

OPINION PIECE
By Rabbi Mark S. Golub



The Jewish tragedy of the Hamas-Israeli Conflict: American Jews Question Israel's "right to exist."

The perspective American Jews bring to the latest armed conflict between Israel and Hamas reflects where an American Jew truly stands on Israel's right to exist. A Jew who is critical of Israel's response to 4,000 Hamas rockets is validating the Hamas claim that there should be no Israel!



The most recent rocket attacks in the ongoing series of Hamas acts of war against Israel has exposed a serious sore in the body of the American Jewish community. A significant number of American Jews on the left find they longer

feel sympathetic to Israel and are critical of Israel for killing Palestinian children.

Some are American Jews who conflate their feelings for Prime Minister Netanyahu with their feelings for Israel and the Israeli people. There are American Jews who so despise the Netanyahu government -- and a number of religious and social domestic Israeli policies -- they refuse to join in pro-Israel community rallies meant simply to express solidarity with the Israeli *people* who are forced to endure the terror, injury and death of rockets falling near and in their homes, their hospitals and their school yards.

Some American Jews have been persuaded by main-stream media reports that *Israel provoked* these Hamas rocket attacks by distorted stories of an Israel assault on the Temple Mount or the eviction of East Jerusalem Palestinian families refusing to pay rent for months on end (neither story has been reported accurately). These Jews are then convinced that Hamas is somehow “justified” in perpetuating the double war crime by firing rockets into a sovereign country from within their own civilian neighborhoods.

Is there any other context in which American Jews would argue that a skirmish with police or a real-estate disagreement would justify firing 4,000 rockets into another country?

Jews have always disagreed – often vehemently. Jews have disagreed about Israeli politics and Israeli policies. Such disagreements are a given of Jewish life. And there are far more vituperative disagreements on every one of these issues among Israelis!

But on one thing there was a web of agreement: an American Jewish commitment to an enduring State of Israel. This Hamas-Israeli conflict is threatening to do immeasurable damage to the American Jewish fabric.

The terrifying – if not incomprehensible -- reaction of a significant segment of the American Jewish community to this Hamas-Israeli conflict is that a larger question is being voiced – even in public: Should the Jewish State of Israel exist?

Now, for many Jews and non-Jews the question is “crazy” – it makes no sense. Of course the State of Israel should exist. It is a nation-state of the United Nations. It would be like asking should the Muslim state of Syria exist - or should Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan - not to mention China, Russia, Cuba - all exist? Or how about Rwanda and Tanzania - should they exist?

To most Americans, the thought that any of these countries should not exist - regardless of their record on human rights -- would never cross their minds.

But sadly, the question is being asked by a startling number of American Jews - who think the answer should be “No” when it comes to the ongoing existence of Israel.

The most high-profile proponent of Israel's demise is Peter Beinart. Until recently, Beinart was a most eloquent voice arguing for a two-state solution that would secure both a Palestinian state and a Jewish state of Israel.

But in a New York Times Op Ed piece published last July (with a follow-up in May), Beinart renounced his support of a two-state solution and now advocates one state from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea. This one state would consist of a Palestinian Muslim Shiite majority which, Beinart argues, would be welcoming of a Jewish minority.

Clearly, Beinart is now publicly calling for an end to the Jewish State of Israel – and he did so in the pages of the New York Times!

Anyone has the right to agree with Beinart. But for all of us who passionately believe in the State of Israel and her right to exist in secure perpetuity, the fact that there are American Jews who would be happy to see an end to Israel is terribly sad. In many ways it is incomprehensible given the sweep of Jewish history and the history of national Jewish rebirth over the past 150 years of modern Zionism. And most terrifying of all, it calls into question the reality of a Jewish People united as one, each caring for all other Jews as “family.

The perspective American Jews bring to the latest armed conflict between Israel and Hamas reflects where an American Jew truly stands on Israel's right to exist. A Jew who is critical of Israel's response to 4,000 Hamas rockets is validating the Hamas claim that there should be no Israel!

For here is the tragic reality underlying this Hamas attack and all those in the past or those yet to come.

The purported explanations of what caused Hamas, this time, to fire some 4,000 Iranian sponsored rockets into Israeli towns, villages and cities all dissemble the one fundamental truth of the conflict. Hamas - and other pro-Jihadist Muslims leaders - believes to the core of its being that there should be *no Jewish State of Israel anywhere in the Middle East.*

What every Jew and non-Jew need understand is that there is nothing Israel could ever say or do - nothing Israel could “give up” - no compromise Israel could ever make – none! -- which would move Hamas (and Mahmoud Abbas' Palestinian Authority) to agree to live in peace alongside a Jewish state.

Bottom line: Hamas agrees with Peter Beinart (though Hamas would probably demand their one state be Judenrein!). The only end to the conflict for Hamas is for Jews to turn out the lights on the State of Israel and leave the land.

Thus, by siding with Hamas in any of their acts of war against Israel is to validate Hamas' perspective and goal: that Israel has no right to exist.

So when an American Jew is fooled into thinking that Israel did something to

provoke Hamas' act of war — be it an Israeli defensive response on the Temple Mount or the eviction of Palestinian families refusing to pay rent — they are guilty of a degree of naïveté and ignorance of which they would be embarrassed in any other context.

Hamas' 4,000 rockets have nothing to do with anything Israel did. And for American Jews, these 4,000 rockets should have nothing to do with whom the Israeli Prime Minister is!

Again: there is *nothing* Israel could do or give to Hamas that would create peace between them. That is the true “human tragedy” all people of good will — and especially American Jews — must accept.

That's the real human tragedy Jews should be talking about whenever the subject comes up: the irredentist religious Muslim ideology that believes it is morally acceptable to fire 4,000 rockets at civilian targets *because Israel has no right to exist!*

This does not mean that all Palestinians think and feel as Hamas does. But sadly, no movement for peace has emerged in the Palestinian world. There is no Palestinian movement equivalent to Israel's Shalom Achshav (“Peace Now”), nor do Palestinian intellectuals publish Op Ed pieces in the New York Times criticizing Mahmoud Abbas or Hamas for their irredentism.

The veteran journalist Geraldo Rivera, criticized Israel roundly on television for the death of Palestinian children. But he felt no need to speak of the horror of Israelis living under a barrage of 4,000 rockets, nor could he accept the fact that not one Palestinian child had to die from Israeli fire if Hamas simply had not attacked Israel with 4,000 rockets.

Sadly, Rivera's perspective is shared by many American Jews who view themselves as moral, righteous people.

As David Harris of the AJC has so aptly put it: this is like blaming the fireman for the work of the arsonist.

The most important thing for every American to remember - Jew and non-Jew alike -- is that regardless of the pretext given by the media for Hamas attacks on Israel, there is only one overriding cause to the Hamas-Israeli conflict — Hamas' unyielding determination that there should be no Jewish State of Israel.

And any American Jew who sides with Hamas is implicitly saying the same thing.

Few conflicts in life are black and white. This one is -- given the fact that there is nothing Israel can do to make peace with Hamas -short of ending its existence.

In this conflict, Hamas is pure black and it's time for all American Jews to see

this reality.

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