

‘A Dangerous Message’: How the West Is Enabling Israel’s Orgy of Violence Against Palestinians

There can be no clearer demonstration of the hollowness of western values than in the persistent, cynical and criminal failure to bring Israel to book for its actions

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It is increasingly clear that [Gaza](#) paid the price for an Israeli military campaign in the West Bank that has little to do with it.

In an orgy of violence, [Israel](#) reversed a strategy – which it has been pursuing for decades – of dividing the Palestinians into different camps. It is now forcing them to reunite.

Israel clearly intended to provoke a wave of missile strikes with the arrest of [Bassam al-Saadi](#), a senior member of the [Palestinian](#) Islamic Jihad group (PIJ). For three days, the PIJ did not react. Saadi had been arrested seven times before and even leaked footage of him being dragged by soldiers did not ignite passions. There were no protests in the West Bank.

Israel then launched its attack on Friday afternoon, killing [Taiseer al-Jabari](#), the commander of the northern division of al-Quds Brigades (Saraya al-Quds), the military wing of the PIJ, along with five-year-old [Alaa Qaddoum](#), a 23-year-old woman, and seven other Palestinian men.

By the standards of this long and bitter conflict, Israel’s attack on Gaza was unprovoked. There is no evidence to support the contention that Jabari was preparing an attack on Israeli tanks.

Only three hours after the strikes on Gaza did the PIJ unleash a rocket barrage, but Hamas’s much larger rocket force remained in its silos.

All of the targets of this campaign are local commanders and relative unknowns, even to Ran Kochav, the spokesperson for the Israeli army [who forgot Jabari’s name](#) on live television on Saturday.

But if the campaign to defang the West Bank is clear, it is equally the case that such an operation would provoke the very uprising it is designed to stem. An armed uprising in the West Bank is no longer a matter of if, only when. This is not just a consequence of the collapse of the Palestinian Authority, whose writ no longer runs in [Jenin](#), or indeed [Nablus](#). Both cities have formed their own brigades.

A leadership deficit

The formation of new armed cells in territory which has largely eschewed armed resistance since 2007 reflects not only the collapse of the PA, but a leadership deficit within all Palestinian factions, PIJ and Hamas included.

The cells themselves may be “inspired” by the Islamic Jihad movement but their members come from all groups, including Fatah, Hamas and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. Put simply, the West Bank is bristling with guns, most of which can be acquired easily on the Israeli market. A new generation of Palestinians is trading in their cars, careers and, ultimately, their own lives for them.

This decision has little to do with the weight of history. It has more to do with the burden of the present.

If recognising Israel does not work; if Israel is disinterested in talks that lead to a Palestinian state; if every time Israeli forces attack, the outside [world commends](#) it for doing so; if vigilante gangs of settlers destroy your olive trees and your houses under the armed protection of Israeli soldiers; if the law that applies to those gangs is [civilian](#), but the law applying to you, who are unarmed, is [military](#); if your own leaders are corrupt, and refuse to hold elections for decades for fear of the popular vote: what else is there left for you to do? Surrender? Leave for London?

Israel is under a profound delusion if it thinks that Palestinians will just melt away. This is the last thing on this generation’s mind. They will stand and fight. It’s not flight they are thinking of, but liberation.

Global abandonment

Palestinians are as globally connected as any other generation of youths around the world. What exactly is the message world leaders are giving them in their fact-free reactions to the latest bombardments?

US President Joe Biden [reacted](#) as follows:

“My support for Israel’s security is long-standing and unwavering – including its right to defend itself against attacks.

“Over these recent days, Israel has defended its people from indiscriminate rocket attacks launched by the terrorist group Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and the United States is proud of our support for Israel’s Iron-Dome, which intercepted hundreds of rockets and saved countless lives. I commend Prime Minister Yair Lapid and his government’s steady leadership throughout the crisis.”

The statement, which is worth reading in full, had no expression of concern about Israel shooting first. Lapid's actions were commendable.

Or what about Britain's [prime minister to be](#), Liz Truss? As these events were unfolding, Truss addressed [Conservative Friends of Israel](#) with these words:

"The UK stands by Israel and its right to defend itself." In her letter to the group, she added: "We condemn terrorist groups firing at civilians and violence which has resulted in casualties on both sides."

To rub salt into the wound, Truss promised to review the location of Britain's [embassy](#), which is currently in Tel Aviv – an act which would consign what small role the UK had as a peacemaker or mediator in this conflict to the ashes. There is no domestic pressure for her to do this.

The EU [acknowledged](#) that the escalation had already led to "a number of casualties" but did not say who they were and which side caused them. France ["deplored"](#) the Palestinian civilian casualties, but condemned "the firing of rockets into Israeli territory and reiterates its unconditional commitment to the security of Israel".

Only the UN and the Irish Foreign Minister Simon Coveney broke ranks – by inches, not feet. Ireland said it was "deeply concerned" by the impact of Israeli strikes on civilians.

What message do these statements send to the families of the 45 Palestinians who have been killed in these attacks, 16 of them children? What message goes through to the hundreds injured?

In this case, Israel clearly fired first not because a Palestinian militant group had reacted. But because it did not react. That is something of a first in this conflict.

And it is applauded for doing so by the very same leaders who are [arming Ukrainian](#) resistance fighters against Russian occupiers.

A dangerous message

There can be no clearer demonstration of the hollowness of western values than in their persistent, cynical and criminally responsible failure to bring Israel to book for its actions.

This is a dangerous message to be sending both sides in the conflict, not least Israel itself.

Lapid is unlikely to lead public opinion in Israel. Israel's next generation of soldiers are not following him, rather the likes of the Kahanist [Itamar Ben-Gvir](#), who took part in the [storming](#) of the Al-Aqsa Mosque along with his supporters.

If Benjamin Netanyahu succeeds in forming the next government later this year, the extreme right – and from a group once classed by the US and Israel as terrorists – could well be in his cabinet.

By giving Lapid the greenest of green lights to kill Palestinians at will, western leaders are sending an even more dangerous message to the next generation of Israeli leaders who are openly talking of killing Arabs come what may. They openly threaten Palestinians with another Nakba.

The latest target of Israel's operation in the West Bank is described as Israel's most wanted man in Nablus. But [Ibrahim al-Nabulsi was only 19 years old](#). Before the final firefight of his life, Nabulsi made an audio recording that went [viral](#): "Preserve the homeland after me, and my commandment is for no one to leave gunpowder. I am besieged, and I am going to be martyred," he said.

Huge crowds attended his funeral, and those of Islam Sabbouh and 16-year-old Hussein Taha, who died in the same Israeli raid.

The relief for Israel in his death will be strictly temporary. The obvious fact is that the more Palestinians Israel kills the more they provide a recruiting platform for fighters to replace them.

Elaine Abu-Shaweesh is all of five or six years old. She was injured in bombings in Rafah on Saturday. Hani Alshaer, a journalist from Gaza, caught her on [video](#) with a bloody bandage on her head, and saying: "Israel is not a state, and they are under, under, under my feet. And they are on the ground and are trash and they are not. They are bombing kids and maybe right now they have destroyed our house, because last time they did, last war."

No one taught this little girl what to say. But come what may she will grow up to resist what is happening all around her. This is Israel's work. It is also the world's responsibility.

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