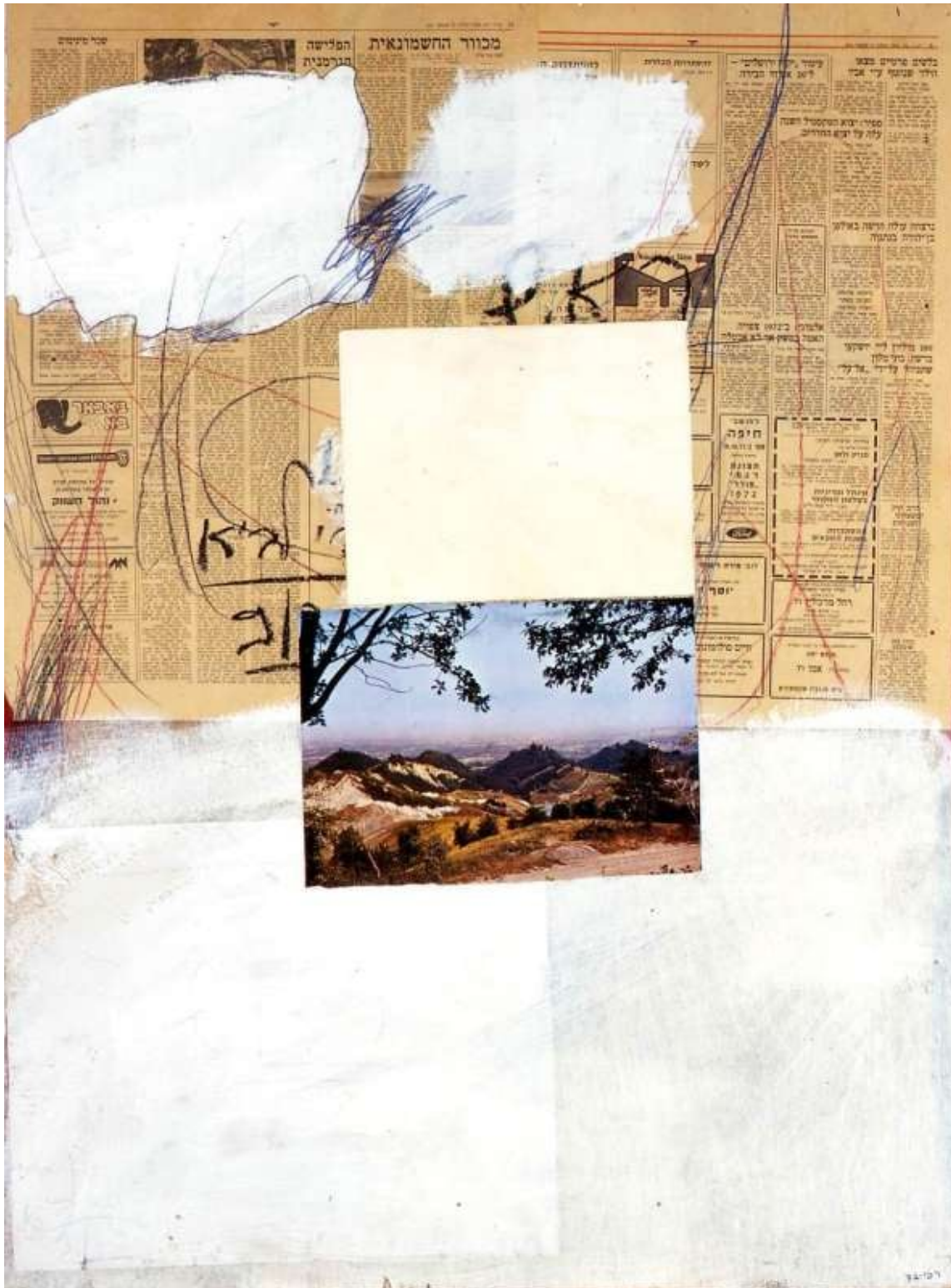


Proportionality, proportionality, proportionality

By [Walter E. Block](#) (May 2025)



Untitled (Raffi Lavie, 1972)

The critics of Israel have long been blaming this country for its lack of proportionality in its response to the brutal, sadistic, barbaric attacks on the part of Hamas on October 7, 2023. Proportionality, proportionality, proportionality is

pretty much all we heard from them.

For example the [Guardian](#): "Israel's use of disproportionate force is a long-established tactic." IMEU: "The [Dahiya Doctrine](#) is an Israeli military doctrine that calls for the use of massive, disproportionate force and the deliberate targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure." [BBC](#): "Israel's Gaza response 'wholly disproportionate' –UN rights chief." [Spain's PM](#): "Israel's 'disproportionate response' in Gaza could destabilize the world."

This terrorist organization purposefully murdered some 1200 innocent civilians. How many equally innocent Palestinians did the IDF murder? Zero; none; not a single one; nada. Yes, there was widely disproportionate and regrettable collateral damage imposed on the Gazans. According to some estimates, it was in the neighborhood of 50,000 deaths. But none of this, not in a single case, was this due to the purposeful action on the part of the IDF. Instead, that military did everything it could to protect those people. It first dropped leaflets on them, not bombs, warning them of incoming danger.

How, then, did they die, so many of them? It was the fault, solely, of Hamas. This terrorist organization used its own people as shields, planning rocket launchers, armaments, weapons, shells, bombs, in hospitals, Mosques, schools, etc.

What was Israel to do in self-defense? Give these placements a free pass? Hamas certainly would not have respected Jewish civilians if the positions were reversed. No military would do any such thing. That would be a recipe for national suicide. Proportionality indeed.

Now that the latest Israel war is in the process of winding down, another disproportionality has arisen. Based on the cease fire agreement, Hamas will free a few dozen Israeli hostages, and a few dead bodies. In return, the Jewish state will release about 2000 prisoners, many guilty of capital

crimes. Where is the proportionality there? Where are all the commentators (see some of them above) who bitterly complained of the lack of proportionality in Israel's military response to Hamas? They are nowhere, that is where. They are strangely silent.

But the disproportion does not end with mere numbers. None of the Israeli hostages was ever accused, let alone convicted, of any crime. They were innocently attending a music festival, or living, peacefully, in nearby kibbutzim. Even the Palestinians allege no such thing. The same cannot be said of the jailbirds recently freed from Israeli prisons. They are, instead, hardened criminals, murderers, terrorists. Yahya Sinwar, released in a previous disproportionate exchange, was the mastermind of the October 7, 2023 abomination. How many new Sinwars are included in this group of 2000? More than you can shake a stick at, one can only presume.

There is yet another disproportion. The Jewish hostages released by Hamas were brutalized, starved, malnourished, emaciated. Those freed by the Jewish state were hale and hearty. They were treated decently while in prison. Further, when Hamas released Jewish prisoners, they turned the procedure into a circus, into a spectacle. They humiliated these hostages. No such occurrence took place on the other side.

When will Israel learn not only to win the war, but the peace as well? The present mutual exchange is far from the only one that was wildly disproportionate. Previously, a single Israeli soldier was traded for about 1000 Palestinian inmates of Jewish jails.

So the next time that Israel's enemies attack it and this country retaliates, if the critics had any decency which they do not, they will adopt a dignified silence when the suffering is "disproportionate." If the future resembles the past, the disproportionality will be the fault of the Arabs, not of the

Jews.

Proportionality, indeed.

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Walter E. Block is Harold E. Wirth Endowed Chair and Professor of Economics, College of Business, Loyola University New Orleans, and senior fellow at the Mises Institute. He earned his PhD in economics at Columbia University in 1972. He has taught at Rutgers, SUNY Stony Brook, Baruch CUNY, Holy Cross and the University of Central Arkansas. He is the author of more than 600 refereed articles in professional journals, three dozen books, and thousands of op eds (including the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal* and numerous others). He lectures widely on college campuses, delivers seminars around the world and appears regularly on television and radio shows. He is the Schlarbaum Laureate, Mises Institute, 2011; and has won the Loyola University Research Award (2005, 2008) and the Mises Institute's Rothbard Medal of Freedom, 2005; and the Dux Academicus award, Loyola University, 2007. Prof. Block counts among his friends Ron Paul and Murray Rothbard. He was converted to libertarianism by Ayn Rand. Block is old enough to have played chess with Friedrich Hayek and once met Ludwig von Mises, and shook his hand. Block has never washed that hand since. So, if you shake his hand (it's pretty dirty, but what the heck) you channel Mises.

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