

There can be no peace in the Middle East until Hamas is eliminated.

Israel is being held to different, higher, standards than any other state.



by Conrad Black

It is disappointing to see the wave of synchronised credulity with which Europe has fallen in behind the tired and mistaken argument that Israel is obliged to show proportionality in its response to the invasion and massacre that Hamas conducted against it on October 7. Most Western governments seemed to accept at face value the dubious claim of the so-called ministry of health of Gaza – which for these purposes is just a Hamas propaganda organ – that the Israeli Defense forces

have killed 30,000 civilians in Gaza.

Astonishingly, U.S. President Biden parroted this claim in his State of the Union message on March 7. No such statistics from Hamas have ever been remotely reliable before and there is no reason to believe that this claim is accurate.

As distinguished historian Andrew Roberts, (Lord Roberts of Belgravia), remarked recently in Britain's House of Lords, even if Palestinian claims of civilian deaths were accepted, when the number of Palestinians killed by Hamas and Islamic Jihad rockets that fell on Gazans rather than the Israelis they were aimed at are deducted from the total of allegedly dead Palestinians, the ratio of civilian to authentic military deaths of Hamas fighters is less than two to one.

As Lord Roberts explained, as one of the world's foremost military historians, this is an astonishingly low ratio in modern urban warfare. And this is especially the case where, as in Gaza, the defenders use the civilians as human shields and frequently concentrate their forces in schools, mosques, hospitals, and heavily residential areas to increase the number of civilian casualties and exacerbate collateral damage.

The Hamas leader, Ismail Haniyeh, has publicly stated (to Al Jazeera) that all of the afflictions of civilians in Gaza is useful to Hamas because it increases pressure on Israel to accept a cease-fire short of the accomplishment of the declared Israeli goal of eliminating the Hamas military and terrorist apparatus.

The figures cited by Lord Roberts clearly show, as he told his colleagues in the House of Lords, the high professionalism and civilized values of the Israeli Defense Forces, which are generally thought to have eliminated approximately one third of the Hamas military/terrorist personnel, and to have cornered almost all the rest in and near the southern Gaza

city of Rafah.

Apart from the demonstrable care that the Israelis are taking not to inflict unnecessary civilian casualties in Gaza, there is the additional and fundamental point that Israel is at war. It is at war because it was savagely attacked without warning and in violation of an agreed cease-fire. Hamas, which perpetrated this assault, focused particularly on the mass murder of civilians, specifically including the very young, women, and the elderly.

It was an assault designed to be as repulsive and abhorrent as possible to all civilised people, the quintessential act of terror. Among its principal motivations was undoubtedly the desire to communicate that the Hamas leadership would never under any circumstances accept the legitimacy of Israel as a Jewish state.

The fact that Israel was specifically created by the United Nations out of the League of Nations mandate as a Jewish state in the aftermath of the attempted genocide of all Jews in Europe by the Nazis and their collaborators is not accepted by Hamas.

In these circumstances, entirely created by Israel's enemies, there can be no serious or credible discussion of the Hamas assault being justifiable under international law or by any standards of legitimate inter-state conduct. The Israeli parliament and public opinion was practically unanimous in seeing the Hamas assault as a threat to the very existence of Israel and an act of war. They were entirely correct and justified in forming an all-party national unity government to eliminate Hamas as a criminal terrorist organization that had shown its determination to exterminate or at the least expel the Jews of Israel.

The leaders of Israel representing the entire Jewish population of that country were explicitly conscious of giving

effect to the promise made by the surviving leaders of the Jewish people after the Holocaust in Europe ending in 1945 which massacred 6 million Jews, half the entire Jewish population of the world, as well as 6 million non-Jews, that the Jewish people would "never again" submit as passive victims to mass murder.

Every country in Europe is well aware in its national experience within the living memory of millions of the nature of war; not one of them officially stated during World War II that combatants had to be proportionate in their response to each other. No one suggested three months after the attack on the United States Navy at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, that the United States should seek a cease-fire and not aspire to killing more Japanese than the number of Americans that the Japanese had killed on that day.

No one of any authority suggested that the Western Allied powers in World War II should be careful in liberating the countries that Nazi Germany had criminally invaded and occupied and in subduing the Third Reich, not to kill more Germans than the Germans had killed among the populations that they had attacked, subjugated, and terrorised.

All European states agree that terrorism is reprehensible and the objective truth is that the best possible outcome of the current conflict in Gaza is precisely the outcome sought by the government of the State of Israel: the complete destruction of the terrorist capability of Hamas, followed by the reconstruction of Gaza with the goal of making it a demilitarised and prosperous and peaceful Arab jurisdiction, preferably as part of a larger settlement creating a Palestinian state with the ambition of coexisting with Israel.

Much would remain to be negotiated, but there will be no progress toward any peace until those terrorists who cannot be persuaded in good faith to lay down their arms and seek an honorable and civilized division of contested territory are

eliminated.

In this conflict, Israel seeks peace and Hamas seeks, once again, the extermination or subjugation of the Jews. The moral relativism of most governments in Europe is a disgrace.

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