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Human “Wrongs”

Durban, Jenin, Gaza.

By Gerald M. Steinberg

The accidental deaths of a number of Palestinian children resulting from the Israeli strike against the building in which Hamas terror leader Salah Shehadeh took refuge in the middle of Gaza City was a tragic error. But from the chorus, composed of the self-styled "international community" — the U.N., the media, human-rights NGOs, and European desk-wise diplomats — Israel's efforts to defend itself constitute a moral crime of the gravest magnitude. If anyone needed further evidence of the ethical depravity of this chorus, these condemnations provide it.

In the feeding frenzy, the obvious fact that this accident would have been avoided if Palestinian terrorists did not choose to seek refuge in densely populated areas is being conveniently ignored. While portrayed as a deliberate assault against civilians, the strike against Shehadeh was a defensive exercise from Israel, as it continues to try to defend the lives of its citizens. The mistake that led to the civilian deaths was a tactical one: using a one-ton bomb, rather than a smaller and more precise weapon.

Acting with pathetic predictably, many journalists reporting from Gaza (and the diplomats that echo these myths) have entirely ignored the reasons behind the Israeli decision — the evil perpetrated by Shehadeh and other terrorists living in Arafat's realm. In sharp contrast to this moral outrage, during the past two years, the Palestinian mass terror campaign has been based entirely on deliberate attacks designed to kill Israeli children. And yet, for most of this period, Europe and the rest of the trendy "international community" has sided with the murderers and condemned the hundreds of victims.

The inability to distinguish between aggressors, who show no concern for human life, and the defenders, whose goal is to preserve the sanctity of these lives, constitutes the fundamental moral failure of our time. The same chorus kicked in automatically when allied bombs went astray in the war against Saddam Hussein (i.e. when civilians housed below a military facility were killed); in Serbia in the effort to defend Kosovo against Milosevic; and again in Afghanistan following bin Laden's mega-terror attacks on September 11. President Bush's uncharacteristic decision to join the condemnation of Israel was transparent and ill-advised, coming a few weeks after an American attack that went wrong in Afghanistan, killing dozens of wedding guests. In each of these cases, the moral burden of the loss of innocent lives falls directly on the terrorists and their supporters, including those who provide ideological support, funds, and cover.

At the same time, the U.N. and its loyal allies among NGO superpowers such as Human Rights Watch have clearly learned nothing from their embarrassment in Jenin, which exposed their eagerness to join the Palestinian propaganda campaign to demonize Israel. In the case of Jenin, the Israeli military was condemned for taking risks (that cost the 23 Israeli soldiers their lives) by using ground forces to destroy the terrorist network that sought immunity in the U.N.-run refugee camps. In contrast, when the Israeli Air Force was sent to strike at the Hamas leader in Gaza, the chorus did not skip a beat. In other words, whatever Israel does and however it acts to prevent terrorism, condemnation will surely follow.

Indeed, these groups quickly exploited the tragedy in Gaza, in order to erase the memories of the false cries of "massacre" and "war crimes," and of their eager repetition of Palestinian lies. The macabre scene of U.N. representative Terje Larsen, running from studio to studio and repeatedly referring to "the stench of death" from the massacre in Jenin that never happened, is being repeated. And with predictability, U.N. human-rights czar Mary Robinson condemned Israeli immorality, less than a year after she presided over the U.N.'s Durban fiasco — a festival of gratuitous Israel-bashing and anti-Semitism under the false guise of anti-racism. These groups or individuals have failed to preserve a scintilla of credibility.

And yet, despite this ethical depravity, Israel will conduct a serious investigation into the fatal decision that led to this tragedy. Morality is not determined by those who scream the loudest or repeat the lies with the greatest frequency, but rather by individuals and nations that cling to a code of conduct that is immune to clichés and cynical manipulation.

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