

# THE IRAN GAZA WAR

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Israeli civilian taken hostage to Gaza

*Jerusalem.* As Jews celebrated a festive holiday on Saturday (10/07), the Iranian-backed Palestinian militia Hamas invaded Israel from Gaza. Spreading out through Israeli towns, the terrorists went house to house gunning down innocent civilians, including hundreds of young revelers at an outdoor “peace” rave.

They abducted scores of civilians—the precise count is as yet unknown—including women and children, as hostages; and chilling videos have surfaced of them desecrating bodies and parading captives through the streets of Gaza, as large crowds yell “God is great.”

It is a rampage of unspeakable cruelty, the worst massacre of Jews since the Holocaust. It is also a security catastrophe of unprecedented proportions for Israel’s military and political class. Much time will be spent figuring out the causes and responsibility. For now, some broader observations:

First, call it the Iran-Gaza War. To be sure, Hamas bears responsibility, and any serious Israeli response will involve its total, unconditional defeat. But Hamas is an ally and instrument of Iran. An operation of such scale and complexity is unlike anything Hamas has previously attempted and strongly shows significant Iranian involvement. Hamas has publicly thanked Iran for its support, and Iran's supreme leader applauded the invasion.

In the north, Israel faces Hezbollah, an Iranian proxy that has de facto control over much of Lebanon, with a vast arsenal of missiles aimed at Israeli cities. Iran is reportedly close to nuclear breakout. This is the war with Israel that it wants—on Israeli soil, through once-removed marauding militias. Tehran terrorizes much of the Middle East in this manner.

*Thus: Any serious response must go through Tehran. If the U.S. and the international community are truly outraged by the scenes of senior citizens gunned down on the street and women and children abducted, they must not only refrain from limiting Israel's operation in Gaza but resolve to oust the genocidal regime in Tehran.*

President Biden's policy has been exactly the opposite. His administration has sought rapprochement with and even allegedly been manipulated by an Iranian influence operation. He has eased sanctions and in recent weeks gave the mullahs \$6 billion for the release of American hostages.

Another lesson involves the high cost of Israeli territorial concessions. Until 2005, there were many Jewish communities in Gaza, known as the Gush Katif settlements. Palestinians routinely attacked and attempted to infiltrate them. Israel's critics claimed the presence of these communities caused conflict. Some Israelis wondered why significant resources should go to protecting these small towns.

In 2005, Israel's army completely withdrew from Gaza and uprooted every Jewish community, even taking the bodies from the cemeteries. Now the whole country faces the danger those communities face, but 100 times worse. The myth that the presence of Jewish communities beyond the 1949 armistice line is the root cause of the conflict has now been firmly disproved. Israel left Gaza voluntarily.

Now Gaza comes to Israel, and it is literally dragging Jewish women back there.

Now imagine if those who perpetrated yesterday's attacks also had control of Judea and Samaria (the West Bank), a vastly larger territory with a much longer, irregularly shaped frontier a few miles from Israel's main population centers. The consequences would be orders of magnitude worse.

Yet for decades, even as Hamas used the opportunity created by Israel's withdrawal from Gaza to launch countless attacks against it, the dominant paradigm of Middle East diplomacy has remained the "two-state solution," which in practice means Israel making greater and more strategically critical territorial withdrawals. Today's events are a foretaste of what the "two-state solution" would mean.

Palestinian Kremlinology seeks to distinguish the Ramallah-based Fatah faction from its rival Hamas. But once one concedes the notion of a Palestinian state, one can't decide who runs it forever. Fatah also ruled Gaza when Israel left, until Hamas took power. Hamas could likely prevail in West Bank elections if Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas ever held them. Mr. Abbas, who was elected to a four-year term in 2005, responded to Saturday's pogrom by asserting Palestinians' right to "self-defense."

Many in the West don't take seriously Iran's or the Palestinian factions' aspirations to wipe out Israel. Such motives are foreign to them. They see Israel as strong enough to guarantee its security through technology and hard borders—which Saturday's events show can't be relied on for the essential security of the people.

The Islamists understand that they can't win through conventional military means. That is why they pose as victims so that Western governments pressure Israel into territorial concessions, which they use as a base to make Israel unlivable.

The gruesome scenes of bloodied Jewish women carted off to Gaza are reminiscent of the recent ISIS reign of terror. Islamists have driven Yazidis, Christians and other minorities from much of the Middle East. It can happen here.

Finally, there is the question of what can be done with Hamas in Gaza. False doctrines of international law have given the terror group an insurance policy: No matter what atrocities they commit against Israel, they will come out of any conflict with no less territory than before. They may lose men, but they gain gruesome honor.

Hamas's war aim isn't to minimize its own casualties but to drive out the Jews. To defeat and discredit its leadership, the Palestinians must pay a permanent territorial price. Israel is fighting the clearest possible war of self-defense. Its 1967 capture of the Golan Heights buffer zone was legitimate and humiliated the regime of Hafez al-Assad. Israel has every right to annex buffer zones in Gaza permanently.

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