

# Who Is To Blame for Israeli Shirel Golan's suicide?

By Phyllis Chesler

**It was an angry public meeting**, and the families were loudly and bitterly blaming the government for failing to do more to rescue and help heal the victims of the terrorist attack.

One woman yelled: "My son was murdered because of your incompetence." A man shouted: "We hear lies."

Here's how the presiding witness responded: "Blame should be directed at one source and one source alone: the terrorists who killed our loved ones."

The year was 2004, the Mayor was Rudolph W. Giuliani, and the hearing was about criticisms of the New York City emergency response efforts.

When people, whether they are Americans or Israelis, have been attacked by foreign terrorists, they tend to scapegoat anyone close at hand, such as their own leaders who are supposed to be in charge of dealing with attacks on their countries.

This very scene is being played out again today, both in the media and on the ground in terms of Israeli, Shirel Golan (z'l), a survivor of the Nova Festival pogrom, who was **rescued** by an Israeli police officer on 10/7 but who committed suicide a year later, on her 22nd birthday.

Some headlines scream that her family, especially her brother, as well as other survivors and friends, blame the Israeli government for Shirel's suicide.

USA Today's headline: "Israel 100% accountable for Shirel Golan's death by suicide, brother says."

“Ha’aretz’s headline: “Shirel was murdered twice. She survived Hamas terrorists but not Israeli bureaucracy.”

Ha’aretz quotes a friend, Yael Tobol, who “expresses the sense of abandonment that she and many like her feel.

Another friend, Victor Hayun, said: “I say this as a Likud member; Bibi screwed up here...these are children who saw murder and rape before their eyes. The state messed up.” (Of course, Ha’aretz fails to note that Shirel was actually rescued by an Israeli policeman.)

What is going on?



Family members visit the site of the Supernova music festival massacre, six months after the October 7 Hamas terror assault, in Re'im forest, near the Gaza border, April 7, 2024. (Chaim Goldberg/Flash90)

In 1977, social psychologist, Lee D. Ross, suggested that a form of “cognitive bias” led people to “underestimate situational influences, i.e. “to minimize the

influence of the surrounding situation and the broader context of behavior.” This became known as a cognitive “attribution error.” People focus on what is easier to perceive, and tend to simplify complex phenomena.

We often tend to blame victims for their own suffering; a rape victim brought it on herself by how she dressed, where she went; counter-intuitively, victims of incest blame the mothers who did not protect them more than they do the fathers who sexually violated them.

Thus, in Golan’s tragic case, rather than blame Islamic

terrorism, Hamas, Gazans, Iran and/or the global war against the Jews (that's far too complex, abstract, and quite distant), some Israelis, themselves grief-stricken and traumatized, fall back on blaming what is visibly present and close at hand—the state, the army, the police, who are supposed to protect them from danger.

I asked Israeli psychoanalyst, Aner Govrin, whether there were many more such post 10/7 suicides. He said: “None that I know of.”

I had feared that there would have been many more given the national trauma, the continuous attacks, the deaths of so many soldiers and police officers in battle, the incessant red alarms, the dislocation of hundreds of thousands from their homes in both southern and northern Israel, the wounded, with no end in sight—and then factor in the online hate, the vicious denials that 10/7 really happened, the feminist silence about 10/7, the media focus on the suffering of Gazans-only, the worldwide blaming of Israel, who is the real and only victim here, as having provoked the pogrom because of its alleged persecution, oppression, and occupation of Gaza.

But, while Israelis may only be human, nevertheless, Israelis, as well as Jews everywhere are an amazingly resilient and socially conscious people. Israel and global Jewry are doing what no other country under siege by seven armies can do. Yet, Israel alone is criticized for not doing even more—while Ukraine is not being held to an Israeli standard of care for its people.

Dr. Shiri Daniels, the Director of ERAN, the Association for emotional first aid in Israel, is quoted as saying: “An increase in suicide can be a delayed response to the powerful national trauma that the war brings.” Her organization has received 172,000 calls and online requests for help from people suffering from anxiety, stress, and psychological trauma since 10/7.

Professor Yair Bar-Haim of the National Center for Traumatic Stress and Resilience estimated that (going forward), “that up to 30,000 Israelis could develop PTSD from the Oct 7 attack and subsequent wars, stressing the already strained mental health system.”

My God! I’m here, in New York City, and after a year of monitoring the hot military war and the even more consequential cognitive war against the Jews, from time to time, I sometimes suffer a sudden and unnatural fatigue. I’ve joked that I, and others like me, may actually be suffering from a kind of secondary form of PTSD. Any human being would feel this way—at least one who spends her every waking hour thinking about the war by barbarians against Western post-Enlightenment civilization; the war against history, fact-based truth, language, and reason, and of course, the incessant war against the Jews.

Israel just happens to be ground zero in this much larger war.