, the use of massive force in order to turn back or kill terrorists. If we were to use the common understanding of proportional force, that would mean that Israel would be entitled to send over three thousand rockets indiscriminately into Gaza because that's what they send in to Israel. Would that be proportional?

Bates: Of course they are blaming it on the death toll but what is ridiculous about that as I have argued many times on this program with callers who somehow think Israel is the bad player here. Even though I think anywhere on the world stage in the modern era if there is a clear good player and a clear bad player it is the Israeli/Palestinian conflict and Israel is clearly the good guy. The example that I always cited is if you are in a military firefight and your enemy is poorly armed and poorly trained they're just firing at you indiscriminately. If your forces are all expert marksmen are you not allowed to take out one of them until they luck out and take out one of you? I mean that's absurd and Israel is using precision munitions. Gazans are just firing indiscriminately hoping to kill civilians in Israel. Rabbi Eric before we began this program you were telling me that Hamas is actually saying that they want precision munitions. What's that about?

Tokajer: Right, the leader of the Hamas in Gaza came out and said they do not purposely fire at civilians in Israel. They just have unguided munitions and if the world will provide them with guided munitions then they will only fire at military installations. It's not their fault that they don't have the equal equipment to not kill civilians.

Diker: Right. Exactly. That is their use of psychological warfare on the part of Hamas. One should applaud their ...

Tokajer: Creativity?

Diker: ... upgrade in use of psychological warfare. That's exactly why they attempted to target our nuclear facilities, our airport, all of our sensitive installations with the weapons that they already had. If they had precision weapons they would be killing children not indiscriminately but very discriminately as their Charter calls for. We have to be very firm in terms of our moral clarity as to whom we are dealing with. We are dealing with an evil, radical Islamic, genocidal, terrorist organization that is dedicated to murdering Jews, Christians, people from the West. That's what they say, that's what they do. So all of this other stuff is pure nonsense and should be ignored.

Bates: While I support Israel completely I must confess that I often don't understand why they are playing so nicely. If I was in charge it would be a lot more like Dresden than Gaza. Let me just point out that Israel, throughout this entire conflict has been providing humanitarian aid into Gaza. Just last week, on the 21st and 22nd of August, there were periods when Israel was bringing into Gaza 232 trucks full of food, medicine and supplies, 262 tons of gas and one hundred seventy-two thousand, two hundred sixty-five gallons of gasoline and in exchange Hamas fired 83 rockets back "during" the crossings! What country in the history of warfare has provided assistance to the people that are attacking them? I can't think of anyone but Israel.

Diker: Your memory is correct and in fact, it's worse than that. It has not been reported in the West, but is clearly well known in Israel, that Hamas systematically refuses international humanitarian delegations to come to Gaza. They have systematically refused to allow injured Palestinian civilians to come to a field hospital that was set up by the State of Israel. This installation on the border outside of Gaza where Israel was prepared with a full contingent of surgeons, nurses, orderlies, specialists to receive Gazans that Hamas had used as human shields and had been injured inadvertently in Israeli strikes against Hamas. Israel was prepared to take care of them by the hundreds. Hamas refused to allow civilians to cross the border into Israeli territory to be given medical care.

Gordon: There is also a blood libel going on. We see it on posters in the US and elsewhere saying that Israel murders Palestinian children. Rabbi Tokajer, you had something on that that we were just discussing?

Tokajer: *Time Magazine* is coming out with a news article which proclaims as blood libel that Israelis are harvesting organs from the Palestinians to make a profit off them. Blood libel goes way back to the 1400's with the Spanish Inquisition, the claim of Jews making matzo out of blood of babies and such but this is a constant thing that comes up. Dan, can you talk about that?

Diker: Frankly what was been uncovered were propaganda sheets that Hamas used to re-energize the 15th century blood libel that Jews use blood of, they didn't even say blood of Christians in this case, but they said blood of Muslims in order to make Matzos on Passover. Hamas in a very sophisticated way, working even in the United States through Muslim Brotherhood backed organizations and in Europe, promoted these blood libels against Israel. These libels have been transformed into what many Americans understand as BDS, Boycotts, Divestitures and Sanctions. The BDS movement is an extension of a terrorist strategy. That is not a grassroots punitive initiative by well meaning people in order to create two states for two peoples solution as many in the United States think it is. It is not that at all. It is war by other means. It is political warfare in order to cause the dissolution of Israel through its criminalization and isolation in the international community. Back of it are these blood libels advanced by Hamas the way the Nazis and Soviets did. As you pointed out Rabbi, the Spanish did that in the Inquisition. It's just a continuation of the same blood libel.

Bates: I've got a question about the Islamic state ISIS, ISILL, whatever name they happen to be going by today. They just beheaded an American journalist, James Foley, and they are threatening to kill more. It is very clear that they pose a threat to the region. Is Israel concerned about their border integrity vis-a-vis ISIS or the Islamic State?

Diker: Let's be clear about what the Islamic State is. The Islamic State is a terrorist network very well funded in Syria and Iraq. Now they are finding their footing, a little more difficult in Southern Lebanon because that is controlled by the Hezbollah an enemy of ISIS. However, they are in Gaza and operatives have been found in the West Bank. From an Israeli point of view a terrorist is a terrorist is a terrorist. If it's Hamas that targets children or executes innocent Palestinians by shooting them as opposed to beheading them or crucifying them as ISIS does, Israel looks at it as all the same. Hamas itself is no less cruel and evil than ISIS. We are surrounded by Hezbollah in Lebanon, ISIS in Syria and in Gaza. Israelis are surrounded by radical Islamic terrorist threat on all sides. ISIS plays a

role in it. There is no additional challenge to Israel's border integrity by them than by anyone else. Hamas is clearly in control in Gaza as Hezbollah is in Southern Lebanon. Those are, the central addresses that Israel looks for when defending their territory.

Bates: I thank Ha Shem that Israel has the Golan Heights because without holding the high ground there it would pose a much greater threat coming out of Syria into Tiberias and along the sea of Galilee.

Diker: Very true.

Bates: The Iron Dome has been very successful intercepting the rockets that have been fired out of Gaza. Now Hamas is firing mortars and Iron Dome is not designed to intercept mortars. How big of a threat are these mortar attacks?

Diker: Mortar attacks are a threat. They claimed the life of that young child, Daniel Tragerman, just the other day and claimed the life of an Israeli today as well. There are only three seconds in between the firing of a mortar and the alert for a person to zip into a protected area. There is virtually no trajectory on mortars. It's very low. It is a dangerous nuisance and one that affects the Southern most communities abutting the Gaza border. The majority of projectiles fired have been these short and medium range rockets. Even with medium range rockets there are only between twenty and sixty seconds to get into a protected area. Iron Dome doesn't protect against mortars and they have been part of the difficulty. They are considered no less dangerous in terms of an overall threat to Israel. This is no tolerance policy for mortars or rockets. There is a no tolerance policy for any of it.

Bates: Dan, thanks much. We've been speaking with Jerry Gordon, Rabbi Eric Tokajer and Dan Diker on this international round table discussion here on 1330 WEBY.

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