



Israel & the Palestinians

**A collection of writings
by Michael Medved**

Gaza, Liberals, and Moral Equivalence

July 31, 2014

A big majority of Americans say Israel is justified in its response to Hamas, but a CNN/ORC poll shows revealing ideological differences in attitudes toward the Middle East.

Among Republicans, 73% stand with Israel, and among Independents that support remains strong at 56%. But among Democrats, only a minority – 45% – feels the Jewish state is justified in its military response in Gaza to stop rocket attacks and terror tunnels.

This attitude indicates that liberals have not only lost touch with public opinion but they've disconnected from reality. If Dems withhold their high-minded approval to a measured, targeted mission to prevent rocket assaults and to block kidnapping missions through the terror tunnels, then what Israeli response would they accept and recommend? Do they expect the Jewish state to absorb countless missile attacks without complaint, and to accept terrorist invasion of their towns and farms, in order to impress the enlightened souls of the international community with their moral superiority? At what point would Democrats deem a military reaction appropriate? After 1,000 rocket attacks? Or 5,000?

This is insanity, of course. Across the spectrum, Americans who back Israel outnumber those who don't by nearly two-to-one (60-34%) but the reaction of demented Democrats reflects the leftist embrace of moral equivalence- their rejection of clear distinctions between right and wrong. Liberals love to prance and preen, advertising their own above-the-fray arrogance by citing imperfection on all sides. But there's a difference between imperfection and painful mistakes in the fog of battle, and deliberate evil and blood lust.

Fortunately, conservatives feel far more comfortable with moral absolutes, and so rally to the support of Israel in this hour of need. Yes, sometimes distinctions are obvious between right and wrong, while some conflicts do come down to a struggle behind good and evil. American Jews, who fatuously gave 70% and more of their support to Barack

Obama in both his presidential races, should keep this contrast in mind on the next Election Day.

Those tender souls who believe that the two sides share joint responsibility for the civilian casualties must meanwhile confront two questions.

First, what could Hamas do to stop the violence immediately? The answer should be obvious: If they halted their rocket attacks, and cooperated with destroying or incapacitating the terror tunnels into Israel, this brutal war would end quickly. Israel has already accepted two cease fires, one sponsored by Egypt and the Arab League, the other by the UN. Hamas rejected both offers.

Which raises the second question: what must Israel do, considering the Hamas intransigence, to bring the killing to an end?

For those who criticize current Israeli policies, what plan of action would advance the cause of peace more effectively? If Israel rewarded Hamas with some face-saving concession for the war the terrorists started, it would only encourage more wars-of-choice by the Gaza gang. If the world accedes to their demands because Hamas unleashed an orgy of deliberate destruction, that makes violent outbursts all the more likely in the future.

Rula Jabreal on MSNBC and other public apologists for murderous jihad claim that American media tilt overwhelmingly toward Israel. But the only positive treatment of the embattled Jewish state stems from its ability to describe war aims while no one on the other side will explain the aims of Hamas. Instead of explaining why Gaza thugs opted to launch a major war, Hamas sympathizers cite meaningless and false clichés about the way that pressure on any population necessarily generates violence and hatred. Yes, 100 rocket attacks a day may express such hatred but it has no purpose whatever other than satisfying the bloodlust of crazed killers and fanatics.

In this contest, the distinction between the two sides isn't fuzzy, difficult or obscure. Israel is fighting to put an end to violence; Hamas is fighting to perpetuate and intensify terror aimed at random civilian targets. If Hamas disarms, there's a chance that brutality would give way to some form of wary coexistence. If Israel disarms, it's obvious that her residents would bear the brunt of increased attacks and looming disaster.

The moral contrast remains so clear that only the most stubborn and blinded relativist could refuse to acknowledge it. One war aim is admirable. The other is evil.

It shouldn't be difficult for any individual or organization to decide which of the two sides deserves passionate support.

Three Possible Outcomes in Gaza

July 31, 2014

There are only three possible outcomes in the Gaza War: a decisive Israeli victory, which dismantles the terror tunnels and reduces the capacity to launch rockets; another inconclusive cease fire, with no preconditions or resolution of key issues; or a deal dictated by the international community, where Hamas stops rockets in return for getting concessions on all its key demands. Amazingly, Secretary of State Kerry favored the third alternative – which would guarantee another war. That policy would reward the terrorists for starting a war, and then deliberately sacrificing hundreds of civilians in the ensuing conflict. If Hamas gains from violent attacks, why wouldn't they use such strategies again? Only one resolution brings peace: demilitarization of Gaza with a clear message that attacks on your neighbors mean devastating results, not international sympathy. Unfortunately, misguided “moral equivalence” idiocy from the state department makes lasting truce vastly more difficult.

Liberals, Moral Absolutes, and the Middle East

July 23, 2014

A big majority of Americans say Israel is justified in its response to Hamas, but a CNN/ORC poll shows revealing ideological differences in attitudes toward the Middle East.

Among Republicans, 73% stand with Israel, and with Independents that support hits 56%. But among Democrats only a minority—45%—feels the Jewish state is justified in its military response to stop rocket attacks and terror tunnels.

Across the spectrum, Americans who back Israel outnumber those who don't by nearly two-to-one, but the reaction of Democrats reflects the left's embrace of moral equivalence—and a rejection of clear distinctions between right and wrong.

Conservatives feel more comfortable with absolutes: sometimes, conflicts do involve a struggle between good and evil. In this war, Israel is fighting to put an end to violence; Hamas is fighting to continue and intensify terror.

One war aim is admirable. The other is evil.

The U.N. and International Community Share Gaza Guilt

July 21, 2014

If the international community has nothing much to say about a governmental entity launching literally thousands of rockets against civilian targets in a neighboring nation, what does it say about the future stability and security of the United States and our allies?

The international community, and especially the United Nations, share responsibility with the terrorist thugs of Hamas for all the bloodshed in the current Gaza fighting. The United Nations Relief and Welfare Agency for Palestine (UNRWA) has propped up the murderous jihadist regime ever since it took power in 2007. The UNRWA budget now stands at \$1.2 billion a year, with literally hundreds of millions poured directly into Gaza. The schools and youth programs run by the UN have included vicious, anti-Semitic propaganda in their curricula and gave in to Hamas demands to abandon even a modest experiment to teach children about the Holocaust.

The United States provides by far the biggest contribution to UNRWA's programs – some \$240 million a year – and should have begun demanding accountability many years ago. Senator Mark Kirk (R-Illinois) has been particularly outspoken on this issue, and had the Obama administration paid more attention to his demands the current crisis might have been avoided. The patterns of daily life in Gaza would quickly collapse without UN aid, and if the United Nations had guaranteed an automatic, instantaneous halt to that assistance whenever Hamas rocketeers launched their weapons against civilians, that guarantee could have deterred, or at least discouraged, the latest round of destructive brutality. How, in fact, can UN officials justify the continuing flow of generous aid to clients whose government violates the UN charter and all rules of common decency with its ceaseless, senseless barrage?

Even Hamas itself can't provide a coherent explanation for this latest flare-up. When Hamas shredded the prevailing cease-fire and launched a new wave of rocket assaults, they did so in response to a perceived opportunity, not to Israeli air strikes. Israeli officials have repeatedly announced, in fact, that air strikes against the rocket launchers and Hamas infrastructure will cease as soon as "quiet" returns and missile attacks end.

Despite popular journalistic references to an endless "cycle of violence" or "tit for tat" in the Middle East, the current conflict has a clear beginning and an obvious initiator. Palestinian apologists may claim that the latest explosion of mortar shelling and rocket assaults represents a response to the murder of an Israeli-Arab teenager in Jerusalem, but Israeli officials promptly arrested six suspects in that indefensible crime and secured confessions from three of them. That surely constitutes a more appropriate and meaningful response than directing rocket fire against innocent civilians in Israel's major cities.

Meanwhile, the latest round of fighting should lead all open-minded observers to reconsider the profound folly in the Obama administration's dysfunctional fascination with the suspended "peace process." The leaders of the Palestinian Authority insist that in order to reach any settlement, Israel must follow the same course of action on the West Bank that she pursued in Gaza in 2005 – forcing all Jewish residents of the area to abandon their homes and dismantle their communities and to turn disputed territories to full, undisputed Palestinian control.

But why should Israelis or Americans expect that this strategy would work better in the West Bank than it has in Gaza? Rocket attacks multiplied more than tenfold after Israeli disengagement from the Gaza Strip nine years ago, with local authorities concentrating on terror strikes rather than state building.

During the recent struggle, the West Bank (known to Israelis as Judea and Samaria) has remained relatively calm, with no rocket fire, despite the presence of more than 400,000 Jewish residents and the visibility of Israeli security forces. Meanwhile, Gaza has launched thousands of attacks from its pristine, Jew-free paradise, following Israel's 2005 uprooting of well-established communities and handing Gazans complete control of their own territory. In other words, recent experience strongly suggests that so-called "occupation" is hardly a cause of violence and instability, and may even provide a cure for it.

In this context, President Obama's offer to negotiate a new cease fire between Israel and Hamas has given rise to a bitter Israeli joke. The punch-line suggests that "Bibi Netanyahu should agree, and let Obama negotiate peace with Hamas—on the condition that Obama gets Bibi to negotiate a cease fire between America and Al Qaeda." The point is that everyone knows a true cease-fire is impossible with Al Qaeda: they don't want America to compromise or change, they want America destroyed. By the same token, Hamas isn't launching hundreds of rocket attacks because they want Israel to change, or to alter specific policies. They demand that the Jewish state disappear, as their charter proudly declares. When facing an existential challenge, negotiation is meaningless— for America or Israel. Terrorist groups pledged to your destruction can't be appeased – they must be eliminated, or at least strictly limited in their ability to do further harm.

Yes, the international community could play a constructive role, but not by demanding a new series of useless negotiations. Instead, the UN, NATO, and above all the United States should make clear that after the current violence ends or subsides, any new round of rocket launches against civilian targets will bring devastating, multi-lateral consequences, and Israel need not stand alone in confronting increasingly sophisticated attacks against its citizens. Without some record of enforcing civilized norms against aggressive terrorists, how can South Korea rely on guarantees of protection against the nightmare state to their north; or Japan (or Taiwan, or the Philippines, for that matter) rely on help against an increasingly imperialistic China; or Ukraine (or Poland) feel secure from a new Russian grab on their territory; or Israel count on promised American and NATO protection from a nuclear-armed Iran?

The current lack of leadership by the US and, even more conspicuously, by the UN and the international community, doesn't just destroy prospects for progress toward Middle East peace. It also insures a far more unstable, perilous and explosive world to menace the security of Americans and all other civilized peoples in the months and years ahead.

No Compromise with Existential Threats

July 15, 2014

There's a bitter joke going around Israel concerning President Obama's feckless response to the current fighting in Gaza. "Obama says he wants to negotiate a cease fire between Israel and Hamas," Israeli cynics observe. "Bibi Netanyahu should agree—on the condition that he gets to negotiate a cease fire between America and Al Qaeda." The point is that everyone knows a true cease fire is impossible with Al Qaeda: they don't want America to compromise or change, they want America destroyed. By the same token, Hamas isn't launching hundreds of rocket attacks because they want Israel to change, or to alter specific policies. They demand the Jewish state disappear, as their charter proudly declares.

When facing an existential challenge, negotiation is meaningless—for America or Israel. Terrorist groups pledged to your destruction can't be appeased—they must be defeated, or at least strictly limited in their ability to do harm.

Silence and Complicity from the U.N.

July 15, 2014

Regarding the current conflict in Gaza, two points ought to unite world opinion:

- First, it's a war crime for any governing body to launch rocket attacks on civilian targets in neighboring countries.
- Second, it's appropriate for any nation hit repeatedly by such attacks to move promptly to eliminate those rockets.

In this context, the silence from the UN is particularly appalling. The Hamas terror state in Gaza couldn't exist for a week without hundreds of millions in aid support from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine, which spends a total of \$1.2 billion a year.

The U.S.—which provides by far the biggest share of that budget—must insist that the UN end all such assistance until Hamas stops all rocket attacks. Israel has already

pledged to halt air strikes whenever missiles from Gaza stop—a halt that the world must unite to demand.