



## **Proactive Redemption in Responding to Palestinian Violence**

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BESA Center Perspectives Paper No. 310 October 11, 2015

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:** Those who view Israel as a stepping stone for redemption and as the Jewish national spiritual homeland will act differently in responding to Palestinian violence than those who view Israel merely as a safe haven. Thus, the government should do more than just approve security operations against the terrorists. It should approve increased construction in Judea and Samaria and in Jerusalem.

The ongoing discourse among Israeli cabinet members and, to a large extent among settler leaders, has been largely over how to provide security to Israelis. While this is obviously a valid objective, it has nevertheless locked Israel into a defensive posture.

Israel's defense doctrine, devised by Israel's first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, seeks to transfer the battlefield into enemy territory, in part because Israel's narrow borders makes defensive maneuvering difficult. But the main reason why Ben-Gurion favored this approach was his belief that to win a war, even a defensive war, Israel had to seize the initiative. In other words: Israel must be proactive, rather than, reactive.

It is not enough to arrest those who killed Israelis after they perpetrated their crime. When you call such crimes terrorism, it blurs the need to figure out what the terrorists tried to achieve. Even if it is hard to pinpoint exactly who the masterminds are, the attacks create a trend that undermines Israel's strategic and vital interests and its very sovereignty in its capital.

Under the government's defensive strategy, the Israel Defense Forces is tasked with providing security. The government expects the IDF to take a series to steps to respond

to the situation, with the expectation that the overall operational effect would lead to the ebbing of violence. But reality is more complex. When the Palestinians create a reality in which certain areas are essentially off bounds for Jews – as has been the case in the current reality we live in – they consider it an accomplishment.

Helping a derailed train get back on track is a technical solution that restores order. The job is done when the train resumes normal operation. But when it comes to the complex relations between human beings, even when calm is restored, a new reality is created.

In this part of the world, to reshape reality according to one's preference, a proactive and strategic initiative is necessary. It is incumbent upon us to subscribe to a new modus operandi to effect the desired change by departing from the reactive pattern of behavior.

But what kind of proactive action would serve Israel in the current state of affairs?

This question puts Israel at a critical crossroad that could define the very essence of our presence on this land: Do we want Israel to be a homeland where Jerusalem serves as the linchpin of statehood, with all the religious and national implications; or do we simply want a country that serves as a safe haven for persecuted Jews and is recognized by the international community?

At the height of the War of Independence, in 1948, Ben-Gurion explained why he set the capture of Jerusalem as a primary objective in the war. Speaking before the Zionist General Council, he said, "I don't need to tell you what value Jerusalem has had in the history of the Jewish people and the land of Israel and world. ... If a land has a soul, then Jerusalem is the soul of the land of Israel, and the battle for Jerusalem is paramount, not just in a military sense. ... We are duty bound to stand by Jerusalem, and it deserves it. The pledge we took on the rivers of Babylon is binding now as it was binding then, otherwise we would no longer be able to call ourselves the people of Israel."

Indeed, that pledge is recited by every Jewish groom: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning." Jerusalem is a point in the universe that encapsulates the Jews' religion, nationhood and polity. The Palestinians also consider it as their national focal point. That is why the city has fueled this current conflagration.

In light of this reality, the government should do more than just approve the security establishment's operational plans. Proactive measures are required that go beyond the authority of security authorities. At the strategic level, the situation calls for increased

construction in Judea and Samaria and in Jerusalem. Such action will serve the national interest, not just a narrow sectarian interest.

At this critical juncture, those who view this land and country as a stepping stone for redemption and as a national homeland will act differently than those who view Israel merely as a safe haven. We have to make fateful choices that will shape our future here, and our decision should be clear.

This article was originally published in Israel Hayom.

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