

Hudnas

by Isaac Yetiv (November 2014)

Shortly after Arafat signed the Oslo agreement (Sept.1993) he visited the Arab community in Capetown, South Africa. There, he was assailed by the ultras who accused him of selling out by recognizing the “Zionist entity” and abandoning the holy war against the Jews. But he calmly explained that he had acted like the prophet himself who signed the peace agreement of Hudaybieh with his enemies when he was weak militarily and then attacked them two years later and destroyed them and their Arabian tribes. “Am I, God forbid, better than the Prophet?” he concluded rhetorically, to the applause of his audience.

Arafat’s political heirs do not act differently. What the West fails to understand is that in Islam, such concepts as peace, treaty, agreement, accord carry different meanings. They are always temporary, as good as they are good for them, and can be revoked or broken at any time of opportunity. There are many terms to define these temporary arrangements; the most common is called *hudna*.

There were many hudnas in the recent Israel-Hamas war, round three, limited in duration (one day, three days, seven days); the last one signed on August 26, 2014, was misnamed “permanent.” There is no doubt that Hamas didn’t believe in this characterization, and that Israel knew it. So why did they do it?

HAMAS: is still alive, in charge of the territory, and “negotiating.” They stood up to the most powerful military in the Middle-East; that’s their best currency of power and success, and that’s a victory for them, duly celebrated with dancing and shooting in the air. They have been elevated to equal interlocutor, courted by their archenemy Egypt and by the US and the Europeans, thus putting their rivals Abbas and his Fatah in the cellar and increasing their popularity among their people. This will serve them well in the next showdown with Fatah, whether in elections or in military confrontation when, at stake, will be the West Bank and the control of all Palestinians.

They have manipulated the hudna system to their advantage, dictating the yes and no at will—and Israel followed—and changing the media narrative from “the savage terrorist organization that launches thousands of rockets against innocent civilians in Israel and uses its children as human shields, sacrificing them for political gains” to “a wronged victim of Israeli oppression that had deprived them of their most elementary rights such as airport and seaport and open borders with Egypt and Israel and an expanded sea zone for fishing”...While the

first two demands had not yet been granted – they will be negotiated later—it seems that the other two had been agreed to. The release of prisoners “with blood on their hands” may follow. Again, as with the previous two rounds, terrorism has been rewarded.

On the other column of the ledger, what should “normally” be counted as a negative result for Hamas, i.e. the killing of more than 2,000 Gazans—half of them military, says Israel—and the devastation of their cities, does not faze them a bit. To the contrary, that was their best weapon, and they glory in it. They have cleverly studied the Jewish psyche, their compassion and humanitarianism, and exploited it to the hilt. While the Hamas rockets rained on its civilian population fleeing to underground shelters, Israel continued to supply food, fuel, and electricity to Gaza, and a field hospital to take care of their wounded; and before bombing in retaliation, the Israelis dropped thousands of leaflets, even “texted” warnings to the civilian population to leave, and take with them, of course, the terrorists who launched the missiles. And we recently learned that the Hamas Gazan leader Haniyeh’s daughter and mother-in-law have been treated (maybe for free? I.Y.) in Ichilov hospital in Tel-Aviv (1000 Gazans are treated yearly in Ichilov only, among many Israeli hospitals). The 4000 years of mankind bloody conflicts have never seen such “humanitarian compassion.”

So what are 2000 lives to Hamas if they can inflame the world against Israel’s “atrocities” and cause a recrudescence of the scourge of antisemitism with an intensity never seen before since Hitler!

As for the devastation, the other “compassionate and humanitarian” suckers, the Europeans and the Americans, will do the “reconstruction,” as they did in 2009 and 2012, just a few more billions of dollars, disbursed by the US and EU taxpayers. The US has been paying to the PA and indirectly to Hamas an average of 500 million dollars a year; it pays 77% of the UNRWA budget, an organization that should have disappeared 40 years ago. Secretary of State John Kerry has just promised, for the reconstruction of Gaza, 212 million dollars more to what was already pledged. I submit that these payments that have enriched many politicians and terrorists have contributed to the expansion and the strengthening of terror.

ISRAEL: Why did Israel accept this ceasefire? True, this was a traumatic experience for the population and, this time, not only the Southern localities around Gaza but practically all of Israel has been affected. But the majority of the Jewish population felt that the job was not finished as their leaders promised repeatedly. And it showed in the polls: Netanyahu’s popularity, which reached 82% in July, dropped to 55% after the temporary ceasefires, and sank to 38% on August 27, 2014, one day after he signed on the “permanent” ceasefire. Many of his ministers were furious because he didn’t bring it to a vote for fear it wouldn’t pass.

Let us try to analyze the situation as objectively as possible. There are three main reasons that weighed heavily on the decision: Most of the Israelis I talked to, including some pundits and politicians, found the main reason to be the excessive number of casualties that "finishing the job" would have required: casualties in the "front" (*hazit*) and in the "back" (*'oref*) among civilians, on both sides.

The second reason is the fear of the "world's" reaction and more antisemitism in Europe, at the UN, and even in the US government which they never trusted.

While these two are real, I believe in a third explanation which seems preponderant: strangely enough, it is the fear of success. Militarily, Israel could reconquer the Gaza strip (as many on the right, including cabinet members, have been demanding from the beginning of the hostilities), decimate the Hamas leadership who will be dead, or prisoners, or in exile. But then Israel will become the occupant sovereign, responsible for the welfare of a hostile vanquished population of 1.8 million that would certainly spawn guerrilla warfare, more repression and more casualties (as occurred in Southern Lebanon in 2000, which prompted then PM Ehud Barak to order a hasty withdrawal of all the military forces.) And then, what to do?

Some say "give it back to Abbas!" Israel does not trust him and his capacity to govern the Strip. First, it could make him more intransigent in his demands to not be accused of selling out, and also, with no Israeli boots on the ground, new terrorist groups could emerge, maybe fiercer than Hamas, and topple him in Gaza and maybe even in the West Bank.

Others say, "Give Gaza to the UN," like UNIFIL in the North. I don't believe the UN will accept the headache and even if it does, they will only give free rein to terror and tie the hands of Israel which could not retaliate for fear of hurting the UN "observers." And the UN is not a friend, not even neutral.

Another possibility is to return it to Egypt which controlled it for 19 years (1948-67). (Begin made the huge mistake of NOT returning to *the status quo ante* and giving Gaza back to Egypt with the Sinai at the signing of the peace treaty.) But Egypt does not need this "poisonous gift."

So it seems that Israel has deliberately chosen "the lesser of two, or four, evils," very conscious of the fact that it will have to face another provocation, followed by another retaliation, another "world" outcry

and condemnation etc. It has not lifted the blockade on Gaza but it has not "demilitarized" it as was its original declared intent. *A propos* "demilitarization," it is worth remembering that

the Oslo II agreement, signed in 1995 by Israel and the Palestinians, and witnessed by the US, calls for “complete demilitarization of Gaza and the West Bank, “allowing only a police force. Netanyahu was not asking for the moon, but only for the implementation of agreements. But we saw what “agreement” means.

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