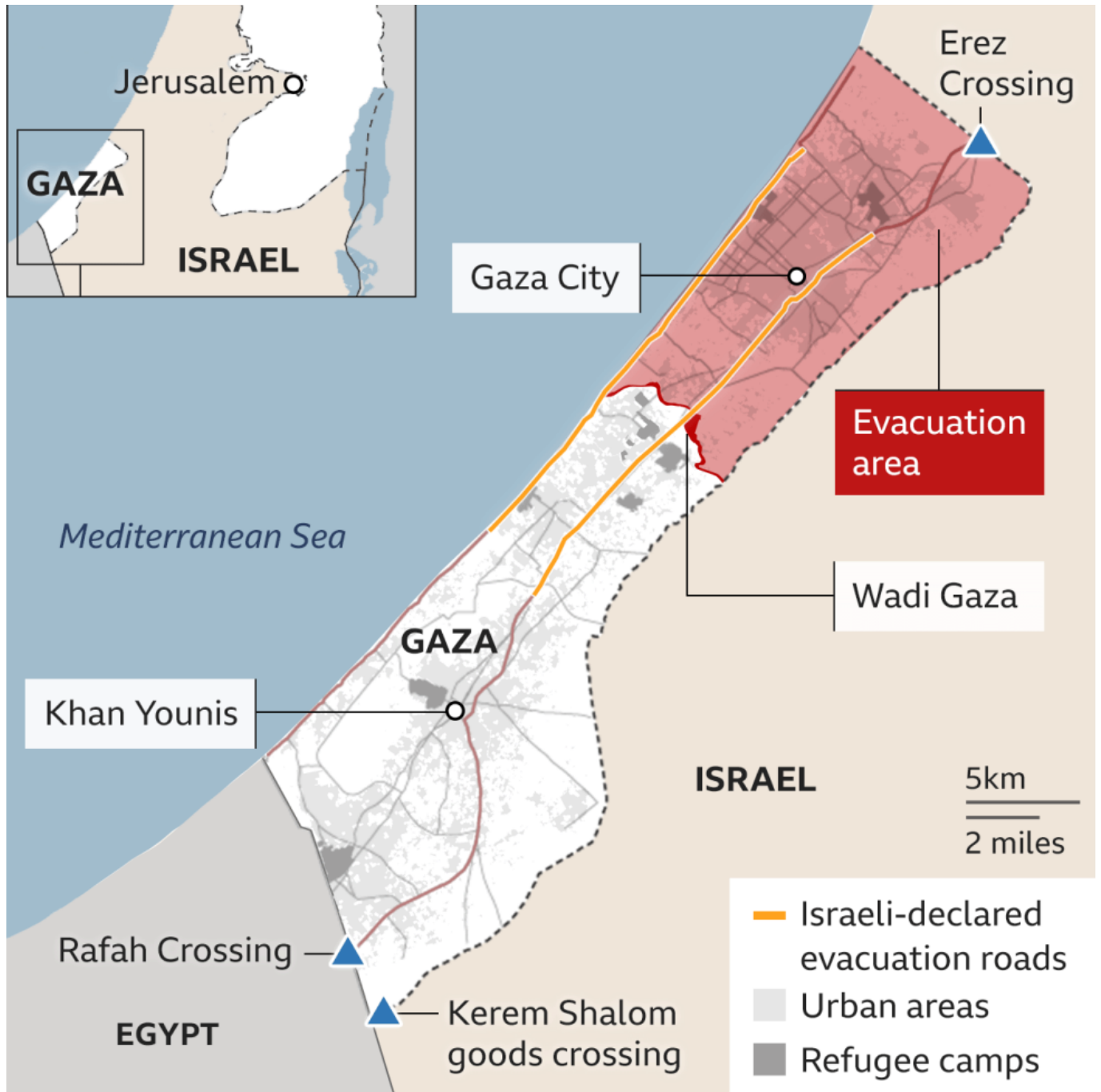


Following Hamas attack, no one can deny Israel's claim to righteousness



Source: UN Ocha, 2023, Israeli Defence Force



by Conrad Black

The Hamas attack on Israel was an even greater atrocity than

the suicide aerial assaults on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on Sept. 11, 2001, and was a greater act of collective suicide. Al-Qaida knew that the 9/11 attacks were a "massacre of the innocents," but their principal target were famous buildings that symbolized the power of American capitalism and military strength. The attacks were a shocking escalation of long-standing terrorist activity, following attacks in the previous several years on the U.S. Marine Corps barracks in Beirut (1983), the international barracks at the Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia (1996), the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania (1998) and the USS Cole in Yemen. They were, in their psychotic way, intended to be a show of purposeful strength and menace. The Hamas attack on Israel was a deliberate assault on random civilians with no greater symbolism and no reasonable possibility that the authors of it did not know that Israel's response would be a determined effort to capture or preferably kill every member of the Hamas military and terrorist apparatus.

Psychotic and evil though they were, the 9/11 attacks were in some measure an expression of confidence accompanied by dire warnings of even more terrible terrorist acts to come (which the governments of the world have in fact avoided). The Hamas invasion, though a crisply executed military operation, was the ultimate act of despair and cynicism: despair at the impending comprehensive peace agreement involving Saudi Arabia, Israel and other Arab powers, and cynicism by the Iranians, who put their Hamas terrorist proxies at high risk of extermination in a reckless throw of the dice. The ancient enemies of the Arabs are the Persians and Turks, not particularly the Jews, and the only influence Iran has in the Arab world is among terrorist minorities that can't get tangible support from more respectable sources. It is telling that you can hear a pin drop in the West Bank: the Palestine Liberation Organization is making muted supportive noises but is not lifting a finger to assist Hamas.

All these Muslim extremists claim an ambition to die gloriously, but that didn't prevent Osama bin Laden from hiding like a mole for almost a decade. We may never learn what inducements the Iranian government gave the Hamas leaders to undertake this execrable mission. It is interesting to see Hezbollah in Lebanon teetering on the brink but so far declining to inflict an unprecedented provocation on Israel. It is a more powerful force than Hamas but hasn't been trying to liberate anything since Israel exited Southern Lebanon in 2000: it objects to Israel but is really trying to control Lebanon, where Shiite Muslims are an unpopular minority. If Hezbollah chooses to launch a full-scale assault on Israel now, it may confidently expect a similar fate to that which is about to be dealt to Hamas, which is presumably why, at time of writing, it has not done so.

In terms of the resolution of what we may call the Palestine issue, the Hamas attack may be taken as the first step in the attempted execution of a strategy to dismantle Israel and kill or expel all Jews from what is now the State of Israel, effectively the revival of the Nazi approach to a "final solution" to the "Jewish question." It was an absurdly ambitious and impetuous initiative by Hamas that has aroused the military superpower of the region and filled it with a terrible resolve not only to exterminate Hamas, but to teach all those who would liquidate the Jews a lesson that they and the world will never forget, as Prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu implied early this week. Even those who do not accept the right of Israel to exist as a Jewish state, although that position is legally and morally untenable, cannot condone Hamas' barbarous treatment of Israeli civilians with no discernible purpose other than murder and terror, unless they are, like the most vehement Nazis, partisans of genocide against Jews. The exception is ethically bankrupt institutions like the CBC, which advised its staff against using the word "terrorist," and the Gadarene swine of gullible philistines in many western universities. There are already

contemptible, indeed hateful, posturings of relativism and even hints of justification in such places as the BBC and the left-wing television networks in the United States, not to mention some of the more militantly racist Arab outlets such as Al Jazeera, which is owned by the Government of Qatar.

Those who have some sympathy for the lot of the Palestinians, and they deserve some sympathy, should not imagine that the actions of Hamas are morally more elevated or even distinguishable from the Nazi seizure, transportation and murder in their death camps of six million Jews and millions of non-Jews. That is widely considered, by a combination of criteria, to be the most monstrously evil crime in the history of the world, and especially shocking as it was perpetrated by a sophisticated culture, shared with such giants of western civilization as Goethe and Beethoven.

Horrible though the bloodshed has been, and sanguinary though Israel's righteous counteroffensive will undoubtedly be, the lack of moral ambiguity on this issue is welcome. Hamas conducted a barbarous assault of genocidal inspiration, for which there is no possible moral justification nor even the slightest possible mitigation of the just condemnation of these acts of absolute evil. While one may hope, and we may probably be confident, that Israel will avoid unnecessary collateral damage to apparently unoffending people in Gaza, Israel has a blank cheque and an entire justification to enact its own permanent solution to those who would murder all the Jews.

Almost uniquely in the world, Israel possesses the legitimacy of having been created by the United Nations. The British, unfortunately, in the stress of the First World War, effectively sold the same real estate to two parties at the same time. The only just solution to that conundrum is, and always was, a division of the relevant territory. The Palestinians could have had a state, albeit a small state (they are not a numerous people), at any time in the past 25

years if they had been prepared to accept Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state. They overplayed their hand as the Arab powers had manipulated the Palestine question to distract the Arab masses from the misgovernment that was long inflicted on almost all of them. And with the recent approach of the Arabs' ancient enemies, the Turks and the Persians, the Arab powers have lost interest in the Palestinians and see Israel as a potential ally, and remain unappreciative of Iran's meddling in Arab affairs.

The conditions are now ideal to destroy Hamas once and for all, to propose a genuine two-state solution, to shatter Hezbollah if it dares to intervene in Israel and to mete out to the terrorist-sponsoring hypocrites in the malignant theocracy of Iran the chastisement they have earned. The world, and especially the Arab world, would be grateful for the aerial destruction of the Iranian nuclear military program. Iran would have no riposte to this. Netanyahu spoke nothing but the truth this week, when he said that for millennia the Jews were not able to defend themselves and paid a horrible price for many centuries of terrible vulnerability, but that now they will defend themselves. Israel should feel morally empowered to give effect to the biblical hope of the long-suffering: "God of vengeance, God to whom vengeance belongs, show Thyself!" After these terrible events, no one can deny Israel's claim to righteousness.

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