

Israel and Brussels: The "Merely Wounded" in Terror Bombings

by Louis René Beres (April 2016)

Back in 2009, the now-infamous *Goldstone Report* was first released by the U.N.'s Human Rights Council. Incontestably, it took a blatantly one-sided look at Israel's *Operation Cast Lead* in Gaza, choosing, in its biased assessment, to ignore all antecedent anti-Israel terrorism. Perhaps most conspicuously disregarded, by Judge Goldstone, was this: *Israel's purposefully limited military operation had represented an indispensable self-defense action, one that was also supported by long-standing, codified and customary, international law.*

In essence, unreported by Goldstone seven years ago, was that *Cast Lead* had been initiated reluctantly by Israel, and then only to ward off unending and potentially still-escalating Palestinian terrorism.

Oddly, even today, even after Brussels, the legally unsupportable idea of terror-bombing as permissible "resistance" is too-widely accepted, especially in the Islamic Middle East. Usually, in such crudely supportive circles, this tactic is further celebrated as "heroic." All such views ignore not merely the obvious violations of law, particularly violations of the basic or "peremptory" principle of *discrimination* or *distinction* (carefully avoiding harms to noncombatants), but also the authentic medical and human consequences of what these terrorists so cheerfully unleash.

For Brussels, for Europe generally, and also for America, Israel remains both a warning and a microcosm. Israel has suffered literally uncountable terror attacks since the 1993 start of the *Oslo "Peace" Accords*. Whether perpetrated by *Hamas*, *Islamic Jihad*, or the *Fatah Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades*, all of these attacks have intentionally killed and maimed large numbers of unprotected civilians, usually women and children. Sometimes, post-attack casualty counts have referred to these maimed victims as "merely wounded," but this is a notably

grave under-representation of what is being suffered.

To be sure, this under-representation is already understood by the surviving victims of this week's ISIS attacks in Brussels.

What does it mean to be *merely wounded* in an Islamic "martyrdom" attack? The answer is exactly the same for the victims of an ISIS terror attack, as for the victims of Palestinian terror groups. For the victims, of course, any differences in ideology or objective between these perpetrators are utterly irrelevant.

This means, among other things, that by looking back systematically at Israeli terror-victims, we can learn more about what actually happened to the recent terror-victims in Brussels, and also what could still be experienced elsewhere in the intersecting European and American futures.

Sometimes, the painfully human impact of terrorist bombings can be made at least partially evident on radiographic images. For too long, X-rays of terror bombing victims in Israel have shown hundreds of metallic fragments, ranging in size from millimeters to whole nails, embedded in the victims' bodies – literally, from head to foot. Here, materials that had been created originally by civilized human beings for suitably constructive purposes, have been transformed by Islamic terrorists into the cruelest of projectiles.

In Brussels, as in Israel, nails, screws, nuts, and ball-bearings were included in the attackers' plan to maximize lethal effects, and also to inflict gratuitous suffering. These objects, sometimes after being dipped in rat poison, or other available toxins, are deliberately propelled into skin, flesh, and bone with the equivalent ballistic force of bullets.

There is more. Usually, the nails fly head first, presenting themselves to the attending radiologist in a strangely surreal yet also orderly arrangement within the victims' bodies. Many are embedded "only" to the depth of their entrance sites. Others burrow their way in more deeply, and lodge palpably under the skin, where the examining physician can actually touch and feel their alien presence.

Others must be removed after hours of meticulous surgical exploration. Still others enter the body far more deeply, perforating and lacerating vital organs

at random. In Israel, CT scans of these victims' heads have generally indicated blood, air, metal, and bone fragments displacing normal brain tissue.

Belgian physicians can plausibly expect the same pattern of injuries from the Brussels attacks.

The "lucky" patient who has somehow survived the initial explosive "insult" will often require subsequent surgeries to repair badly-damaged organs. Others, as we have already seen in Brussels (following more "typical" attacks in Tel-Aviv and Jerusalem), may sustain fractures, burns, amputations, vascular injuries, paralysis, blindness, or brain damage. Nowadays, a collapsed lung or perforated colon – an *insult* that would ordinarily be considered a fully major injury – is taken by the physician as a blessing.

After all, the victim here, whether in Brussels, Tel-Aviv, or Jerusalem, is *merely wounded*.

Although some terror-bombing victims may recover physically, and return to a more or less "normal" life, many more will require an entire lifetime of ongoing rehabilitation. Some, of course, will be impaired permanently. All will suffer serious psychological effects that will need complex and expensive treatment. Significantly, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and anxiety will affect not only the actual victims of any such attack, but also large swaths of nearby populations.

There is more. The physical pain experienced by the *merely wounded* victims of terrorist-bombings may be further enlarged by the corollary destruction of human language. This ignored linguistic debasement, which cannot be captured in any precise radiographic images, can still produce a visceral reversion to certain pre-language human sounds. What Judge Goldstone had failed to hear, in his manifestly uneven assessment of Israel's earlier *Operation Cast Lead*, and what the rest of us may now still fail to acknowledge, from those newly victimized innocents in Brussels, are those uniquely pitiable moans that always evade statistical measurement.

In the end, it is inevitably these manifestly unscientific sounds, hideous cries and whispers that are fully anterior to any learned speech – *and sounds common to all Islamic terror-victim populations* – that can best explain the very deepest meanings of "merely wounded."

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