



PERSPECTIVES

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Israeli Arabs' Violent Lawlessness: An Existential Threat

by Maj. Gen. (res.) Gershon Hachohen

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: The violent Arab-Israeli riots that took place in Israel's cities during the last Gaza war are a corollary of the widespread lawlessness and rebelliousness that has been taking root in parts of Israel's Arab society for some time, and which can cause vast damage to the fabric of Israeli life if left unattended.

Over the last two decades, Israeli citizens, especially in the Negev and the Galilee, have been suffering from steadily growing domestic terrorism in the form of violent extortion, racketeering, and plundering committed by Israeli Arabs. There is hardly a Jewish farmer whose property or crops have not been stolen or set on fire. And while the phenomenon has not been exclusively targeted at Jews, it has distinctly nationalist dimensions, both in its deliberate violation of the sovereignty of the State of Israel and in its trampling on the physical safety and dignity of the Jewish population. So much so that it echoes the precarious millenarian existence of the Jews as an eternal minority living on the sufferance of the respective majorities (known in the Islamic world as *Dhimmis*)—a status that the establishment of a Jewish state was supposed to obliterate.

David Ben-Gurion did the right thing when he insisted, upon Israel's establishment, that the enforcement of law and order be vested in the state's authorities and institutions—the elementary requirement for a sovereign state. However, because of social and legal development, the freedom of action of the police has diminished over the years and with it the security situation of Israeli Jews—especially in the periphery, where they have been left to deal alone with growing violent lawlessness on the part of their Arab compatriots.

In the daily struggle against crime families in the Arab sector, the Jew is at a marked disadvantage: he is usually on his own, without a clan to protect him or a group of young people who will stand by his side as he herds his sheep or works his fields. The kibbutz of yesteryear was a clan of sorts that comprised dozens of young people who were available to come out and fight when needed. Today's kibbutzim and moshavim are empty for most of the day, and their way of life has changed beyond recognition.

Despite considerable efforts by the police, the Israeli authorities have chosen to ignore the comprehensive significance of agricultural crimes, racketeering, and terrorism, committed by Israeli Arabs against Israeli Jews, classifying it as "ordinary" criminality and denying its obvious nationalistic overtones. No such ignorance existed during the British mandate (1920-48), when the nature of the struggle was perfectly clear to all, and the Hagana underground forces took deliberate steps to protect the Jews, their lives, their dignity, and their property. In 1946, for example, a special Palmah company was established that worked directly under Ben-Gurion and that was tasked, among other things, with securing Jewish facilities and businesses. The leadership of the time understood that even a threat to private businesses contained a core of national threat.

In recent months, Arab extortion and racketeering have increased in the Galilee and the Negev. This has created a situation in which Jews who own agricultural equipment are unable to insure that equipment with Israeli insurance companies, and in some cases are forced to work instead with insurance companies abroad. Temporary police reinforcements will not stop this phenomenon.

The main sign of the loss of Israeli governance is the presence of tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of illegal weapons in Israeli Arab society. During periods of quiet, these weapons are used at gang fights, "ordinary" crime activities, or weddings, but in times of war, they can be used against Israeli Jews and security forces, as indeed happened on a few occasions during the May riots.

There is no more legitimate sovereign act than the collection of illegal weapons, but this requires a large scale, systematic, and sustained law enforcement campaign. Israel does not have the necessary forces required for this mammoth task.

Israel has to organize properly if it is to provide protection to threatened citizens, both Jewish and Arab. To protect expensive agricultural machinery, trucks, and mechanical equipment, secure overnight parking lots can be set up and protected by police or army forces, and security forces should be

deployed day and night to protect threatened businesses. Both visible and covert force deployments are required in the forests to prevent widespread acts of arson and enable firefighters to be called at the critical time.

Given the vast proportions of Arab-Israeli violent lawlessness, the state must respond to this threat without delay and with all available resources while combining proactive and defensive measures. Because such a campaign requires a broad quantitative mass that is way beyond the existing order of forces of the police and the army, it must rely on a large-scale reserve force that will be subordinate to the Israel Police/Border Police and/or IDF Home Front Command. This force should contain about 100,000 fighters. Before it loses the last vestiges of its sovereignty, Israel must provide a comprehensive systemic response to this serious threat.

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Maj. Gen. (res.) Gershon Hacoen is a senior research fellow at the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies. He served in the IDF for 42 years. He commanded troops in battles with Egypt and Syria. He was formerly a corps commander and commander of the IDF Military Colleges.