
FRIENDS OF ISRAEL INITIATIVE

Israel under Fire:
The continuing threat of Iranian-
supported terrorist rocket attacks
from Gaza, the failure of the
international community, and the
consequences of continued failure

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Recommendations

The cycle of conflict since Israel's disengagement from Gaza in 2005 suggests the long-term continuation of Iranian-backed terrorism against Israel from Gaza. It also seems inevitable that, pressured by Iran, Gaza terrorists will intensify their attacks to the extent that Israel is left with little option other than to launch a further major operation against them, which would likely result in further serious loss of life.

Now is the time – before it becomes necessary for another Israeli security operation in Gaza – for the international community, led by the UN, to take pre-emptive action. Six policy options are proposed, that together could undermine Iranian support and discourage continued attacks by Gaza terrorist groups.

1. The UN should cease the tacit encouragement of terrorist activity against Israel by Iran, Hamas, and other groups in Gaza that results from continued, unjust, and unfounded UNHRC resolutions against Israel. As well as encouraging terrorism, the UNHRC's distorted and perverse focus on one democratic Western nation provides ammunition for those who desire to propagate hatred against Israel, and thus has the effect of deepening the conflict still further.

2. It is incumbent upon the UNSC and the Quartet to follow through on their warning to the government of Gaza, which was cast in advance of Is-

Research by Joseph Raskas

rael's unilateral withdrawal from Gaza, to crack down on Palestinian militants and not to participate in "armed group or militia activities." The UN should launch a special committee to investigate the rocket attacks from Gaza – including the structural support provided to Gaza terrorist groups by the regime in Tehran – and publicly condemn those responsible for these attacks as often as necessary.

3. The international community should weaken the resolve of Hamas and other groups in Gaza seeking to undermine regional stability by re-imposing the economic sanctions which were previously imposed on Hamas following the Palestinian national elections in Gaza, and which were lifted without proper justification. The international community should restrict the flow of money, people, and goods into and out of Gaza – seizing assets that are within jurisdiction, tightening restrictions on the movement of Hamas officials, and limiting the opening of border crossings to the passage of basic goods, fuel, water, and relief aid, without increasing the hardship of the inhabitants of Gaza. The international community should implement these policies swiftly, unless and until Hamas satisfies three conditions previously imposed by Israel and the Quartet that would move Hamas to become a legitimate partner for peace: to renounce violence against Israel, to recognize Israel's permanent right to exist, and to accept the validity of previous Israeli-Palestinian agreements.

4. The international community should impose a price on Iran for continuing its support of terrorism against Israel. It should take full account of Iran's sponsorship of terrorism in any decisions made on whether or not to relax sanctions and financial measures on Iran, as well as other relevant concessions, as a result of ongoing nuclear negotiations. It should condition further progress on these negotiations on Iran's support for terrorism against Israel.

5. In the wake of the recent significant weapons shipment from Iran to support terrorism against Israel, Western governments should declaredly join Israel in interdiction operations against potential future Iranian weapons shipments. Western nations should jointly monitor clandestine shipping routes, co-develop concepts of operation for a range of options, coordinate extensively through military and intelligence channels, and conduct publicly announced joint exercises. Doing so would send a clear message, both to Tehran and to other state sponsors of terrorism, that the international community has the will, power, and resolve to hold these terrorist sponsors accountable for illegal activities intended to destabilize the region.

6. Members of the international community should recognize, and assert as often as necessary, that if Israel is compelled to respond to Hamas's rocket attacks, the blame lies solely upon the unlawful aggression of Hamas, not Israeli military countermeasures. It is the inherent right of any country to act in self-defense against those who seek to harm it. Under article 51 of the Charter of the UN, Israel has the full right to defend itself and the security of its citizens from attacks. If Israel is forced to exercise that right, it deserves the full weight of the international community backing it.

Introduction

Since Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip in 2005, Gaza terrorists have fired over 8,000 rockets into Israel, killing 44 Israelis and injuring more than 1,600. During that time, Hamas – designated a terrorist organization by the US, EU, and others – has been in effective control of Gaza. The Israeli government has held Hamas accountable for attacks launched from its territory.

Iran, which is considered by the US to be the world's most active state sponsor of terrorism, has encouraged, facilitated, and perhaps even directed these attacks on Israel from Gaza, including by funding and supplying munitions to Hamas and other terrorist groups.

No country in the world can be expected to accept such violence aimed at its population and territory. Every sovereign nation has not only the right, but also the inherent responsibility to protect its citizens from external attack. In accordance with this responsibility, Israel, as well as implementing defensive measures, has taken offensive military action to protect its people, including two major sustained operations against Gaza terrorists, Operation Cast Lead in 2008-9 and Operation Pillar of Defense in 2012.

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has adopted six resolutions as part of international efforts to address Iran's nuclear program and, to a limited extent, its support for terrorism. Despite Israeli preventive actions and some limited efforts by the international community, Iran continues to fund and equip Gaza terrorists. The firing of rockets continues, with the most significant barrage in recent months – more than 80 rockets – launched on March 14, 2014.

Due to its own current difficulties (set out below), it may not presently suit Hamas to allow further escalation. But it remains highly likely that Gaza terrorists, pressed by Iran, will again intensify their attacks to the extent that Israel is forced into another major operation against their terrorist activities and infrastructure in Gaza.

The pattern of behavior of the international community in the face of incessant attacks against Israel has been lamentable. Despite over 100 letters written by the Israeli ambassador to the UN Secretary General and Security Council seeking their aid, the UN has taken no effective action. Instead, the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) has repeatedly condemned Israel. The UNHRC's 27 resolutions against Israel, since its inception in 2006, grant effective immunity to Hamas. Tacit approval of terror harms, rather than advances the prospects for peace. Furthermore, the UN's actions could be considered borderline-encouragement of Gaza terrorism. The deeply flawed Goldstone Report into Operation Cast Lead, in which Israel was accused of various war crimes and crimes against humanity, is an example of UN action that is tantamount to encouragement.

By its inaction, tacit approval, and virtual encouragement, the UN, as well as other international bodies, must assume a measure of culpability for the continuing rocket attacks; and thus also for any casualties on either side resulting from Israel's military response.

During Operation Cast Lead there were more than 1,000 Palestinian and 13 Israeli fatalities. During Pillar of Defense 177 Palestinians and 5 Israelis were killed. While these casualty figures are appalling, the consequences of continuing attacks from Gaza – and of continued lack of international action against them – are wider still.

One million people in southern Israel live under grave threat, often with violent disruptions to their lives. They suffer incalculable psychological trauma. Roughly 1.8 million Palestinians living in Gaza suffer economic hardship as a result of the security measures imposed by Israel and Egypt to defend against Gaza terrorists.¹ Many also suffer immense psychological trauma as a result of terrorist activity in their midst and in particular Israeli military action designed to prevent and counter Gaza terrorism. Both

¹ Israel and Egypt control the borders of Gaza. Since the ouster of the Muslim Brotherhood-led government of Mohammed Morsi, the Egyptian military has waged an ongoing campaign to uproot the terrorist infrastructure in the Sinai Peninsula and is increasingly focused on securing the territory's border with the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip.

peoples, whom it is to be hoped one day will live in peace side by side, are building ever-greater mutual resentment and mistrust as a consequence of this terrorist activity.

A further consequence is the impact on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. A major stumbling block for the current framework talks revolves around Israel's concerns for its own security in the aftermath of the creation of any Palestinian state in the West Bank. The people of Israel have seen the result of a complete withdrawal from territory controlled by Palestinians. They understandably fear that the West Bank, too, would become a launching pad for terrorist attacks against them. Is it reasonable to expect Israel to rely upon security assurances from the international community when, in the face of continued attacks from Gaza – repeated year after year – they witness only condemnation and disdain from that same international community?

Iranian involvement has sustained the extent of missile attacks by Gaza terrorists. There has been some international attempt to halt Iran's terrorist activities. Yet instead of fully halting or extracting a price for Iran's continuation of terror, the West is engaging Iran with a view to its rehabilitation in the world community. The strategic basis for this engagement is understood, but even potential progress on curtailing Iran's nuclear program should not be a reason to ignore its support for international terrorism. On the contrary, Iran's continued support for terrorism, while seeking an accommodation with the West and continuing to pursue nuclear weapons capability, should be particularly alarming to Western powers.

This paper considers the course of events that have unfolded since Israel withdrew from Gaza, knowledge of which is critical to an understanding of the current situation and the way in which the international community has contributed to, or at least failed to act against, the continuing violence. The paper goes on to set out the current situation on Iranian-supported terrorism against Israel from Gaza, and proposes six options for action by the international community. Options that might at least have some mitigating effect on the serious consequences outlined above.

While this paper focuses on rocket attacks as the main terrorist tactic currently employed against Israel, Gaza terrorists have also used other tactics, including kidnapping, direct fire, improvised explosive device attacks, and suicide attacks. The principles put forward in this paper apply also to such other forms of attack.

Background

Gaza is a strip of land, approximately 25 miles long and six miles wide, which lies on the Mediterranean coast of Israel. Israel controlled Gaza after it captured the territory from Egypt during the Six Day War. Under a series of agreements signed between 1994 and 1999, Israel transferred security and civilian responsibility to the Palestinian Authority (PA) for many areas of Gaza (as well as the West Bank). Today, approximately 1.8 million Palestinians and three major terrorist groups – Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and the Popular Resistance Committees – reside in the Strip.

Unlike many of her neighbors, Israel is a geographically narrow country almost completely devoid of strategic depth. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) must therefore act preemptively and decisively to defeat enemy threats. Israel must prevent the enemy from entering its territory – and if that fails, it must try to quickly transfer the battle to enemy territory. The majority of Israel's population and key infrastructure are located on the country's coast, within the range of artillery or rocket fire from Gaza. Hamas possesses M-75 rockets, which have a range of 75 kilometers and are capable of hitting central Israel and Jerusalem. During Operation Pillar of Defense in 2012, Hamas launched 10 M-75 rockets at these locations.

In September 2000, Israel tightened security measures around the Strip. The move was a direct response to the outbreak of the Second Intifada, or Palestinian uprising, against Israel. Despite the IDF engaging in frequent military operations to prevent terrorist attacks emanating from Gaza, according to the Israeli government, Palestinian terrorists still perpetrated 11,369 attacks against soldiers and civilians in the Gaza area between September 2000 and January 2004. In December 2003, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon indicated that the presence of Israeli civilians in Gaza was not worth the high cost – politically, economically, and militarily – of defending them. He announced the so-called “Disengagement Plan”, a proposed unilateral withdrawal from Gaza, which would be implemented along with the construction of a security barrier to help prevent future terror attacks. The stated purpose of the disengagement was to “reduce terrorism as much as possible and grant Israeli citizens the maximum level of security.” It was intended to bolster security for the residents of Israel, reduce pressure on the IDF, and lessen friction between Israelis and Palestinians.

Sharon said he was compelled to take unilateral steps to reduce terror attacks on Israel's civilians because the so-called "Road Map" – the peace plan announced by US President George W. Bush in April 2003, which outlined a process for a negotiated settlement between the Israelis and Palestinians through a series of confidence-building measures on both sides – had reached an impasse. Moreover, Sharon believed that a unilateral withdrawal would demonstrate a firm Israeli willingness to make significant concessions for the sake of peace and prompt the international community to support Israel more broadly.

The UNSC published a "special statement to the media" that expressed special satisfaction in the execution of the disengagement, a step defined by the UN as a "rare gesture" towards Israel. The then representatives of the Quartet – UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, UK Foreign Secretary Jack Straw, High Representative for European Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana, and European Commissioner for External Relations Benita Ferrero-Waldner – praised Sharon for the pullout, saluting the courage which they said he displayed during the implementation of his decision. In the same statement, the Quartet urged the PA to crack down on Palestinian militants and not to participate in "armed group or militia activities."

Politicians on both Israel's right and left and some senior military commanders advised against the withdrawal, warning that a pullback would signal to Middle East observers that Israel is weak in the face of terror, and would therefore lead to even greater Palestinian demands. Israel's right-wing parties rejected the proposal on the grounds that it did not require reciprocal concessions by the Palestinians, while the religious parties insisted that Gaza constitutes an integral part of the land of Israel. In August 2005, then Finance Minister Binyamin Netanyahu resigned from the government in protest. He was the highest ranking Israeli official to do so.

Beginning on August 15, 2005, Israel uprooted approximately 8,500 citizens in 21 communities in Gaza, at a cost of nearly \$900 million. Two weeks later, on September 1, 2005, Israel signed an agreement with Egypt, enabling the IDF to relinquish military control of the Philadelphia Corridor, a 14 kilometer strip of land running along the Egypt-Gaza border. The Israeli troops were replaced by Egyptian border patrol forces. As stipulated by the agreement, the deployment of Egyptian troops was intended to monitor the Egyptian side in order to prevent smuggling of weapons and personnel into

Gaza. Egypt commenced the deployment of the new forces to the specified area of operation on September 10, 2005.

In contrast to Sharon, who intended the Gaza exit “to be the first and last,” Khaled Mashaal, the head of Hamas’s political bureau, said Hamas views the withdrawal as the “first step for full liberation and achieving all of our legitimate rights. Today Gaza and tomorrow the West Bank and later every inch of the land.” Palestinians evidently concurred with Mashaal’s assessment. A 2005 poll conducted by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research demonstrates that a lopsided majority (84%) of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza viewed the Israeli withdrawal as a victory for Palestinian armed resistance. From a Palestinian perspective, the pullout proved that terror is the most effective tool in the arsenal of forcing political concessions from Israel.

Outline of the situation in Gaza since the disengagement

The firing of rockets from Gaza started in 2001, prior to the disengagement, when Hamas originally introduced the Qassam. Gaza terrorists have focused so much effort on rockets as a means to attack the Israeli population due to the effectiveness of Israeli security control around the Gaza Strip. Israel’s ability to check and control movement of people and vehicles from Gaza makes it very difficult for terrorists to launch other forms of attack such as suicide bombing and shooting from Gaza against Israeli population centers. The terrorists’ attempts so far to circumvent Israeli security by tunneling into Israeli territory offer only limited scope for their attacks.

Rocket attacks against Israel increased from 2002 through 2005. But prior to Israel’s pullout from Gaza in August 2005, Hamas dramatically reduced the number of rockets fired so they would not inhibit the withdrawal. Then, after Israel’s disengagement from Gaza, the number of confirmed rocket strikes against Israel increased by more than 500 percent. Rather than lay the groundwork – both physically and fundamentally – for growing the Palestinian economy in Gaza and preparing for peaceful coexistence with Israel, Gaza terrorist groups effectively turned the Strip into a launching pad for rocket fire against communities inside Israel and a staging ground for cross-border attacks. Since Israel’s withdrawal from Gaza in 2005, Gaza terrorists have fired more than 8,000 rockets into Israel, killing 44 Israelis and injuring more than 1,600, according to IDF data.

On January 25, 2006, Hamas won de facto control of Gaza, trouncing the Fatah Party in elections for the Palestinian Legislative Council and sinking hopes of the international community that the contest would foster better relations between Palestinians and Israel. The United States underestimated the depth of hostility among Palestinians toward Fatah, and thus failed to foresee the consequences of the election. Hamas – a Sunni Islamist group violently opposed to the state of Israel, and a US-designated Foreign Terrorist Organization since 1997² – won 76 of 132 seats.

Following the election in Gaza, Fatah (with backing from the United States) refused to allow Hamas to govern. Then US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, on *ABC News*, said: “You cannot have one foot in politics and the other in terror. Our position on Hamas has, therefore, not changed.” In March 2006, the United States and the European Union cut official aid to the Palestinians. Israel and the Quartet imposed economic sanctions on the Hamas-led government, demanding that it recognize Israel, renounce violence against Israel, and accept previous accords with Israel. The sanctions were lifted in February 2007, when Fatah and Hamas signed an agreement to form a coalition government, called the National Unity Government. The sanctions were lifted despite the fact that Hamas remains committed to Israel’s destruction, a clear violation of a key demand of the sanctions architecture.

The coalition government was dissolved by President Mahmoud Abbas, following a Hamas military takeover of Gaza. On June 13, 2007, Hamas launched a violent coup, wresting control away from Fatah. According to Javier Solana, then the European Union’s Foreign Policy Representative, Iran was likely behind the Hamas takeover of Gaza and ousting of Fatah. Abbas responded to Hamas’s coup by dissolving the national unity government – formerly led by Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh of Hamas – and forming an emergency government led by former Finance Minister Salam Fayyad, based in the West Bank city of Ramallah. The Israeli government, from that point onward, has considered Hamas solely responsible for all of the terrorist activity in Gaza, including any violation of the calm and firing against and attacking Israeli citizens.

Since it began exerting authority in Gaza, Hamas intentionally restrained its terror policy toward Israel. It did so likely in order to stabilize its rule in

² Hamas is designated a terrorist organization by Israel, the US, UK, EU, Canada, Australia, and Japan, due to its long record of attacks and its refusal to renounce violence.

Gaza and allow for the strengthening of its military capacity without cross-border disturbances from Israel. Hamas consolidated control of Gaza by laying foundations to its rule through a government that could sway the entire Palestinian public. Hamas established clinics and schools to meet Palestinian needs and, in doing so, highlighted the endemic corruption and inefficiency of Fatah. Hamas also improved the infrastructure of its military wing, the Izzadin Kassam Brigade. The buildup was done likely in order to prepare for a future conflagration with Israel and to maintain military superiority in the Strip over the PA security apparatuses.

Israeli intervention policy

After having completed the violent seizure of control of Gaza in June 2007, Hamas again escalated its attack policy against Israel. According to an assessment by Shabak, the Israel Security Agency, Hamas leaders correctly calculated that despite Hamas's seizure of the Strip, Israel would refrain from a harsh retaliation if Hamas avoided attacks on inner Israel. Israel also carefully calibrated its response to Hamas – destroying weapons stockpiles and manufacturing facilities, as well as selectively targeting terrorist leaders. Both Israeli retaliatory measures conveyed seriousness to Hamas, but avoided provoking a much larger confrontation. According to Israeli Supreme Court Justice Elyakim Rubinstein, Israel's policy of "selective targeting" is consistent with international law because Israel is engaged in armed conflict with terrorists, and the targets of the attacks are not civilians, rather combatants who are part of a military chain of command.

In June 2008, Hamas attempted to recalibrate the so-called "retaliation equation" – a tactical measure intended to force Israel to pay a higher price for each successful interception of terror – by gradually increasing the frequency of rocket attacks against Israel. The goal was to increase the pace of rocket fire against Israel and, with time, deter Israel from retaliating. The deliberate escalation of ballistic terrorism helped Hamas advance its twin goals: namely, garnering Palestinian support for violent resistance and diminishing Israel's inherent right to self-defense by eroding the world public's patience for the IDF's policy of prevention. A 2008 poll conducted by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research in the West Bank and Gaza showed increased popularity for Hamas and its leadership, increased support for its positions and legitimacy, and greater satisfaction with its

performance, compared to the previous year. From January 2006 until January 2008, the UNHRC condemned Israel 15 times, calling on Israel to stop its military operations in Gaza. Only one other nation, Myanmar, was condemned by the council in that time.

Operation Cast Lead

The hitherto steady rate of firing rockets by Hamas accelerated significantly after an Israeli assault thwarted a 2008 tunnel attack by Hamas against Israel, in which six Hamas terrorists were killed and four IDF soldiers were injured. Hamas responded with a barrage of rocket and mortar attacks towards Ashkelon. On May 14, 2008, an Iranian-made Grad rocket launched from Gaza hit a busy shopping mall in central Ashkelon, wounding 90 people. Among those seriously injured were a 24-year-old mother and her infant daughter. From Israel's perspective, Hamas had crossed the line by causing serious injury and damage.

By December 2008, Hamas had amassed more than 20,000 armed operatives and implemented a vast labyrinth of underground tunnels throughout Gaza, primarily for smuggling weapons and launching terrorist attacks. By mid-December 2008, Hamas had drastically increased the launching of short and long range rockets against Israeli population centers and continued to escalate its barrages on a daily basis. Hamas fired 440 rockets in December compare to 150 in November and roughly 300 mortar shells in December compared to about 95 in November. Hamas launched these rockets from densely-populated areas, including schoolyards as well as hospital and mosque rooftops.

Rather than offensive action, Israel pursued non-military efforts at first. The government allocated 327 million NIS to the fortification of existing shelters and the IDF Home Front employed sophisticated technology to warn civilians of incoming rocket attacks. Israel also made urgent appeals to the UN Secretary General and successive Presidents of the Security Council, as well as diplomatic overtures directly and through intermediaries. From 2000 to 2008, Israel sent more than 100 letters to the Secretary General of the UN and the President of the Security Council, describing the Palestinian rocket fire against Israel, as well as suicide attacks. The UN took no action. Israel also joined members of the international community in instituting economic sanctions against Hamas. On December 27, 2008, after all of these options failed to significantly reduce rocket fire from Gaza, the IDF launched

Operation Cast Lead. The military operation was limited to two objectives:

1. To stop the bombardment of Israeli civilians by destroying Hamas's mortar and rocket launching apparatus and infrastructure.
2. To reduce the ability of Hamas and other terrorist organizations in Gaza to perpetrate future attacks against the civilian population in Israel.

The operation began with a wave of airstrikes launched by the IDF against Hamas military targets in Gaza. In response, Hamas increased its rocket and mortar attacks against southern Israel, striking major cities such as Beersheba and Ashdod for the first time. From the beginning of 2008, less than half a year after Hamas seized control of Gaza, until prior to Operation Cast Lead, Hamas and other Palestinian terrorist groups fired 3,102 rockets and mortars from Gaza into Israel. During the three-week operation, Gaza terrorists fired 796 rockets and mortars at Israel. Israel's then Permanent Representative to the UN, Gabriela Shalev, repeatedly dispatched letters to the Secretary General of the UN and the President of the Security Council, in which she described the continued threat of rocket attacks, the failure of the international community to stop the Hamas attacks, and the consequences of continued inaction. The Israeli airstrikes were followed by an IDF ground operation into Gaza, which ended on January 18, 2009 when Israel declared a unilateral ceasefire. Hamas announced a one week ceasefire roughly twelve hours later. Israel completed its withdrawal from Gaza on January 21. Sources diverge on the exact number of fatalities, but according to various estimates the conflict resulted in between 1,166 and 1,417 Palestinian and 13 Israeli fatalities.

In September 2009, South African Justice Richard Goldstone released the findings of the UN Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza War, more commonly known as the Goldstone Report, an initiative of the UNHRC. The Goldstone Report alleged that Israel engaged in "a deliberately disproportionate attack designed to punish, humiliate and terrorize a civilian population." The report falsely accused Israeli troops of committing "war crimes" by attacking purely civilian targets during Operation Cast Lead. Conversely, Goldstone failed to note that Hamas was guilty of deliberately using the civilian population as human shields. Indeed, the report says it could not "establish the use of mosques for military purposes or to shield military activity," despite evidence that undermined this assertion.³ The report did conclude that

³ During the operation, Israeli soldiers discovered, among other things, a Hamas intelligence map depicting the placement of bombs near mosques, gas stations, and fuel depots. The IDF also captured footage of a booby-trapped zoo and school in Gaza. Both the map and the video were well publicized during Operation Cast Lead. It

Palestinian rocket fire into Israel constituted war crimes; however, it failed to link Hamas to any violations of the laws of war, even though it was the continuous rocket attacks on Israeli civilians from Hamas-controlled Gaza territory that forced Israel to launch Operation Cast Lead.

Hamas inevitably endorsed the report. Musa Abu Marzuq, Hamas's second in command in Damascus, correctly told *Al-Arabiya* that "the report acquits Hamas almost entirely." On November 5, 2009, the UN General Assembly voted on the report, endorsing it. In February 2010, Britain and France changed their vote from abstention to support for the Goldstone Report, and in mid-March 2010, the European Parliament voted to endorse the report as well.

On April 1, 2011, in an article in the *Washington Post*, Judge Goldstone retracted many of his allegations against Israel. He conceded that his report had hastily and wrongfully equated Israel with Hamas in deliberately and willfully targeting civilians. "If I had known then what I know now, the Goldstone Report would have been a different document," he wrote. Judge Goldstone's article validated Israel's *casus belli* for the operation, noting that "Israel, like any sovereign nation, has the right and obligation to defend itself and its citizens against attacks from abroad and within." Judge Goldstone admitted that the majority of Palestinian casualties were indeed Hamas combatants (as opposed to the innocent civilians that his report had suggested) and conceded what should have been an obvious point – namely, that "asking Hamas to investigate may have been a mistaken enterprise."

Despite Judge Goldstone's retraction, the Goldstone Report effectively ensured that Hamas and other Gaza terrorist groups would not have to pay serious consequences for their attacks against Israeli civilians or for deliberately endangering the lives of many inhabitants of Gaza. In doing so, the report effectively undermined Israel's deterrent capabilities and emboldened Hamas's leadership. Almost immediately after the operation ended, Hamas, with Iranian support, began rearming itself and increasing its military capabilities. Hamas extended the range and quality of its weapons and smuggled thousands of rockets into Gaza. In the ensuing years, Hamas and other Gaza terrorist groups repeatedly violated the ceasefire agreement by firing rockets and mortars at Israel.

is highly unlikely that the Commission would have been unaware of this evidence.

Operation Pillar of Defense

In the first weeks of October and early in November 2012, Hamas launched numerous rocket attacks against Israel and the IDF responded with military strikes against the terrorist infrastructure in Gaza. On October 24, Hamas fired 80 rockets and mortars into Israel. Israel retaliated against the Hamas rocket fire by killing three members of a Palestinian rocket squad. On November 10, Gaza terrorists fired an RPG at an IDF convoy patrolling inside Israel along the border, wounding four soldiers. The next morning, a barrage of rockets hit Israeli towns, causing destruction of buildings and cancelling schools in towns across southern Israel. The Israeli government appealed to the UN on at least 20 separate occasions, urging Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the President of the Security Council to take action against Palestinian rocket attacks on Israeli civilians. As was the case prior to Operation Cast Lead, the UN took no action whatsoever in response. After diplomatic overtures failed to stop the rocket attacks, the IDF launched Operation Pillar of Defense, a campaign against terror targets in Gaza. As articulated by then Defense Minister Ehud Barak, the objectives were threefold:

1. To enhance Israel's deterrence vis-à-vis Hamas and other factions in Gaza.
2. To deny Hamas and these other factions certain strategic capabilities, especially longer-range rockets.
3. To restore normalcy to the life of Israeli citizens.

The operation commenced on November 12, 2009, when the IDF killed the head of Hamas's military wing, Ahmed Jabari, in Gaza. The IDF successfully eliminated Hamas military targets, including rocket factories, rocket squads, and terrorist commanders. During the operation, Hamas and other Palestinian terrorist groups in Gaza fired long-range rockets, such as the Iranian Fajr-5, toward Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. From November 14 to November 21, Palestinian terrorist groups fired more than 1,700 rockets and 50 mortars at Israel. The majority of those rockets struck Israeli territory and some damaged homes, schools, and other civilian areas. According to the IDF, five Israelis were killed by rocket fire and 240 were injured, and 177 Palestinians were killed, of whom approximately 120 were combatants. Israel's Iron Dome missile defense system was used extensively during the operation. The missile batteries shot down more than a quarter of all rockets fired into Israel (436), of which seven were launched towards Tel Aviv.

Iron Dome achieved an 85% success rate against missiles that it engaged.⁴ An Egyptian-brokered ceasefire on November 21 officially ended the hostilities between Israel and Hamas. According to the text released by the Egyptians, Hamas agreed to stop rocket fire into Israel and attacks along the border, and Israel agreed to stop military activities and targeted killings of terrorists in Gaza. The year following the implementation of the armistice agreement was comparatively quiet, with “only” 33 rockets fired at southern Israeli communities, the lowest attack rate in more than a decade.

Iran’s support for Gaza terrorism

Since the end of Operation Pillar of Defense, Hamas has been busy rebuilding its arsenal. The military capabilities of Hamas are in large part the product of Iranian support. The United States Department of Defense declared Iran a state sponsor of terrorism in 1984, and today considers it the world’s “most active state sponsor of terrorism.” Although tensions have recently arisen between Hamas and Iran – due to the latter’s support for the Alawite regime of Bashar al-Assad in Syria against the Sunni-led rebels – Iran continues to back Hamas with respect to waging war against Israel, which Iranian leaders have described as a “cancerous tumor.” Iran provides Hamas financial support, which some analysts believe could amount to \$20-30 million per year, as well as weapons, including the Iranian-made, medium-range Fajr-5 rockets and the Gaza-made M75s, which are produced using Iranian technology. Both were used against Israel during Operation Pillar of Defense.

Iran continues to export terrorism against Israel, even as it is engaged by the West in diplomatic talks over its nuclear program. On March 5, 2014, Israeli forces interdicted a Panamanian-flagged vessel, the Klos-C, in the Red Sea carrying a large arms shipment to the Hamas-controlled Strip. The shipment reportedly originated in Syria, and then transited through Iran and Iraq, before eventually being intercepted on the high seas by Israel. Hidden in several containers were, among other things, advanced M-302 missiles, which have a payload of up to 170 kilograms of explosives and are capable of striking most Israeli population centers. In addition to Iran being a strategic threat to Israel because of its nuclear program, the existence of an Iranian weapons pipeline to Gaza underscores the tactical threat Iran

⁴ Iron Dome is designed to engage and destroy only launched missiles that its target acquisition system identifies as being on a trajectory that might cause casualties or significant damage to property. The system does not target rockets or missiles predicted to land in uninhabited areas.

poses to Israel. Some analysts consider it possible that at least part of the weapons shipment was destined for the Sinai Peninsula, where it would also have been used by terrorists to target Israel. The M-302 missiles, if fired from Sinai, could also hit Tel Aviv and Jerusalem as well as other Israeli population centers.

The Israelis extensively documented the raid against the Klos-C with photos and videos, presenting the weapons which were captured. The United States condemned “in the strongest terms Iran’s effort to supply terrorist organizations operating in the region with weaponry.” Hamas belittled the interception as a “silly joke,” while Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif described Israeli claims regarding the operation as “the repetitive and unfounded lies of the Zionist media.”

The incident is not the first time that a Gaza-bound Iranian arms shipment has been intercepted by Israel. In 2011, the Israeli Navy boarded the *Victoria*, a German-owned ship, which was laden with more than 50 tons of weapons that were concealed behind bales of cotton and sacks of lentils. According to the IDF, most of the weapons were manufactured in Iran and contained Farsi-language instruction manuals printed with symbols of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards. In 2009, the Israeli Navy intercepted a ship, called the *Francop*, off the coast of Cyprus, which was allegedly en route from Iran to Syria, at which point the weapons were to be offloaded and shipped by land to Iran’s terrorist proxy, Hezbollah, in Lebanon. IDF inspectors showed the ship contained 36 civilian containers with 500 tons of arms. All three weapons shipments were in contravention of UNSC resolution 1747, which “decides that Iran shall not supply, sell or transfer directly or indirectly...any arms or related materiel.”

Iran’s support for Hamas and other terrorist groups in Gaza is part of a wider and continuing pattern of activity. Iran has for many years played a role in fomenting and maintaining instability in the region. When Palestinian resistance groups have appeared to flag in their efforts against Israel, Iran has frequently stepped in to re-energize them, often using their terrorist proxy, Hezbollah, as a vehicle. In addition to supporting and directing Hezbollah’s efforts against Israel and the West, both in Lebanon and elsewhere, Iran has also directed, supported, and facilitated terrorist attacks against Western military forces in Iraq and Afghanistan.⁵

⁵ In December 2009, then US Army Gen. David Petraeus told *ABC News* that, “Iran continues to fund, train, equip, and give some direction to the residual Shiite militias and extremist elements in Iraq. There are daily attacks with the so-called signature weapons only made by Iran – the explosively formed projectiles, forms of

Response of Egypt and other regional actors

Recent years have seen the formation of three broad regional blocs in the Middle East: Iran, Syria, and its Shiite proxies in one camp; Israel and the United States' traditional allies – including Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain – in a second camp; and a radical Sunni bloc anchored at times by Turkey, Qatar, and the Muslim Brotherhood comprising a third camp. In 2012, Turkey replaced Iran as the leading financial backer of Hamas, according to Israeli government sources. According to Israeli estimates, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan has since then overseen the transfer of up to \$250 million to Hamas in Gaza per annum, as well as provided training to Hamas security forces in Gaza. Turkey coordinated the cash transfers with Qatar, which reportedly pledged \$400 million to the group in 2012.

There are strong ideological, theological, and organizational ties between the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas. According to Richard Clarke, former chief counterterrorism advisor on the US National Security Council under Presidents Clinton and Bush, “The Muslim Brotherhood has provided the ideological underpinning for almost all the modern Sunni Islamic terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda, Hamas and Islamic Jihad. In fact, the Brotherhood plays an active role in promoting terrorism against the US”. Precisely because of those ties, Hamas had broad expectations that the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt would cement an alliance between itself and the country, and that Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood would provide increased support post-Mubarak.

The Muslim Brotherhood's loss of power has been highly damaging to Hamas. A court in Egypt has banned Hamas activity and ordered the seizure of its offices and assets. The Egyptian army, which blames Hamas for facilitating the movement of jihadist materiel and personnel into the Egypt-controlled Sinai Peninsula, has launched a campaign to eliminate Hamas's

improvised explosive devices.” In June 2011, then US Secretary of Defense Robert Gates said, “Iran is furnishing new, more deadly weapons to Shiite Muslim militias targeting US troops in Iraq as part of a pattern of renewed attempts to exert influence in the region. About 40 percent of the deaths of American soldiers since the official end of US combat operations almost 10 months ago have occurred in the past few weeks as a result of the attacks.” In March 2012, then US Marine Corps Gen. James N. Mattis, US Central Command commander, told the US Senate Armed Services Committee that, “Iran poses the single greatest threat to US interests and to our friends and stability in the region, and poses a global threat through its world-wide proxy network as recent attacks have demonstrated.” Later that year, in November 2012, the US Department of Treasury designated Ali Musa Daqduq, “A senior Hezbollah commander responsible for numerous attacks against Coalition forces in Iraq, including planning an attack on the Karbala Joint Provincial Coordination Center (JPCC) on January 20, 2007, which resulted in the deaths of five US soldiers.”

smuggling tunnels, which had served as a major economic lifeline and key source of tax revenue and arms for Gaza. Media reports citing Egyptian military officials put the number of destroyed tunnels at 1,370. As a result of the tunnel closures, the vast supplies of cheap fuel, cement, water, and electricity from Egypt have dwindled. Unemployment is rising and public dissatisfaction with Hamas is growing. Gaza-based political scientist Mukhaimar Abusaada evaluated that “under the current circumstances 2014 is going to be a very bad year” for Hamas. The Hamas government’s 2014 budget of nearly \$900 million already has a deficit of 75 percent. Many analysts believe that the budget will likely fail to meet many of its target goals.⁶

The reemergence of an Egyptian government sympathetic to Hamas seems unlikely in the foreseeable future. Hamas’s decline in its international position has come with a decline in its domestic control over Gaza. The group has scrambled to harshly crack down on the *Tamarrod* movement in Gaza, which takes its name from the Egyptian movement that led to the ouster of former President Morsi.

The renewal of violence in Gaza

Hamas’s strained relationship with Iran has enabled competing terrorist organizations in Gaza, such as Palestinian Islamic Jihad, to expand ties with Tehran. The consequences of those ties were revealed on March 12, 2014, when Palestinian Islamic Jihad launched at least 80 rockets at Israeli population centers, the largest salvo of rockets since the ceasefire was brokered in November 2012. Prior to the attack, Hamas reportedly withdrew its 800-strong security force from the Gaza-Israel border. The force is officially deployed to “safeguard public order” and is responsible for preventing rocket launches from Gaza that are not authorized by Hamas’s leadership. The barrage has deepened worries that Palestinian terror groups may be positioning themselves to start another round of fighting with Israel. More rocket fire could spiral downward into a major confrontation that would almost certainly cause civilian and military casualties on both sides.

Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Ya’alon had warned in the fall of 2013 that Hamas was arming itself in anticipation of “a renewal of violence.” The assessment by Ya’alon came on the heels of a speech by Hamas Prime

⁶ The budget covers four types of expenses: salaries and wages, \$509 million; operating expenses, \$114 million; transferable expenses, \$111 million; and capital expenses, \$160 million.

Minister Ismail Haniyeh marking the two-year anniversary of the Gilad Shalit prisoner exchange, in which the Hamas leader called on Arabs and Muslims to prepare for the “big Al Aqsa intifada” against Israel and hailing recent terror attacks in the West Bank. In anticipation of a potential conflagration, the IDF has been marking Gaza weapons depots and locating tunnels running between Gaza and Israel, many of which are intended for abducting IDF soldiers, and are constructed with concrete that the IDF has permitted into Gaza to ease the financial crisis there. According to the IDF, Hamas spends 20-30 percent of its military budget on the development of its underground infrastructure. In March 2014, Israeli forces discovered a large tunnel running several hundred meters into Israel from Southern Gaza. The tunnel was dug at a depth of eight meters and is among the largest and most sophisticated ever found, according to the IDF, which assessed that it was intended for attacks against Israel. Abu Obeida, Spokesman for the Hamas armed wing-Izzadin Kassam Brigades, accused Israel of using the discovery of the Hamas tunnel as a pretext for preparing for new aggression in Gaza.

Israel prefers a relatively weak Hamas to an extremist Salafist regime in Gaza. At present, Hamas likely cannot afford to provoke further conflict with Israel. But analysts widely believe that another round of hostilities with the group is simply a matter of time. Security officials have indicated that a substantial Israeli ground offensive may be unavoidable if Gaza terrorists continue to increase the number and intensity of rocket attacks against Israel. Even without an intensified campaign, in the event that just a single Gaza rocket kills or seriously injures multiple Israelis, the Israeli government could well decide that a major operation is necessary to defend its citizens.

If and when the next conflagration does occur, Israel will be forced to face a Hamas with increased stockpiles of weapons, now more capable of killing Israeli civilians and doing significant damage to Israeli population centers. Hamas’s arsenal includes mortars and rockets such as the upgraded Qassam, Katyusha, and GRAD. These weapons have ranges that can reach Israeli population centers such as Ashdod (population 200,000), Beersheba (pop. 197,000), Ashkelon (pop. 113,000), Rehovot (pop 113,000), and S’derot (pop. 22,000).

None of these rockets can be aimed with any precision and must therefore be considered indiscriminate. Furthermore, the absence in the main of Israeli military forces in areas struck by the rockets hitherto, as well as statements

by the leaders of Hamas and other terrorist groups, indicate that most of these attacks are deliberately intended to strike Israeli civilians and civilian structures.

Media reaction

Many media reports and human rights groups increasingly dismiss the Gaza rocket threat, especially the Qassam, as mainly a symbolic weapon, not a serious threat. While emphasizing the psychological threat, they downplay the dangers posed by these rockets and cite the low fatality rate and imprecision of the rockets as supposed proof of their claim.⁷

These commentators overlook the impact of intensive civil defense measures that have been implemented to defend against rocket attacks and have significantly mitigated their effects. Most Israeli homes and public facilities have access to a nearby bomb shelter. i-Apps, an Israeli smartphone application development company, has developed a GPS-based app to assist citizens fleeing from rocket fire to locate the closest bomb shelter and provides the fastest route to it. Moreover, the Iron Dome antimissile defense system, which was put on line in 2011, has intercepted large quantities of rockets. The fact that the Iron Dome achieved an 85-percent success rate during Operation Pillar of Defense was a major reason Israel did not have to launch a ground incursion into Gaza. In the absence of a multi-layered civil defense system, the threat would have been graver. Significant casualties and damage would likely have compelled Israel to initiate such an operation.

Response of the international community

The international response to the Gaza rocket fire has been one-sided and ineffectual. Since 2006, when the UN Human Rights Council was created to displace the discredited Commission on Human Rights – due to what the New York Times called its “disgraceful” performance, by allowing “abusive regimes” seats on the commission to “insulate themselves from criticism” –

⁷ In *Mass Casualty Potential of Qassam Rockets*, authors Lian Zuckera and Edward H. Kaplan apply shrapnel-casualty and spatial allocation models to the population of the southern Israeli town of Sderot to estimate casualties per randomly aimed rocket fired into the unprepared town. Their model suggests that, with robust civil defense systems including safe rooms, bomb shelters, early detection alarms, and missile defense, Qassam-like terror attacks on unprotected urban locations could prove much more serious than what one would expect based solely on the observed number of casualties in Sderot.

the UNHRC has criticized Israel on 27 separate occasions. While condemning Israel, those resolutions grant virtual immunity and even encouragement to Hamas and others. Israel is the only country listed on the UNHRC's permanent agenda, which purportedly addresses the human rights situation in so-called "Palestine and other occupied Arab territories." Since its inception, the UNHRC has condemned Israel in 80% of its country censures – 20 of 25 resolutions. The other five resolutions criticized North Korea once and Myanmar four times. In direct contrast, the UNHRC has never singularly criticized the Palestinians or Iranian support for Palestinian terrorism against Israel.

During the UNHRC's 25th session, which ended on March 28, 2014, the council passed five anti-Israel resolutions. Four of the five resolutions condemned Israeli treatment of Palestinians in the West Bank, east Jerusalem, and Gaza. They passed nearly unanimously, by a 46-to-1 vote. A fifth resolution against Israel condemned its continued presence on the Golan Heights and its treatment of the Syrian population that lives there. This focus by the UNHRC on condemning Israel should be seen in the context of events in Syria. More than 150,000 people have been killed in Syria's three-year civil war, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. Nonetheless, 33 nations voted in favor of the anti-Israel resolution, despite the fact that it didn't include a single mention of the mistreatment of Syrians by the regime of Bashar-al Assad. The United States was the only nation to support Israel in all five resolutions.⁸ Paula Schriefer, who heads the United States Delegation to the UNHRC, said that the United States remains "deeply troubled by the council's stand-alone agenda item directed against Israel and by the many repetitive and one sided resolutions under this agenda item."

It is illegal under international law and morally reprehensible for Gaza terrorists to attack Israeli civilians and military targets. The UN has the fundamental responsibility to do everything necessary to ensure Hamas complies with international humanitarian law. History demonstrates that inaction poses dangerous consequences. The UN's record in Lebanon provides an example. The inability and unwillingness of the UNSC in September 2004 to enforce resolution 1559, which called for the "disbandment and disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias," contributed

8 Nine EU countries – Germany, France, Italy, the United Kingdom, Austria, Romania, the Czech Republic, Estonia, and Ireland – supported the four resolutions that condemned Israeli treatment of Palestinians, supporting the Goldstone Report on Israeli actions in Gaza and encouraged a boycott of West Bank settlements and Jewish neighborhoods of east Jerusalem. They abstained, but did not reject, the resolution condemning Israeli violations of human rights against Syrian citizens on the Golan Heights.

to the outbreak of the Second Lebanon War in July 2006. The UNSC subsequently failed to take necessary action to enforce UNSC resolution 1701, which was intended to halt the re-armament of Hezbollah after the war. Today, the Iran-backed Hezbollah is believed to possess over 100,000 missiles, including weapons with longer ranges capable of striking anywhere in Israel.

Consequences of continued inaction by the international community

Silence is often perceived as tacit approval of a government policy. As was the case with Lebanon, the muted response by the international community to Hamas's unlawful aggression against Israel has helped contribute to significant loss of life. During Operation Cast Lead, there were more than 1,000 Palestinian and 13 Israeli fatalities. During Pillar of Defense, 177 Palestinians and 5 Israelis were killed. Many Palestinians and Israelis have been killed and wounded outside these major operations as a result of Iranian-supported Palestinian terrorist attacks launched from Gaza.

Tacit approval of terrorism is tantamount to encouragement of terrorism. As demonstrated by the Goldstone Report and the many biased UN resolutions against Israel, a one-sided and distorted focus on Israel by the international community undermines Israeli deterrence capabilities and emboldens the terrorist leadership in Gaza. Failure to intervene effectively – either to halt or significantly reduce this terrorism – is likely to result in continued death and wounding that could be avoided.

Inaction has also impacted an entire generation of Israelis, including children, who have had their lives repeatedly disrupted. They have been traumatized by more than a decade of rocket firings aimed at them. One million Israelis live under this constant threat, and the fear and trauma that it causes is spreading wider. Similar trauma has been visited upon the approximately 1.8 million people of Gaza by terrorist action that has necessitated Israeli military reactions.⁹ Many Gazans have also suffered economic hardship as a result of security action by Israel and Egypt to counter the terrorist activity.

⁹ Gaza children have been killed by rockets meant to kill Israelis. For example, on November 14, 2012, a woman, her 11-month-old infant, and an 18-year-old adult in Al-Zaitoun were killed by what appeared to be a Palestinian rocket that fell short of Israel, according to the 2013 annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict.

Continued inaction can only perpetuate this trauma and hardship. It will also impact upon the longer term prospects for peace, as ever-greater mutual resentment and mistrust continues to build between the Israeli and Palestinian peoples.

Impact on peace talks

Hamas's and other Gaza groups' continuing rocket fire against Israel – and the failure of the international community to intervene against it – significantly reduces the prospects of a peace settlement with the PA now or in the future. Since 2007, when Hamas wrested control away from Fatah in Gaza, the two groups have been in a state of open conflict, each regularly accusing the other of interfering in Palestinian affairs. Efforts by Hamas to bolster its declining status via terror attacks against Israel have repeatedly disrupted peace talks.

Fatah and Hamas have recently announced that they intend to create a single Palestinian government. This poses a problem for them, as analysts have long since converged on four critical factors that risk rendering any Palestinian state a failed state: a lack of political legitimacy for Palestinian governments, a lack of economic sustainability in either the West Bank or Gaza, the existence of rival governments in territories claimed by the Palestinians for a state, and the inability of Palestinian governments to check armed groups unconnected to those governments. A single state under two governments is almost by definition a failed state.

It seems clear that Hamas has no intention of renouncing violence against Israel, let alone recognizing its sovereign right to exist. The group's charter, known as The Covenant of the Islamic Resistance Movement, is comprised of 36 separate articles, all of which promote the basic goal of destroying Israel through Jihad (Islamic Holy War). In January 2014, Hamas graduated 13,000 students from paramilitary camps geared at training children to fight Israel. Gaza terrorists, in that same month, fired rockets toward the funeral procession of Ariel Sharon. Among leaders at the funeral: Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, President Shimon Peres, US Vice President Joe Biden, and German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier. On March 22, 2014, ostensibly to commemorate the 10-year anniversary of the death of its spiritual leader, Sheik Ahmed Yassin, in an Israeli airstrike, and the assassinations of other top figures a decade ago, Hamas sent threatening text

messages to a large number of Israelis, calling on them to leave the country and warning them they would be “the next Gilad Shalit.” Another message, in broken Hebrew, stated: “A warning to the Zionists. The al-Qassam rockets are waiting for you.” Yet a third message promised Israelis that “In the next war all of Palestine will be returned.”

For the international community, the lesson should be clear: Hamas and other Palestinian groups in Gaza have resorted to armed violence regardless of unilateral Israeli withdrawals and ceasefire agreements. The formula known as “land for peace” is taken as weakness and has led Israel’s enemies to conclude that victory through armed struggle is possible. The significant and ongoing rocket fire from Gaza also demonstrates how crucial ironclad security arrangements are for Israel in any potential peace agreement. Minimally, Israel must be able to prevent weapons from being smuggled into the West Bank; historical evidence shows us the alternative to that scenario is Gaza. If launched from the West Bank, similar rockets to those used in Gaza could strike further major Israeli population centers – home to more than 70 percent of the population.

For that reason, Israel sees it as vital to retain control of the Jordan valley. The presence of Israeli forces in the West Bank after the creation of a Palestinian state is a major issue of contention between the two sides in the current framework talks. Continued Iranian-supported Palestinian terrorist attacks against Israel from Gaza can lead only to further entrenchment of Israel’s position. The seeming indifference or unwillingness of the international community to take any action to stop these attacks, and indeed in some cases, their encouragement, undermines the confidence of the Israeli government and people in any assurance given about guarantees of security in the West Bank by international forces or by any other means.

Recommendations

The cycle of conflict since Israel’s disengagement from Gaza in 2005 suggests the long-term continuation of Iranian-backed terrorism against Israel from Gaza. It also seems inevitable that, pressured by Iran, Gaza terrorists will intensify their attacks to the extent that Israel is left with little option other than to launch a further major operation against them, which would likely result in further serious loss of life.

Now is the time – before it becomes necessary for another Israeli security operation in Gaza – for the international community, led by the UN, to take pre-emptive action. Six policy options are proposed, that together could undermine Iranian support and discourage continued attacks by Gaza terrorist groups.

1. The UN should cease the tacit encouragement of terrorist activity against Israel by Iran, Hamas, and other groups in Gaza that results from continued, unjust, and unfounded UNHRC resolutions against Israel. As well as encouraging terrorism, the UNHRC's distorted and perverse focus on one democratic Western nation provides ammunition for those who desire to propagate hatred against Israel, and thus has the effect of deepening the conflict still further.
2. It is incumbent upon the UNSC and the Quartet to follow through on their warning to the government of Gaza, which was cast in advance of Israel's unilateral withdrawal from Gaza, to crack down on Palestinian militants and not to participate in "armed group or militia activities." The UN should launch a special committee to investigate the rocket attacks from Gaza – including the structural support provided to Gaza terrorist groups by the regime in Tehran – and publicly condemn those responsible for these attacks as often as necessary.
3. The international community should weaken the resolve of Hamas and other groups in Gaza seeking to undermine regional stability by re-imposing the economic sanctions which were previously imposed on Hamas following the Palestinian national elections in Gaza, and which were lifted without proper justification. The international community should restrict the flow of money, people, and goods into and out of Gaza – seizing assets that are within jurisdiction, tightening restrictions on the movement of Hamas officials, and limiting the opening of border crossings to the passage of basic goods, fuel, water, and relief aid, without increasing the hardship of the inhabitants of Gaza. The international community should implement these policies swiftly, unless and until Hamas satisfies three conditions previously imposed by Israel and the Quartet that would move Hamas to become a legitimate partner for peace: to renounce violence against Israel, to recognize Israel's permanent right to exist, and to accept the validity of previous Israeli-Palestinian agreements.
4. The international community should impose a price on Iran for continuing its support of terrorism against Israel. It should take full account of

Iran's sponsorship of terrorism in any decisions made on whether or not to relax sanctions and financial measures on Iran, as well as other relevant concessions, as a result of ongoing nuclear negotiations. It should condition further progress on these negotiations on Iran's support for terrorism against Israel.

5. In the wake of the recent significant weapons shipment from Iran to support terrorism against Israel, Western governments should declaredly join Israel in interdiction operations against potential future Iranian weapons shipments. Western nations should jointly monitor clandestine shipping routes, co-develop concepts of operation for a range of options, coordinate extensively through military and intelligence channels, and conduct publicly announced joint exercises. Doing so would send a clear message, both to Tehran and to other state sponsors of terrorism, that the international community has the will, power, and resolve to hold these terrorist sponsors accountable for illegal activities intended to destabilize the region.¹⁰

6. Members of the international community should recognize, and assert as often as necessary, that if Israel is compelled to respond to Hamas's rocket attacks, the blame lies solely upon the unlawful aggression of Hamas, not Israeli military countermeasures. It is the inherent right of any country to act in self-defense against those who seek to harm it. Under article 51 of the Charter of the UN, Israel has the full right to defend itself and the security of its citizens from attacks. If Israel is forced to exercise that right, it deserves the full weight of the international community backing it.

¹⁰ This option would require a specific UN mandate. Between March 23 and October 31, 2011, NATO conducted military operations as part of a wider campaign, called Operation Unified Protector, to enforce an arms embargo off the coast of Libya. The operation was conducted on the basis of UNSC Resolutions 1970 and 1973, which provide the power and scope of maritime enforcement – that of ensuring a State or a non-State entity's compliance with UN-imposed economic sanctions at sea. At the end of the operation in October 2011, NATO maritime forces checked a total of 3110 vessels and boarded 296, and eleven ships were denied transit to or from Libyan ports. UN-mandated maritime embargo operations have also been authorized as a result of the Iraq-Kuwait conflict in 1990 and during the Balkans crisis in 199-93, as well as in the course of other conflicts.

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