

Carl Bildt Snipes At Israel

by Hugh Fitzgerald



As is well known, whenever there is a natural or man-made disaster, anywhere in the world, Israel is always among the first to offer aid, beginning with Human Locator Devices to rescue those still under the rubble. It sends medical teams, medical equipment, medicines, field hospitals. And Israel has a long record, too, of providing hospital care to non-Israeli Arabs, too, such as soldiers and civilians wounded in Syria by Assad's forces. Thousands of Palestinian Arab children have been treated for free in Israeli hospitals by surgeons working for the "Save A Child's Heart" Foundation, their lives saved by the "Zionist enemy." Even Ismail Haniyeh, the leader of the terror group Hamas, scarcely a month after Hamas and Israel ended a war, brought his daughter, who had been suffering complications from the treatment she had received in a Palestinian hospital, to Israel for treatment. Haniyeh knew, despite all the malicious propaganda about "the Jews" that he himself had helped spread, that the Israelis were not monsters, that Israeli doctors would give his daughter the

very best treatment, and save her life – which is exactly what they did.

When the Beirut waterfront exploded, Israel immediately offered all kinds of medical aid. Four major hospitals, the Galilee Medical Center in Nahariya, Rambam Medical Center in Haifa, Ziv Hospital in Safed and Sheba Medical Center in Ramat Gan all offered to treat Lebanese patients. Several days have gone by since those offers, and there is still only silence from the Lebanese government. Beirut is afraid to accept Israeli help, because of Hezbollah's likely reaction, and afraid to turn it down, because of the anger that would cause among many Lebanese. Silence has become the better part of valor.

But others did comment on Israel's offers of assistance to Lebanon.

Pride of place must be given to Sweden's former Prime Minister, Carl Bildt, [here](#).

A former Swedish leader sparked a flurry of protest online after appearing to suggest Tuesday that Israel does not normally offer aid to enemy countries during disasters, as Israel continued to offer to help treat Lebanon's injured.

Israel announced Tuesday night that it had reached out to offer humanitarian help to Lebanon after a massive blast rocked Beirut, killing at least 100 [now 154] and leaving large parts of the capital in ruins. The disaster has pushed Lebanon, already straining under an unprecedented economic crisis, to the brink, and hospitals have struggled to cope with the thousands of injured.

"The only encouraging thing in this catastrophe in Lebanon is that even Israel has been quick in offering humanitarian aid," tweeted former Swedish prime minister Carl Bildt.

Strategic Affairs Minister Orit Farkash Hachohen [of Israel]

shot back at Bildt that Israel does not shy away from offering aid to countries it considers foes...

Its offers of aid to enemy countries are almost always turned down and some have accused Israel of rubble-washing – using disaster recovery to burnish its image.

A cruel and absurd accusation. What should Israel do? Not offer aid to countries in need after a disaster, so as not to be accused of “using disaster recovery to burnish its image”? And why should Israel, in offering aid, be the only state accused of this so-called “rubble washing”? Could it not be said of other countries as well? Or can we recognize that Israel is in fact a Good Samaritan among the nations, quick off the mark with help, and deserves – though it does not ask for nor expect our praise?

Bildt, who was Sweden’s premier from 1991 to 1994 and its foreign minister from 2006 to 2014, is a frequent critic of Israel’s right-wing government. He did not offer a reply to Farkash or others who criticized him online over the comment.

Is it possible that Carl Bildt, who was Sweden’s Foreign Minister for eight years, never noticed that Israeli doctors and field hospitals were always being sent wherever there was need and a willingness to accept aid from Israel? Was he really unaware that Israel has unstintingly offered aid to Arab and Muslim countries, too, including Turkey, which accepted such aid after an earthquake in 2011, and to Iran and Iraq, after their earthquakes in 2017, but both countries promptly turned the Israeli offer down?

Did Carl Bildt, who has a long record of antipathy to Israel, not feel a twinge of embarrassment when caught out with his tweet about how “even Israel” had offered assistance, as if the scale of the disaster in Beirut had led the Jewish state to begrudgingly offer what, in fact, it always offers eagerly,

and immediately?

Did Bildt note the huge outpouring of human sympathy for the Lebanese from Israelis on social media? Did he come across the Israeli fundraising efforts for the people of Lebanon? What did he think of the Tel Aviv city hall, right in Rabin Square, which was lit up in the colors of the Lebanese flag in a sign of solidarity? Anything? Nothing? What has Sweden offered to Lebanon? Any signs of human solidarity in Stockholm beyond the standard boilerplate of mechanical compassion, with Sweden's Prime Minister Lofgren stating that "our thoughts are with the victims of the devastating explosion in Beirut. We extend our condolences, support and heartfelt sympathies to the people of Lebanon." Condolences, support, heartfelt sympathies. Sorry, not good enough. Were there any offers to treat Lebanese wounded in Swedish hospitals? No. Why not? Are there any reports of Swedish doctors, medical equipment, or field hospitals on their way to Lebanon? Again, no. Why not? Perhaps Carl Bildt has an explanation.

A little rewrite of that offensive tweet is called for. Carl Bildt need only change "**even Israel has been quick in offering humanitarian aid**" to "**Israel, as usual, has been quick to offer humanitarian aid.**" How about that, Carl? Why not, in regard to tiny but big-hearted Israel, for once do the truthful and the handsome thing?

First published in