

Israeli soldiers don't have the luxury of grief



by Phyllis Chesler

In Israel, our soldiers are fighting heroically, but they are also being killed in combat.

In Israel, so I've been told, one soldier who had been allowed to return home for 24 hours left her family and went to the basement to sleep in their safe room. What she'd seen in the south and Gaza, what she now knew, compelled her to do so.

Young Israelis today understand more about Jewish history than they ever had to before. They are living a replay of it on steroids. Some former "peaceniks" no longer believe that they

can trust, live with, live near or employ Arab Gazan civilians. One wonders what this means in terms of the pro-Hamas Arabs in Judea and Samaria. This question is a very serious one.

In 1980, when I was interviewed for the front page of *Yediot Aharonot* about the return of antisemitism, most Israelis with whom I spoke rejected the information. They gently but firmly explained to me that this was simply business as usual between one nation and another. But I had just returned from a U.N. conference in Copenhagen—the precursor to the notoriously antisemitic 2000 Durban conference—and sadly, I knew they were wrong.

Now their children and grandchildren have no choice but to grapple with the fact that we have not escaped Jewish history; although this time around, we have a blessed and powerful army to fight for us (may God protect its soldiers). Our young are called upon to sacrifice their lives for us, as they've done in war after war.

Earlier this century, the same took place in Jenin, the terrorist hotbed from which numerous suicide bombers left to blow up Israeli civilians in buses, cafes and at Passover seders:

As we all now know, the “Jenin Massacre” was a lie. It never happened.

For two years, terrorists attacked Israeli civilians non-stop. In March of 2002, they murdered 100 Israeli civilians. In April of 2002, a suicide bomber exploded a bomb at the Park Hotel in Netanya, just as Jews were seated at their Passover

seeder tables. This was a final straw. Reservists voluntarily flew home to Israel from all over the world. Most of the [human bombs](#) had come from Jenin. It was time to [shut Jenin down](#).

Israeli soldiers went in on foot to Jenin, not only to prevent Palestinian civilian casualties but also because world opinion would not allow Israel to defend herself properly. The relentless sacrifice exacted by the world meant that 24 Israeli soldiers had to (needlessly) die in the siege in Jenin. The Israelis went from booby-trapped house to booby-trapped house and were easy prey for snipers, rockets, grenades, etc. For their efforts, Israel was falsely accused of committing a massacre in Jenin.

According to [Brett Goldberg](#), contrary to myth, Israeli soldiers in Jenin not only gave out food and water but gave up their rations to civilians. They stocked up on candies for the children and diapers for infants. Israeli soldiers did not confiscate or destroy civilian property. They slept on floors so as not to soil beds. Israeli soldiers systematically rolled up oriental carpets to shield them from their muddy military boots. They left notes apologizing for any damage and thanking the absentee homeowner for their "hospitality."

While a very hot and terrible war continues to rage in Gaza, here in the Diaspora we have also experienced lesser versions of the globalized intifada: There have been physical attacks, menacing threats, campus insurrections and riots. Roads to airports, bridges, train stations and city centers have been blocked. Hateful and vulgar marchers have polluted our cities with pro-Hamas flags, horns, megaphones, drums and shrieking slogans of genocidal hatred.

Last night, a dear friend visited me. She was outraged by

these “demonstrations.” She described confronting one such demonstration in Woodstock, New York, carried out by “paid activists.” When one demonstrator put her hands on her, my friend pushed back hard.

“Who do you think you are?” she said. “Both my parents had numbers on their arms. I will not be quiet as you tell lies about Israel and the Jews.”

She, like so many of us, has already lost what she once considered friends. “What friends?” she asked. “If this is who they are, part of a pro-Nazi movement, I can never be friends with them.”

What has made my own dis-invitations and lost “friends” worthwhile are the letters I sometimes receive. Here’s one from an Israeli mother whose daughter narrowly escaped death at the Nova festival ravaged by Hamas. It both humbled and uplifted me:

My kids are glad to know you are writing about soldiers. Please continue with this. My daughter was supposed to be at the rave. She received WhatsApps from friends and comrades while they were being raped and murdered. She has no time for the luxury of grief. She was called to reserves immediately and proudly serves. My son is a badass (in a special unit). He too has no time for grief. They have lost precious loved ones and friends. They see how the world portrays them and Israel and they know the truth. When someone like you writes articles that make sense and are truthful and have the power and capacity to educate others, they smile for a moment or two. We loved your current article about soldiers. Thank you, Phyllis. Please continue to write.

I will. Your words mean everything to me. I am privileged

beyond measure.

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