The Gaza War: Appearance vs. Reality

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<http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/4624/gaza-war-reality>

Now that the dust has begun to settle in Gaza after Israel’s Operation Protective Edge, it is again easy to feel sorry for the beleaguered Palestinians. As everyone knows who looks at *The New York Times* and CNN*,* the lingering images are incontestably painful, and continue to look “asymmetrical” and “disproportionate.”

How could Hamas have been the aggressor when so many more Arabs than Israelis were killed? Surely the side with greater civilian losses must always be in the right. How could it be otherwise?

The people of Gaza (together with those many Israelis still forced to live under terrorist rocket attacks) are indeed victims of regional violence. But their victimization was not caused by any outside enemy. On the contrary, Palestinian suffering remains the direct result of a criminal Hamas leadership. Why is Hamas putting its weapons in the middle of homes, schools, hospitals and mosques in the first place?

Moreover, this Palestinian leadership sits safely away from Gaza, either tucked away in Qatar or the comfortable parts of Europe. “Martyrdom” is always welcomed, as long as it is someone else’s.

Contrary to carefully scripted outbursts from Hamas, Israel’s defensive responses were never gratuitous or contrived. Unlike their adversaries, Israelis receive absolutely no joy from killing others. Hamas, Islamic Jihad and related terror groups operating from Gaza, on the contrary, always seem to take calculated steps to ensure that Israeli reprisals will kill or injure Palestinian noncombatants. By directing elderly women and young children to those areas in Gaza from which lethal rockets will intentionally be launched into Israeli homes, hospitals, and schools — with the knowledge that the Israelis will have to return fire to the places from which the fire originated — Palestinian leaders openly violate the most elementary restrictions of the laws of war. Under international law, holding civilians in front of one as a shield is specified as a crime.

ronically, these criminals are now proposing to bring Israel's leaders before the International Criminal Court.

Now, after an expectedly inconclusive end to Operation Protective Edge, several major Palestinian terror groups will begin to prepare for expanded attacks on Israel. Such attacks, possibly in cooperation with certain allied jihadist factions (perhaps even with the Islamic State, [IS], which is now slaughtering its way across Iraq), could include chemical or biological weapons of mass destruction. Over time, especially if Iran transfers some of its growing inventory of nuclear materials to terror groups, Israel could even face Palestinian-directed nuclear terrorism, perhaps launched from trucks and ships, as well as from nuclear-tipped rockets and missiles.

Should Iran be permitted to become nuclear-capable, as now seems a certainty, it could send ballistic missiles armed with nuclear warheads against Israel, as it has repeatedly threatened to do, despite the stipulations in the UN Charter that member states are prohibited from threatening each other. Israel's Arrow ballistic missile defense system would require a 100% rate of success, but no such system of perfect reliability is possible.

Israel has always tried during war to keep its essential counterterrorism operations in Gaza consistent with the established rules of international humanitarian law. By contrast, Palestinian violence has been persistent in violating all rules of engagement, despite the signed [Oslo II Interim Agreement of 1995](http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/foreignpolicy/peace/guide/pages/the%20israeli-palestinian%20interim%20agreement.aspx), Article XIV of which states that the West Bank and the Gaza Strip shall be completely demilitarized. [[1]](http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/4624/gaza-war-reality" \l "_ftn1)

Furthermore, although the word "occupation" has been tirelessly repeated in the media for a month, there is no "occupation" of Gaza. Every last Israeli left Gaza in 2005, in the hope that the Palestinians, reciprocally, would finally cease their self-destructive excursions into terror and instead use the opportunity to build a productive state. All restrictions on how goods could enter Gaza grew out of the concern, now seen as justified, that instead of building a productive state of its own, Hamas was using the material it imported to build a city of terror tunnels from which to attack Israel. What country could possibly permit that of a neighbor who keeps pledging to destroy it?

[[1]](http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/4624/gaza-war-reality" \l "_ftnref1) 3. Except for the Palestinian Police and the Israeli military forces, no other armed forces shall be established or operate in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

4. Except for the arms, ammunition and equipment of the Palestinian Police described in [Annex I](http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/Peace/Guide/Pages/THE%20ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN%20INTERIM%20AGREEMENT%20-%20Annex%20I.aspx), and those of the Israeli military forces, no organization, group or individual in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip shall manufacture, sell, acquire, possess, import or otherwise introduce into the West Bank or the Gaza Strip any firearms, ammunition, weapons, explosives, gunpowder or any related equipment, unless otherwise provided for in Annex I.