

Humanitarianism in Action in Israel

Since October 3, 2015 dozens of Palestinian terror attacks against Israeli citizens have occurred, killing seven people and injuring more than 100. More deaths would have occurred if it had not been for the speedy action of the Israeli United Hatzalah (rescue), volunteer emergency medical service, reacting immediately to all emergencies within minutes of a call for help.

With more than 2,300 volunteers, medically trained technicians from all walks of life, UH responds to over 650 emergencies a day, and has treated over 200,000 people a year. UH provides medical and communications equipment as necessary. Its quick response is often the difference between life and death, especially regarding the victims of Palestinian terror attacks as well as the usual traffic accidents.

One of the UH innovations is a life compass system which integrates tracking technology with dispatch software, thus providing accurate information of the problem and what is medically needed. For this, a fleet of 250 "ambucycles," a form of motor bike fully equipped with advanced life-saving equipment, a trauma kit, oxygen canister, defibrillator, and other emergency supplies, and which can avoid traffic jams and narrow streets, is used.

The activity of United Hatzalah illustrates once again, even though some human rights groups and Archbishop Desmond Tutu refuse to acknowledge it, the disparity in behavior between Palestinians and Israelis.

In an important and influential article in 1993 followed by a book in 1996, the Harvard political scientist Samuel P. Huntington spoke of the great global divisions, the clash of

competing cultures, civilizations that shared cultural values, based on factors such as language, history, religion, and self-identification. Categorization of this kind may be somewhat questionable, even vague. The categories of civilizations are not rigid in nature, nor are they entities with a single identity. Also, it is not necessarily true or inevitable that the clash of civilizations will dominate global politics. Nations, like individual people, may have multiple identities, any one of which may become dominant at a particular time.

Nevertheless, the contrast between the terrorism of Palestinians in recent weeks and the life-saving attitude of United Hatzalah in Israel suggests that Huntington was not mistaken about the fundamental clash between the civilizations of Islam and the West. One need not exaggerate the importance of difference and confrontation between them to indicate the sad reality of the existence of a clash of two civilizations in the Middle East.

The reality is the upsurge, the escalation of terrorist acts by young Palestinians, female as well as male, some of whom are Arab-Israeli citizens and others from east Jerusalem who have Israeli identity cards allowing them freedom of movement but who are not citizens. The violence is both in Israel itself and in east Jerusalem. Some attacks have been made by youngsters, most of whom are under 20, and have little or no organizational affiliation. But most have resulted from the deliberate falsehoods proclaimed by Palestinian leaders about the supposed intentions of Israel concerning the Al-Aqsa Mosque on the Temple Mount.

The Palestinian Authority and its President Mahmoud Abbas have been unable to control the violence, though it may have made some minimal efforts to restrain it. It is likely that Abbas cannot control the northern branch of the Islamic Movement in Israel. But he has compounded the problem by talking of the Israeli aggressive offensive against Palestinians and their

holy sites.

At the core of the problems are two factors: the inability or unwillingness of Palestinian officials to stop terrorism, their falsehoods about the events, and the continuing praise given by some of them to terrorists; and the indifference of the international community toward terrorist acts against Israel. On October 13, 2015 Secretary of State John Kerry was not going "to point fingers" at who was responsible for the violence.

A few examples are sufficient to illustrate the point. One semi-amusing one concerned Ahmed Mansara, the 13-year-old Palestinian boy who along with a relative carried out a stabbing attack on two Israelis in Pisgat Ze'ev on October 12, 2015. One of the two was a 13-year-old Israeli boy who was riding his bike when he was stabbed and who now remains in serious condition. Two days later, President Abbas claimed that Mansara had been "executed" by Israeli police responding to the attack. One day later, on October 15, photos were published of the boy, who had suffered minor injuries, eating a hearty breakfast in a bed in the Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem.

Why can't the lying stop? Sa'eb Erekat, the chief Palestinian negotiator, who never negotiates and is now also PLO secretary-general, announced on October 13 that Israel was killing civilians and children in field executions. In fact, it was his own organization, the supposedly moderate Fatah that was issuing online incitements to violence to stab and murder Israelis, to use syringes filled with poison, and to call on Palestinian women to perpetrate terrorist acts. Its invocation was "stick your knife in the heart of your enemy."

This is a new form of war against Israel. A year ago it was different. During Operation Protective Edge, July 8, 2014 until August 26, Israel responded to the unending rocket fire from terrorists, who used children and teenagers as

auxiliaries, in Gaza. The use of the air defense system Iron Dome to intercept and destroy rockets and artillery shells played an important role in the relatively low casualty rate among Israeli civilians.

The Iron Dome is not relevant in this new war as a defense against stabbing. Israel is defending itself by units of the police and the IDF which have closed certain areas, guard neighborhoods and public transportation, and instituted curfew in certain areas. Metal detectors have been installed throughout the Old City of Jerusalem, including the entrance to the Temple Mount.

Without declaring that one side in the dispute between Israel and Palestinians is wholly good and the other evil, and recognizing that both sides are part of humanity, it is well to consider the crucial difference between Palestinian terrorist acts and the incitement to commit them, and the humane and altruistic behavior of the volunteers of the United Hatzalah of Israel.

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