

Respectfully Requesting a Furlough—but From Whom?

By Phyllis Chesler

I admit it—at long last, I am suffering from some kind of battle fatigue.

I've been on the front lines of the cognitive war against the Jews, against Israel, and against the West for so long that I suddenly cannot bear to follow the ongoing and continuous details of how hard Israel has to fight for its survival, against what amounts to psychotic global defamation.



As has been noted, Israel is fighting a war of self-defense on many fronts; fighting back against Hamas, Hezbollah, the Houthis, Yemen, Qatar, and Iran, but also against the war against it launched by the world-wide media, which has set fire to Western campuses, academic organizations, sports stadiums, street demonstrations, and against individuals who

are visibly Jewish, including Jewish students. There is one more ongoing war, namely the one that's been instigated by a dissident group of Israelis against their current government as well as another galvanized by dissident Jewish virtue-signalers in America.

Count them. We've all been covering at least eight wars against the Jews and against the truth. I've probably missed a few; there are so many.

Very much like Democrats in America, these Israeli dissidents absolutely will not allow their elected administrations to proceed without daily pushback and aggressive, highly personal confrontations. They honestly believe that they are fighting the Good Fight against corruption, tyranny, misogyny, and racism. They have no faith in their duly elected officials. The Israelis are more embittered by the failures of their government to prevent the 10/7 atrocity than they seem to be enraged by the barbaric pogrom committed by Hamas/Iran.

Some of the hostage families are so blinded by their torment and suffering that they are willing to sacrifice all the coming generations in order to rescue one of their own.

So human. So understandable, so very heartbreaking. But one cannot defend one's country with only this in mind. I may live afar, but I will never, ever forget the merciful exchange of Gilad Shalit for 1,000 Palestinian prisoners with blood on their hands, including one Yahya Sinwar, the mastermind of 10/7.

Oh yes, there must and there will be a reckoning about the Israeli intelligence and chain-of-command failures that led to 10/7.

But what about Hamas's many bloody deeds? Who will hold them accountable—them, their paymasters, and all the civilians who agree with both their tactics and their larger religious vision of rendering the entire Middle East “judenrein” from

the river to the sea? Who will judge the United Nations and the International Criminal Court for their non-stop lies against Israel and their support for Hamas's actions as somehow justified because they, too, fervently believe Big Lies, including the charges that Israel is guilty of settler colonialism, apartheid, and occupation?

And, pray tell, who will investigate the complicity of the entire world for siding with the rapists and murderers, the Jew-haters everywhere? The funders of all the pro-Hamas demonstrations that really swung into even greater action around the world once the sight of Jewish blood, Jewish vulnerability, became so visible?

How dare I claim battle fatigue? I was not tortured and murdered on 10/7. I've not been fighting on the ground in Gaza or in Yehuda and Shomron. I was not taken hostage as 255 Israeli civilians were; there are only 24 precious, precious hostage souls who are believed to still be alive, despite being beaten, starved, sadistically tortured, deprived of air; I have not physically fallen in battle as 1,851 young Israeli soldiers, civilians, police officers, and ISA agents already have. I am not one of the countless innocents who have been wounded, perhaps for life, or who've "merely" been disabled for a very long time. I am not one of the thousands, or hundreds of thousands, who've been internally exiled, traumatized, who are still awakened by the sound of sirens, who must still scramble to a shelter before a Hamas rocket hits.

I have not buried my child or attended the funeral of a close relative or that of a neighbor or the rites for one of my students—as so many others have.

And yet: Like so many others, my having read every line I could find immediately after Arafat's Intifada of 2000, or perhaps even before that, having scoured every line about the Islamic bombings of the World Trade Center; every line about

Bin Laden's airplane destruction of the Twin Towers, which once stood in my own fair city; reading every line Bin Laden wrote about his war against the Jews and the West; every line I could find about every Jihad attack against Israel and against Americans and against Europeans and against other Arabs, Muslims, and infidels (especially Christians and Hindus), pretty much everywhere in the world; as many analyses of the many wars that Israel has had to fight in just the 21st century—I admit it: I'm exhausted. No, I have not given up caring nor have I changed my point of view.

I think I need a furlough, some kind of break from the front lines of the cognitive war. Why do I say this? To my consternation, lately, I find that my eyes begin to glaze over when I'm reading the coverage. I think I cannot bear to absorb any more of the horrendous details and to keep them stored in my memory so that I may call upon them when I write an article or do an interview.

Look: There are others now, newer, younger, fresher to the battle who are doing all that they can. I read Eve Barlow, Brooke Goldstein, Yosef Haddad, Benjamin Kerstein, Shabbos Kesternbaum, Hen Mazzig, Yasmine Mohammed, Noa Tishby—and my long-time stand-by allies: Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Benjamin Balint, Anne Bayefsky, Avi Bell, Andrew Bostom, Alan Dershowitz, Basem Eid, Seth Franzman, Caroline Glick, Natasha Hausdorff, Charles Jacobs, Eugene Kontorovich, Richard Landes, Liel Leibowitz, Nitsana Darshan Leitner, Lori Lowenthal Marcus, Douglas Murray, Hillel Neuer, Fiamma Nirenstein, Asra Nomani, Andrew Pessin, Melanie Phillips, Daniel Pipes, Laurie B. Regan, Liora Rez, Greg Romann, Fern Sidman, Charles Small, Rochel Sylvetsky, Khaled Abu-Toameh, Jonathan Tobin, Ritchie Torres, Bat Ye'or, Elder of Zion.

Forgive me: I cannot name everyone, but I'm counting on them to continue on the front lines of the propaganda war. I know they will. As for myself? I might take a brief literary turn or two, perhaps write some opera and film reviews. I'm not

going far. Just need to rest my head a bit.

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