

For Israel to exist, Israelis should love the country more than they hate its government

Lev Tsitrin

The news coming out of Israel is grim.

In the last couple of days, three policemen were gunned down in the West Bank. Six hostages were executed by Hamas in Gaza.

Even worse was the news of the reaction to the latter horror. One would have understood it if Israelis demanded more toughness against Hamas and its supporters. I was prepared to hear the demand for the hostage-to-prisoner exchange measure to be played in reverse: if in November, during the pause in fighting Hamas got three terrorists freed to each freed hostage, then three Hamas terrorists jailed in Israel should now hang for each hostage executed by Hamas – eighteen hangings of those whom Hamas wants released the most as payback for its latest atrocity – plus eighteen others for the prior week's similar grim finding of another six bodies.

I would have also understood the public demand that the entire policy of hostage-prisoner release be ended, given extra price Israel paid on October 7 for the Shalit deal in which a thousand terrorists – including the mastermind of the October 7 attack – were released from Israeli prisons in exchange for a single captive soldier, Gilad Shalit – 1,200 Israelis butchered on Oct 7, plus 700 soldiers killed in action so far. I would have understood if the press demanded an answer from Shalit, and those who pressured the government for that deal, to this simple question: “given the October 7, wouldn't it be better if Shalit still be in captivity? Or, since he obviously needed to be released, shouldn't it have been done by smashing into Gaza and destroying Hamas back in 2006 when he was

captured”?



But astonishingly, this is not how the country reacted. The anger was channeled against Israeli government, not Hamas. Israelis are indignant

that the government did not cave in to Hamas' demands that guarantee its victory in the war. Israel rose in huge demonstrations to demand that the government agrees to end the war on Hamas' terms. Israel's trade unions, supported by the leading opposition politicians demanded the general strike to pressure the government into submitting to Hamas' demands, if that's what it takes to release the remaining hostages.

This is not just counterintuitive – Hamas' brutality causing not rage, but cave-in. This is not just scandalous. This is not just immoral.

This is suicidal.

Apparently, Israelis learned nothing from the Shalit deal. Overwhelmed by empathy and the goodness of their hearts when seeing the grief of the hostage families, they forget to ask themselves the question that should now torment Shalit's conscience: how many will have to die for their happiness of reuniting with their loved ones? How many will have to grieve in the future so they should be happy now?

War is a zero-sum game: what one side wins, another side loses. Today, Israel lost heavily to Hamas' brutality – in the self-inflicted wound of the general strike, a full day of economic activity lost.

Why this madness?

The answer is rather simple: there are those who hate Netanyahu so much – and want themselves to get his seat so badly – that any occasion to harm him is a good occasion. Hamas attacks Israel? Wonderful, let's demand Netanyahu's resignation. Hamas executes hostages? Ditto!

But is it good for the country?

Well, they don't think about the country. They are so blinded by hate of Netanyahu that they are willing to surrender to Hamas if that helps them get rid of him.

This is not good. Golda Meir famously observed that there would be peace only when the Palestinians start loving their children more than they hate the Israelis. Time has come to apply the same criterion of the balance between love and hate towards Israelis themselves.

By Golda's logic, Israel will do well only when Israelis' love of their country is greater than the hate of its government. Else, the country will rend itself apart,

Governance is a notoriously a dirty – and bloody – business (as bloody as was the October 7 Shalit deal debacle), and Israelis should learn to know this. They should learn to love Israel more than they hate Netanyahu. If they don't, there won't be Israel for much longer: Hamas – which leveraged the Shalit deal into October 7 mass atrocity will leverage its victory over Israel in this war towards a yet greater victory over Israel in the future.

Don't let this happen, Israelis. Please start loving you

country more than you hate its leaders.

Photograph from [The Telegraph](#)