

Barbarians at the Gates of Israel

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Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs

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The Descent into Barbarism in the World

It was the morning of October 7, 2023. The sun shone gloriously on the yellow sand, the grass of the kibbutzim, the swing chairs beneath the veranda, the lopsided sculptures, the children's bicycles, the grandparents' electric cars, the shells threaded onto string swinging in the wind and tinkling in front of the houses. The sea nearby. Everyone was sleeping. It was six o'clock on Shabbat morning. Not far away, a crowd of thousands of young people was dancing to pounding rave music at a festival called *Nova*, lightheaded with youth and peace until collapsing into sleep.

In the kibbutzim of southern Israel, among the Israeli families, this was the beginning of a holiday; nobody knew of the reality of roaring white pickup trucks breaking through the mesh fences and walls to invade. The inhabitants of Be'eri or Kfar Aza had wanted to create in the south one of the most utopian pictures of the homeland of the Jewish people, in the style of the early twenty-first century: a little socialist, very loving, ecological, and pacifist as well as technological, even holding a daily dialogue with the inhabitants of Gaza, neighbors across the yellow space, with gifts to the children, cookies, and health care.

At six-thirty, the legion of children, about three per family, princes, and princesses, masters of all, were sleeping before a new royal awakening of kisses and cookies. The grandparents

had left the Friday-night tables half laid, with the traces of the large families who had eaten the foods of their Polish or Moroccan past. They would sleep a little longer, as would the longhaired post-army youngsters, with the guitars propped in the corner, the cell phones already buzzing with all the *TikToks* trying vainly to warn them: “Wake up, something’s going on!” But it was already too late. In the houses overflowing with books and flowers, the many peace ideals would be incinerated with the special thermobaric RPG grenades, large black spindles (we saw dozens of unexploded ones) that explode at 2000 degrees and carbonize everything, leaving the victims and the houses, objects, and people, unrecognizable and unidentifiable. This is precisely what happened. I have seen photographs of the carbonized victims, like the victims of Pompeii.

As missiles began to rain everywhere, much more than the usual barrage of the southern communities constantly shelled by Hamas, I received a call from my shocked friend Ruthie: “Do you maybe know why they’re shooting so much and everywhere?” I didn’t know, nobody knew, nobody was expecting it. As in 1973, when the Yom Kippur War took a toll of about 2,700 Israeli soldiers, Israel had believed that its moral and technological superiority, its mythical powers of survival against all and everything, nullified any warning, any forecast. Instead, everything would soon be ashes and blood.

In the 1920s and 1930s, in Europe, Gershom Scholem, Franz Rosenzweig, Walter Benjamin, and others relied on the refinement of advanced German thought without an inkling that anything was brewing in the country. They did not know, precisely because of their sophistication and hope in life joined with materialization, that a monster was lurking

in the shadows, planning how to kill all the Jews, one by one, and bury them under the ruins of Europe.

Thus, Be'eri rested until 6:30, among the sweetest Israeli dreams. It is one of the border kibbutzim known for its pacifism, for seeking a secular *tikkun olam*, a mending of the world where man helps God to complete the Creation. But then, the truth had only one color, that of Jewish blood, and the pogrom arrived on pickup trucks.

Batya Holin of Kibbutz Kfar Aza, who had prepared with Gazan photographers a very successful joint exhibition, noted that four of them disappeared in the days before the massacre. During the killings, the fifth phoned her from within the border where he had broken in with the monsters, asking her where she was, if there were soldiers around them, and if she was with her whole family. "He was digging for information," Batya said. "Only then, while they were trying to break into our hiding place, did I understand that he was a terrorist."

To believe that what happened is true, I had to watch several times, the footage collected by the actual Hamas operatives with their video cameras. I had to listen and listen again to a hundred horror stories, visit the ruins, meet the survivors...and it is still hard to believe with my own eyes and my own ears. In the shadows of the tunnels under the buildings in Gaza or up and down the no-man's-land between Gaza and Israel, the Hamas men had been given careful training and detailed instructions for months. Their preparations, like those of the Syrians and Egyptians for the surprise attack of 1973, were not secret: meetings were held, and leaflets were distributed with instructions and maps. The orders were: "While rockets are being launched from here [Gaza] and they are all taking refuge in their homes, invade, kill, rape, tear them apart, burn them, cut off heads

and limbs.” Whose? Everyone’s. Including babies, mothers, children, older people, young men and women. And to take some into captivity in Gaza, with the most diverse sections of Jews, so that the blackmail would be perfect.

Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar used his imagination well, ordering the tearing of children from their mothers’ arms and the killing of mothers in front of their children, inventing every possible way to make the terror more horrendous than that of ISIS, to exterminate in the cruelest manner possible. Sinwar’s men were commanded to kill babies, brutally rape women of any age, even girls, whether alive or dead; to castrate men and boys, to decapitate, burn whole families alive together along with the symbols of their lives. Thus, he forever epitomized the savagery of his movement, making him the absolute leader of contemporary hatred. Sinwar placed Hamas at the head of a worldwide movement for the deconstruction of history that legitimizes rage as the emblem of life. This action must be taken against civilization. This movement has decided that the contemporary outcome of history and religion, including the Jewish-Christian civilization and the human rights culture, is advantageous only for those who created it as a tool of oppression to be torn to pieces. Hence, the diabolical choice to tear down this civilization can use any means to destroy the “colonialists,” the “imperialists,” the “racists,” the rich, the white men, and above all, of course, the Jews.

This concept finds consensus far from Gaza, first of all in the Muslim world, which places the “Islamophobes” among the oppressors, and among the students, the LGBTQ movements, the ecological movements that think the earth will be destroyed by capitalist interests, and, also, by the Jews. Sinwar’s atrocities have still not been condemned by the UN,

nor by the Palestinian Authority, and not even by Ivy League universities. It is a crime whose “context” is what counts, and nobody expected that after a massacre like October 7, the destruction of contemporary civilization would piggyback on an antisemitic atrocity.

The plan, unlike that of the Nazis in their time, was to destroy the Jews by publicizing as widely as possible the resolve to make them suffer one by one. Hamas leaders repeated the promise: “We did it, and we will do it again and again and again.”

Once the barbarians entered Israel, they roared down the roads in their hundreds in white pickup trucks and on motorbikes, shooting everyone they encountered, pedestrians and drivers, in the head and chasing those who tried to escape. They were divided into units assigned to close public roads while heading for the countryside and the kibbutzim. They were systematic, coming back to seize whoever might have escaped them. They opened the doors of the cars abandoned at the sides of the roads to make sure everyone was dead and finish off the wounded, and they gave chase to those who fled. Then they came together to shout for joy over the bodies of the dead: “*Itbah el Yehud! Allah hu Akbar!*”

They all shouted with the index finger raised, indicating their blasphemous oneness of God, the primal call of jihadism: Allah is great. By cutting off the head of a baby, the murderer was fulfilling the mission of reconquering the land occupied by the Jews, purifying it of the Western and democratic culture. “*Yehud, Yehud!*” alerted the comrades to the next victims. When advancing over the green fields of the kibbutzim, they discovered someone hiding. When they entered the houses of the kibbutzim, they slaughtered a grandmother hugging two children. When they saw a hero,

and there were so many, coming out with a gun in hand to try to stop them, they exclaimed, “*Yehud!*” Then they would slit his throat and burn him. One killer was recorded phoning his mother in Gaza to brag he had killed ten Jews. This is what he and his colleagues had learned at school from an early age, as directed by the Hamas Charter. *Yehud* is, according to the Islamic texts, a lowly being, a “son of pigs and monkeys,” just as Hitler’s *juden* were considered roaches – destined for slaughter because they are not human.

A few days later, in the squares of Europe and America, in Madrid, Paris, Rome, and New York, and on campuses, demonstrators shouted: “Hamas, Hamas, kill the Jews!” waving Palestinian and Hamas flags. They chanted, “*From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free!*” From a survey in the field, it emerges that many of the students did not know what river and sea meant, but everyone knew what the words “Let’s kill the Jews” meant. Nobody was shouting, “Two states for two peoples!” Thus, the call for genocide was heard around the world.

Each Hamas team headed for a kibbutz, and in the kibbutzim, they searched house by house for the families and killed them in the most unthinkable ways, concentrating on the children. The terrorists had maps obtained from work they had done in the communities. They knew where they lived, how many they were, and where the children’s bedroom was.

As filmed by the murderers’ own cameras affixed to their foreheads, I saw their house-by-house hunt, the pursuit of the children, and the discovery of desperate families huddled in their safe rooms. The monsters in the videos walked with machine guns drawn on the green lawns, searched in small groups for their next victims, threw a hand grenade, broke down a door, and found yet another one, two, three people

stupefied by their encounter with death, killed the family. Ten against one, they encountered a desperate father coming out to defend his family or an unsuspecting and heroic cop who had rushed to answer the call.

In the film, you see how they went into the houses, searched out people to be killed, and fired on the children and the families in their rooms and beds. You see a Thai man hacked to death with an ax; two children, together with their father, dash for the shelter of their home, but the father is slaughtered by a grenade, and the two children, hurled to one side, are crying, one of them no longer able to see out of one eye. The older boy, about eight, hugs and tries to comfort the younger one, who must be about five, asking him if he can see but telling him not to call “Abba” (Daddy); Abba is really dead, unlike in the cartoons. I have no idea what happened to them. Other stories of unspeakable cruelties and glorious courage in fighting, resisting, and dying on behalf of others now form a tapestry, and who knows when we will finish weaving it? Human body parts and confirmations of the definitive loss of somebody missing and not abducted are still emerging. While I am writing, another two people who were thought to have been kidnapped were found to have been murdered. There are so many whose bodies are in no state even for burial because the phosphorus bombs reduced the bodies to a handful of charcoal. Sainly volunteers are still searching for a sign the survivors can recognize: a ring, sometimes an earring, or nail polish.

There are stories of the carbonized dead killed inside the safe rooms; there were always members of the family who, taking turns, tried to secure the door handle until the terrorists succeeded in smashing the door or the window. The last phone calls to the relatives say, “They’re in the house,

goodbye, I love you.” Then, when communication was cut off, the monsters managed to smash open the doors and, with their automatic weapons, kill all the families piled on the floor or in the beds as lakes of blood formed. Or they burned everything with the hand grenades and the flamethrowers, shouting with joy amid the orgy, displaying the results to each other. If they did not manage to get into the shelters, they searched for a window through which to toss in a bomb that would heat the closed space to 2000 degrees, leaving only unrecognizable bodies and objects, black shadows with grimaces like those of Pompeii. Sometimes, the victims died of asphyxiation, especially the children. A baby was saved because he was held on the windowsill to breathe the air, on and off, for about ten hours. Children aged four and five were able to stay quiet for twelve hours, petrified by fear in their hiding places.

Two young siblings who remained motionless for six hours in a closet were saved. The siege lasted for over twelve hours. The rescuers who arrived at the beginning were few – lightly armed and altruistic policemen, soldiers on leave who did not know what they would find. Often, the men of the family tried to get out of the house with a weapon – a gun, a knife. Heroic soldiers who rushed in from outside, without yet understanding what was happening, met their death in battle.

Meanwhile, the terrorists carried out and abducted stupefied and crying small children. Mothers bent over the bodies of infants were dragged away. The two little Bibas children, the redheaded baby and his brother, were abducted along with their weeping mother, whose fate is uncertain. Babies and the elderly were hoisted onto motorbikes, women forcibly stripped and thrown by the hair into cars, then filmed when they were fed to the ferocious mob in Gaza. The rapes

cannot be counted; it is now known that there were many, accompanied by mutilations. The abducted women were now widows, the children were now orphans, the husbands were now bereft, and they had to face captivity.

Just beyond Kibbutz Be'eri, surging along the roads and now from the sky on hang glider wings, Hamas gunmen found the most convenient slaughter site: The Nova music festival, where one thousand young music dancers danced. Three hundred would be killed; the footage shows them running, desperate, with no escape. The music stops, and the incredulous screaming starts amid the monsters' advance; smiles and dancing give way to rape and carnage. Mad with the joy of killing so many Jews at one time, the terrorists shot – some drug-fueled – raped, beat, burned, and piled up the hundreds of dead and broken bodies like garbage that continued to be found weeks after the massacre. Some survived by pretending to be dead, buried under the piles of their murdered friends. This is where the most femicide occurred, leaving the bodies of the women piled, bloodstained, the lower parts of the bodies bare, mutilated, and some with broken pelvic bones.

What happened on October 7 challenges the very question of what it is to be a human being. Perhaps for this very reason, an event of blinding clarity was inverted to the point of blaming the victims; we see the masochistic fate to which our civilization voluntarily surrenders itself, desisting from comprehending, condemning, and fighting alongside Israel.

When I was a little girl, my grandmother swore to me that what my family had experienced with the Italian racial laws and that the Holocaust would never happen again. She promised me a sweet life with fine food on the table. Florence's early morning pale blue light and the green dome of the synagogue

provided the setting for playing up and down the stairs – free, equal Jews. My father strengthened me with his brash, tough bohemianism of a soldier of Israel: he had come to fight in Florence in the Jewish Brigade in wartime. My mother was the living guarantee of the new life, the beautiful partisan and journalist. “Never again” was manifested in things; it was my daily life. It was inside me. I already knew that the Jews had a land and that living away from it was only temporary. Now, a generation later, a soldier who had just come out of Gaza said to me: “Of course it’s difficult; we risk our lives, but my grandfather survived Auschwitz, and my father fought in the Yom Kippur War. Now it’s my turn. I am *never again*.”

With my grandmother, we danced the hora in the corridor beneath the tapestry of Queen Esther, who saved the Jews with her wits and beauty, celebrating the victory over Nazism from which the state of Israel was born. For us, it was clear that a covenant with God, namely our passion for life, had saved us from the Holocaust, and that now, beyond Europe that had betrayed us, our invincible national identity was based on the People of the Book and the Land of Israel.

My Florence home on 16 Via Marconi was our nest amid a strange sense of impermanence. The bourgeois and certainly antisemitic fellow tenants may have wondered why my grandparents had come back to live there. The eyes of schoolmates wondered why I was there, and I was proud to look them in the eye defiantly; the suffering had been temporary, even though part of my family had been massacred in the extermination camps. Still, I was happy; even as a child, I felt that our life was a sign in itself of the transcendence of civilization, that for the Jews, living is a mission. The Jews live, they have always lived, wherever possible, and they have always taken civilization with them, resisting the darkness

of aggression and antidemocratic bullying, for as long as the concept of democracy has existed. Israel is the peak of this destiny. The philosophical and political opposite of “*woke*” is the defense of the life of all those who believe in civilization, human dignity, and human rights.

This is what I did. Living in Italy proudly and then coming back home to Jerusalem. I tried to describe in my books how antisemitism was being transformed into “Israelophobia.” I thought that memory would halt its transformation.

It doesn’t. Europe, floundering toward the accommodation of the Holocaust in the memory of “Never again,” satisfied with a repentance that was never completed, has not succeeded in facing the truth of Israel, a country rejected by the Arab states that nevertheless is miraculously successful – two unforgivable characteristics. Today, we are at that point again.

The fortress that had defeated Nazism was supposed to defeat antisemitism. It had at its disposal such formidable institutions as the UN and the European Union, all of which prided themselves on their allegiance to Jewish memory and its collective representative, Israel – until that allegiance crumbled, and the inhabitants of the fortress prattled along the old, familiar road to antisemitism.

On October 7, the intellectuals, the university campuses, the UN, and the European Union were faced with a unique opportunity for verification: the Jews were murdered mercilessly, and antisemitism cried out from the videos and the testimonies of the survivors. But suddenly, UN Secretary-General António Guterres proposed an explanation for all this – the lack of human rights, the occupation, the Palestinians who suffered for the last 75 years, and the absence of two states for two peoples. “These are the reasons for this. It does not occur in a vacuum,” said Guterres, and the French

president added, as if Israel did not know this well and did nothing to prevent it. "Israel, do not kill women and children."

In reality, Israel is the only country that, in the course of this just war, took care to warn the Palestinians of dangers and to create humanitarian corridors for their flight. In contrast, Hamas blocked their escape routes to use the Palestinians as human shields. Women and children are forced to remain in the war zone to protect the Hamas terrorists and the enormous quantities of weapons hidden in homes, mosques, hospitals, and schools where the Israeli army uncovered vast armories of weapons. Gaza is one giant bunker filled with tunnels for Hamas to take refuge in, heedless of human life. On the contrary, Hamas never offered the tunnels as civilian shelters since it is eager to sacrifice lives for its propaganda purposes.

With the slaughter of Jews in a corner of Israel came the wave of antisemitism across the globe – a veritable green light for genocide. We Jews were once again petrified. It was not long since I had written *Jewish Lives Matter*, which described the transition from human rights concerns to antisemitism, yet I did not anticipate the inflamed mobs searching for Jews all over the world. The same intellectual assumptions that prevented us from foreseeing what was brewing in Gaza blinded us to the tsunami of hatred against the Jews that poured over both Israel and the Jewish community worldwide and with which we are now dealing. In 1973, too, the Yom Kippur War did not seem possible until it broke out because we were still imbued with the victory of the Six-Day War; now, in postmodern Israeli ideology, nobody wanted to believe that a bloodthirsty medieval army was pouring across our borders.

The complacency stemming from hard-won modern achievements, our scientific preeminence in the world, the promise of the Abraham Accords, the idea of belonging to a

democracy that fights fierce wars unabated, the ambition to be a country equal to others, that can afford to have internal quarrels and rifts when it wants – all this is an essential component of Israeli society. Israel, like the rest of the West, is egalitarian, ecological, global, technologically advanced, very modern, full of young people who tell you proudly how deeply they are involved in high-tech and startups, who glory in protesting against perceived injustice or mistaken policy, such as the Supreme Court reform, even to the point of not showing up for reserve duty. But when disaster struck, all Israelis came running home with brilliant patriotic spirit.

Looking through its theocratic window, Hamas had witnessed Israeli pilots, the flower of Israel, undermine the army with their political protest and call for conscientious military objection while the ruling right-wing railed against them. Both sides were wrong: both needed to renounce their goals as the collective hatred toward Israel emerged; antisemitism took center stage like an enormous, macroscopic, dangerous puppet while Israel bled.

A long theoretical trend that originated from the heart of the Soviet Union and consolidated in its venomous Third-Worldism that was lethal above all for the impoverished countries that adopted it, has coalesced with Islamism. Those “isms” (Third-Worldism and Islamism) have destroyed any attempt at peace and led the Palestinians to reject any offer of coexistence. But the world keeps trying regardless, and even Biden, ignoring the fact that the Palestinians of the Palestinian Authority at this point are all ideologically pro-Hamas, again offers the two-state formula that has already failed and led to catastrophes.

What Hamas did to the inhabitants of Kibbutz Be’eri is the final and definitive confirmation, leaving no alternatives for

Israel but war or surrender. While I sat waiting to watch the 47-minute Hamas atrocity film, I wanted to understand how far antisemitism can go, to fathom the hatred of a human being for a newborn baby only because he is Jewish. Like a child on the Tel Aviv beach, I saw the tsunami wave of hate rising as high as a mountain, and I could not escape. I am a child in the face of the history of antisemitism, against which the only victory was the State of Israel, and even the walls of this citadel are again being besieged.

It began already with the ancient Egyptians. Its endpoint until yesterday was Nazism. First, the Jews were hated for their religion, then for their race, and finally for their nation. The antisemitism of anger over the fact that the Jews finally can build themselves a homeland, a lovely high-tech home admired by all that remains a democracy despite the thousands of challenges, has gone hand-in-hand with a cunning and well-interwoven web of lies, including that of the international illegality of the territories and the historical and legal obligation to share the land with the Palestinians. It is a baseless demand because the Palestinians have never wanted to share anything with Israel and with the Jews; they hate them too much to do so.

Hitler did not invent the yellow badge of ignominy: it was Pope Innocent III who decreed the badge that then became a star, and this, in turn, was copied by Abu Yusuf al-Mansour, a thirteenth-century Moroccan prince. When the Crusaders were tearing the Jews to pieces in the Holy Land, the Archbishop of Canterbury was issuing a decree that prevented Jews access to food. The Inquisition burned the Jews with their children in their homes and the squares; all the European nations had competed in persecution and tools

of torture, foreshadowing the techniques used by Hamas. Burning Jews alive is not a Hamas original.

During the time of the systematic, organized, well-executed Holocaust (a collective enterprise of the most cultured nation in Europe) and the disorganized but massive Soviet persecution of the Jews, the Soviet Jewish writer Vasily Grossman was an important and despairing witness of it all, precisely because he could not and would not believe it. The decimation, the tortures, the prisons, the shootings, the deportations, and the censorship of his words compelled him, however, to understand what was happening.

The Holocaust was the result of Hitler's ideological and almost physical passion, of his ecstatic dedication to the slaying of the Jews. Even when all was already lost, he continued to use the Greek trains, not to transport his army, but to take Jews to die in the gas chambers. His choice was also secretly shared by a mob in which, like a blistered boil, the fever awaited the optimal situation. Germany was an almost wholly Nazified country, and so is Gaza: their military and elected organizations, the schools, hospitals, control structures, instrumentalization of the civilian society, repression of any freedom, and use of violence are some of the similarities with that mid-20th century world in which the primary mandate was to kill the Jews. Some of the Gazan journalists are Hamas agents and sometimes are recruited by *Reuters* and *CNN*. They were seen in their role as Nazi "groupies" on the motorcycles when the kibbutzim were attacked.

However, Hamas outstrips Hitler's Nazis and *Schutzstaffel* (the SS), whose propaganda on exterminating the Jews was less explicit; the decision was mentioned only in Germany and in Italy, without a display of trophies or an overt flaunting of triumph in the world. Here, however, one of the novelties is

the absolute and unvarnished exhibition of the most virulent racist hatred that exists: radical antisemitism. Not only must it be shown by Hamas and its supporters, it is something to be proud of.

The Nazis, while they were teaching the people the reasons to hate the Jews, did not flaunt the unprecedented violence that was taking place, did not publicize photographs of gas chambers or mothers with their children in their arms on the edge of the mass grave into which they would fall after they were all shot by Nazi guns. The Nazis got drunk at night, Douglas Murray recounts, because the commanders consoled them with alcohol for what they had done. Here, however, the young terrorists from Gaza filmed themselves laughing with each other, in top form, riding motorcycles, driving pickup trucks, raping and disemboweling women, and then shooting them in the head.

Communism also chose the path of partly disguised antisemitism. The deportations and shootings of the Jews under Stalin did not take a genocidal turn, only because, at the time of the “Doctor’s Plot,” he was still formulating a plan for their destruction. While he saw them as an essential threat to his power, the Communists never theorized that it was indispensable for the world to deport or kill all the Jews. They were traitors, spies, cosmopolitans, capitalists, and for this, and not because they were Jews, they had to be exterminated.

However, for Hamas, the goal of the extermination of the Jews is a cosmic quest: the extermination of the Jews. Allah will be pleased, and the day will come when Islam will rule the world. The excitement on October 7 was tremendous; frisson accompanied the brutal and primitive executions and mass rape.

The Hamas aim, like ISIS and Al Qaeda, was to terrorize. This Islamist aim stems from an ecstatic interpretation of a religion, and it is essential to acknowledge that not all interpretations are like that. But nobody can explain how it is possible to decide to cut off the arm of an eight-year-old girl and to let her shiver for hours bathed in her own blood until she dies if it is not motivated by a maniacal, transcendental ambition. Nobody can explain how it is possible to kill a mother and father in front of their three-year-old child and then abduct her alone in a vehicle to Gaza. Yet all this happened. Nor can one explain how it is possible to slaughter a group of little girls all sitting together in hiding, holding each other's hands to gain courage. Yet this also happened. We are here to try and bear witness to it forever because denialism, like that of the Holocaust, is the most classic form of rehabilitation of the monsters and the basis, even today, of the fiercest antisemitism.

The wave of antisemitism came unexpectedly against the dead and the live Jews. It is also no longer true that many people "like dead Jews" and not living Jews. They do not like any of them. Some 1,200 heinous deaths were not enough. The denialism erupted immediately after the world's most proven massacre. UN Secretary-General Guterres, in the name of the UN, said and insisted that the background to the violence was the guilt of the Jews, a claim that has been used by the world endlessly and that has dramatically flourished since the Jews have had a country and an army.

The history of the Jews and Israel is not widely known; it cannot seem to emerge; it is a set of dates and news items to be obliterated and replaced by myths of cruelty. There has been scientific and elaborate work on this from the USSR to Arafat, from the Ayatollah Khomeini to the American

campuses. As Lenin put it: “The wording is calculated to evoke hatred, aversion, and contempt for people who commit such deeds. Such wording is calculated not to convince but to break up the opponent’s ranks, not to correct the opponent’s mistake but to destroy him, to wipe his organization off the face of the earth.”

In the square of Bari in Southern Italy, on October 14, 2023 (seven days after the massacre), student Marina Caldarulo said:

We are in the square because we are with the Palestinian people; we wish to bring them all the support possible. Do we consider Israel a terrorist state? What is happening in those lands has been going on for 75 years. Everyone can see what is happening and form an opinion.

Words such as these, also proclaimed in other squares, perfectly reflect contemporary antisemitism: ignorance and outright lies. Israel, the Jewish State, indeed is “guilty” of having existed for 75 years. Still, it has nothing to do with the history that the Soviet Union wove together with Arafat into the anti-American and anti-Western consciousness, defining it as a colonialist, imperialist, capitalist country, while today, in the post-communist world, it is dubbed an apartheid state. Even after Israel’s total disengagement from Gaza in 2005, the refrain about Gaza being “an open-air prison” continues to be used. Yet, the occupation had not existed for close to 19 years, and even at the time, in 1967, it was forcibly imposed on Israel after an Egyptian occupation that had lasted since 1948 and about which nobody had anything to say.

Gaza fell into Israeli hands after a war of defense, and certainly not because of a decision to take that cursed piece of land, which Cairo, for its part, had never wanted.

Even the antisemites of the campuses, if they know anything, know only misconceptions. The idea is false that Israel has occupied the “Palestinian state,” which in reality has never existed in 75 years or since the founding of the state of Israel. The idea that the Jews originally had no connection with the land of Israel is false: anybody who has read a little history knows that Israel is the land of the Jewish people and that Jerusalem is its lifeblood by historical tradition. This is the country of origin where the Jews have their roots, a proven biblical geography, their fundamental archaeological relics that the Palestinians continue to plunder, and a great love that is as alive as ever. It is upon Jerusalem that the entire morality of the monotheistic and civilized world rests, especially the Judeo-Christian one (as long as one is not willing to forget that Jesus was a good Jew).

Moreover, if you are ready to spend five minutes studying, you can easily see that Israel is part of the decolonization process in the Middle East. It is part of lands that Turkey and the Ottoman Empire occupied, and then by Great Britain with its temporary Mandate for Palestine, which had the specific task, certified by promises and international conferences, of ending colonialism and entrusting Palestine – including Transjordan, east of the Jordan River – to the Jews.

Indeed, the Jews had always maintained a presence, which in the eighteenth century already made them the majority in Jerusalem and other cities of Palestine. The very name Palestine is a Roman invention that has nothing to do with the word “Palestinians” in the Muslim sense of the term. It was adopted after the expulsion of the Jews by Titus in 70

BCE, after conquering the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem, using the Greek definition of the territory between Egypt and Syria. Since 1948, when UN recognition sanctioned the return of the Jewish people to their home and proposed a partition of the land with the Arabs, Israel has continually offered to share the land and sustained the peaceful nature of Zionism. This began with the acceptance of the UN Partition Plan, which the Arabs rejected, and was reiterated from the Oslo Accords onward with the offer to the Palestinians to accept the Jewish people as legitimate inhabitants of the State of Israel in exchange for half the land. That bargain was repeated three more times and always rejected, even as Israel de facto had evacuated all the Palestinian population centers from Bethlehem to Hebron.

The West Bank, previously occupied by Jordan and all portrayed in biblical history, was occupied by Israel after the multifront 1967 war waged by Egypt, Jordan, and Syria to wipe out the Jewish state. Remarkably, Israel's control of the territories comes after the repeated rejection of Israel's generous offers that even included half of Jerusalem, the most notable example of which is Ehud Barak's offer to Yasser Arafat at Camp David.

In the squares, on the campuses, along the streets of the European capitals and the large American cities, mobs chant "*From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free!*" – a genocidal slogan glorifying the October 7 pogrom and confirming its objective. That mob stands with Hamas.

In Britain, after the Hamas massacre, few of the youth think Israel was in the right, and in America, half of the youth aged 18 to 25 believe the Holocaust is a myth. A majority of young people up to age 24 want to give everything to Hamas, obliterating Israel. They do not know how much

this would cost in terms of violence. They will bring about the legitimization of the anti-Western hatred turned against them, of the contempt for freedom in the face of ideologies that, when they shout their hatred for Israel in the square, destroy their own affiliation with the world of democracy and human rights. They are not aware that Hamas and radical Islam persecute women, homosexuals, and democracy, teach children to hate and to kill, despise, and shamelessly stamp out our culture, music, beauty, and art. (I will never forget how Rome covered its naked statues in honor of, or perhaps in fear of, an Iranian visit).

The recent great wave of immigration from the Islamist East to the West has brought with it a great contempt for our world, and the postmodern deconstruction of our values and way of life can bring society to its knees, change it, and convert it. Whoever imagined that a white person is inevitably racist and a male is a rapist can make the cognitive leap and associate with the idea that a Jew is a colonialist torturer of the Palestinians. Hence, all the parties can coalesce, and the oppressed can fight against the oppressors.

Under a soft European social-democrat mantle, the European Union, following in the tracks of the UN, has developed a false conception of the society founded on rights that violates and erases them, threatening them one by one, making acceptable all the anti-liberal Third World demands initially sponsored by the USSR. The theory of the “oppressed,” used by Arafat, poses a strategic and economic threat to the world at large. Just think of the legitimization of female second-class status and the violence against women in the Muslim world, transferred to the large cities of Europe. In Cologne in 2016, nobody dared condemn the mass sexual violence perpetrated by groups of young immigrants against

local young women at New Year's Eve celebrations in the main square. There was greater fear of charges of "Islamophobia" than of sexual violence. I have never heard a condemnation of the mass marriages of the young girls of Gaza to older men, real pedophilia in the open.

Today, the Hamas murderers particularly enjoy the support of bastions of culture, those in which the "religion" of our times that of human rights was formulated. And yet, this religion is now in danger of shattering because of the insane double standard that cannot see the flagrant violation of those human rights by Russia, China, and Iran, which has gained, to the shame of the whole world, the presidency of the UN Human Rights Commission. An appeal like the one signed in Italy by 4,000 academics, who after the October 7 massacre, demanded the cessation of cooperation with Israeli universities, will forever stand out in the history of ignorance and ignominy. The refusal of the feminist organizations to recognize Israeli women's irremediable pain of multiple rapes accompanied by scars, fractures, wounds, and murders, used serially as weapons of collective terrorism and domination, will remain on the conscience of the United Nations forever, even if a weak condemnation was eventually recorded.

The reaction of the "woke square," the cultural and academic institutions and their various associations, has shown how the uncritical and ignorant embrace of Third-Worldism is deep-rooted and dangerous for the youth and for the very civilization in which we live. The cultural background of the new antisemitism, also shared by some Jews, is constructed on the latest "sophisticated" lie that has transformed the Jewish people into a mass of "oppressors" determined to "dominate," "occupy," and "exploit" into a "genocidal" people. Based on this determination (endorsed

by the European Union, which intentionally misinterprets the resolutions of 1967 that envisage a solution the Palestinians have consistently rejected), Hamas exterminated the most significant number of Jews in one single day since the Holocaust and kidnapped 240 of them, including infants and the elderly.

In an imaginary Palestine, which, having never existed, can be imagined at will (namely that entity “from the river to the sea”), according to the most perfect antisemitic dream, all the Jews are annihilated.

Twelve hundred fatalities in a small country like Israel correspond to 50,000 citizens in the United States, and the hostages, again comparatively, to about 5,000 people. Nobody could imagine that the United States or even a cowardly European country would agree to be “humanitarian” like Israel, which, instead of carpet-bombing all the terrorist murderers in one day, has adopted a strategy that allows the Gaza civilians to evacuate the war zone. Nobody, knowing that the war criminal Yahya Sinwar could be hiding under a hospital building, would enter on tiptoe rather than bomb the building. Yet, Israel has tried to bring medicines, incubators, and food for the medical staff and the sick and to evacuate patients where possible.

Today’s antisemitic allegations against Israel are neither more nor less than the ancient accusations of deicide, the blood libel that gave ideological sanction to antisemitism at the time of the Holocaust. It is of no importance that Hamas kills gays and that in Gaza little girls are given in marriage to vile adult pedophiles, or that women are oppressed through beatings, polygamy, and segregation. Over the years, I have seen cartoons in which Ariel Sharon eats Palestinian children with his chest covered with their blood, and I have heard a

French ambassadors call Israel “that shitty little country” when the suicide bombers blew up buses carrying children on the way to school and old people in slippers. I have already seen the consequences so many times, standing the actual history on its head, of calling the Jews colonizers and the Palestinians colonized, the Jews aggressors and the Palestinians aggressed, the Jews warmongers and the Palestinians pacifists. I have seen the denial of every simple historical truth and have not missed the spectacle of the Western mobs bellowing with every act of cruelty toward the citizens of Israel and every modest attempt by the Jews to respond to terror attacks and missiles. I have seen newspapers condemning Israel because the “Al-Aqsa Mosque was in danger!” Hamas’s war cry. Yet, when Hamas rocketed Jerusalem in 2021, it seemed to me that Al-Aqsa was worth far less to them than the chance of hitting the homes of the Jews.

I have never understood the hubris, the happy intoxication, the denial of every grain of knowledge and awareness that is contained in the core of antisemitism. There is a general denial of the shared goal that has led humanity to where they are, or where they believe they are: coexisting civilly, building houses and schools, forming relationships, caring for children lovingly, reading, and writing.

This seemed to have been achieved when my grandmother took me by the hands in the hallway of the house on Marconi Street and danced the hora with me, happy and amazed that the massacre had almost passed her family by.

Now Israel knows that it is very much alone. It’s a delusion that the great postmodern Western family or the pro-Western Sunni Arabs of the Abraham Accords would wish to create a united shield against Iran. It no longer exists. Hostility and fear often go together, and behind Hamas, an obscure array

of “resistance” partners whose borders reach as far as Turkey, Syria, Russia, Lebanon, Yemen, and China now induces a new awareness, a sense of alarm that is not likely to end even with the Gaza war.

But for those in Israel, there is a great consolation: on the day of the massacre, from every corner, lightly armed men and women rushed to help in staggering numbers and with astounding altruism. A resident of Be’eri, one of the kibbutzim razed to the ground by Hamas cruelty, was on the beach in Tel Aviv sunbathing but still arrived, frantic, on the roads near his home two and a half hours later, when it was forbidden to travel on the highways still infested with terrorists carrying out their massacres. That person headed a group of heroes who joined together by chance and ventured into the now-incinerated streets of Be’eri, where, trying to free the people barricaded in the dining hall, they met their deaths. I talked with dozens of youngsters who grabbed what they could find – a knife, a stick – in the face of the invaders’ machine guns and came out of besieged homes to defend mothers and children from terrorists. A father who, from hundreds of kilometers away, rushed to the kibbutz where his daughter lived and snatched her from death like a madman, managing to push her through the back window of the house where she was under siege. A mother who, while terrorists were shooting and torturing, followed her son everywhere, collecting the wounded, as he ventured into the kibbutz trying to save whoever he could; when her son was shot, she drove him home and returned to rescue other boys. An older woman kept a gang of terrorists at bay in her home by feeding them, saving the whole family with her composure until help arrived. I interviewed a man who, with one leg now severed from his body, held out for about ten hours, shielding his

family until he saw his son and wife die riddled with bullets; almost completely drained of blood, he resisted, determined to at least save his daughter. On the day of the attack, police officers and soldiers entered Gaza to fight and gave their lives there.

In the war, the episodes of heroism multiplied: in the family of former chief of staff Gadi Eisenkot, now a member of the war cabinet, his son, twenty-five-year-old Gal, and his nephew, nineteen-year-old Mahor Cohen, were killed in battle. Wracked by grief, Gadi expressed how honored he felt to have been the father and the uncle of two young soldiers; the following day, he was already back at work. The president of Israel, Isaac Herzog, waited for word from his son, who is fighting in Gaza, because, in general, the use of telephones is forbidden. All of Israel has sons, daughters, grandchildren, spouses, and parents forced into a war of defense against the terrorists who decapitated babies. On October 7, 300,000 reserve soldiers rushed to save the country. Many thousands of Israelis working or touring overseas rushed to airports to fly home, even sitting in the aisles and washrooms of El Al planes. They appeared at their reserve units demanding equipment and orders without call-up papers. Since then, they have been fighting to their last breath and until the victory that is indispensable for Israel's security.

Israel is a country of heroes. At the Nova festival, the young people who had been dancing tried to protect each other at the price of their lives. Desperate girls tried to protect their friends from rape, torture, and murder and fell victim to this themselves. By the hundreds, soldiers sacrificed themselves; not yet dressed, they jumped out of the besieged barracks and fought against the surprise attack with bare hands. The police officers, without knowing what they would find, threw

themselves into battle and were often overpowered by the astounding numbers of terrorists. The women soldiers who, at their observation posts, had seen and warned of the black tide that was rushing toward Israel continued to serve at their posts even after realizing that nobody wanted to believe the truth. They were alone and gave their lives.

Visit the soldiers at the front today who have been sleeping in the mud and eating cans of tuna since October 7 and called up for reserve duty, secular and religious, Ashkenazi and Sephardi. You will discover, in the aftermath of Israel's political imbroglio, the image of unity and complete dedication to defending their country. By comparison, in Europe and the United States, the national spirit is overcome by personal interest and convenience.

Israel is the unrecognized experiment of what a democratic state can be when faced with a challenge and a genuine danger. It offers a picture of what young people can become when they have faith and a common purpose, when duties are acknowledged in addition to rights. They even accept the terrible idea that those born with the proverbial silver spoons in their mouths can also die in battle and that this possibility is already taken into account when they are 20 or 30 years old.

Indeed, it is not only antisemitism but also ignorance that has placed Israel as the paradigm of evil while it fights for the good of all.

Amid the postmodern construction of radical ideas about colonialism, the woke framework for understanding the world, the transformation of the terrorists into freedom fighters, the academic embrace of the Orientalism of Edward Said, whose ill-conceived redefinition of the relationship between the West and the Muslim world is, in fact, an invitation for the West to submit to Islam – the Jews have once more been chosen as

the supreme enemy. And let us not delude ourselves: this is a threat not only to Zionism but to the entire Western project of the constitutional state and democratic society.

But Israel will not let a trace of appeasement recur, of which the prototype is that of British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, who allowed Hitler's antisemitic fever to metastasize into World War II. Since Israel has existed, it has been – and will continue to be – essential to remember that it is good to be Jewish; you are lucky that you are; you must fight to affirm it and never yield to hatred and fear. After October 7, Israel knows it well. I felt it in all the proud, resplendent speeches of remembrance of the fallen soldiers in Gaza, in the incredible words of glory that parents still know how to say without crying: simple words, words of immortal love for children who are always laughing, active and curious, and of the peace that Israeli society desires above all else. As de Tocqueville says, no democracy wants war, but when it has to fight one, it is a shared choice; it knows how to do it and gives its all.

When I look without turning away at what happened on that day, just in those 24 hours that began at 6:20 a.m., when my friend Ruthie Blum phoned me to tell me, “They’re bombing us like crazy,” I want to put these “stones of memory” in my country of origin, Italy, just to end with the words I hear repeated so often by Israelis, who are trying, united, to vanquish the monster that endangers the world: *Am Israel Hai*. Rejoice in this, you who love democracy; it is your protective shield, which the whole world needs more than Israel needs a traitorous West.

And yet I want to end on a personal note: the latest attack on the Jews is in full swing, and we are its direct physical target, as well as the Jews of the Diaspora. Do not read this

volume as a collection of writings about the past. The entire machine of preparation for the hatred and war, which has been under construction for years in Gaza, in particular for the October 7 attack, operates in almost identical fashion in the Palestinian Authority.

From the first moments in which a child wants to know and act, the PA instills in them, without a moment's pause, hatred for the Jews and the West. A child's supreme aspiration is to become a *shahid*. They do not care about finding prosperity, peace, or knowledge, let alone building a Palestinian state, especially not if it were to be established according to the two-states-for-two-peoples formula. To them, Israel is just a Zionist entity with no name or roots, a hodgepodge of apartheid and colonialism. And the Jews are all doomed to death, including the children. Fatah is today almost identical to Hamas, to the extent that those who approve and would repeat the horror are around 80 percent of the population under its rule. Fatah's secular tendency has declined, and "*Allah hu Akbar!*" is now the motto of every *shahid*. Even in the Western metropolises, the Islamic suburbs indoctrinate their children in the same way; their prime target is always the *Yehud*. The Hamas youth in Be'eri boasted to his mother on the phone that he was slitting their throats, but the cases of physical antisemitic attacks in Europe and in America are now counted by the score.

Ignorance denies that violence is the characteristic specifically of those who hate the West. But in the obvious example of the West Bank, the much-reviled violence by "settlers" is only a one-digit fraction of the shooting and vehicular attacks by terrorists against Jews last year. Indeed, like an active volcano ready to erupt, hatred reveals itself daily

with a repertoire of gunfire, stabbings, vehicular attacks, and stone-throwing ambushes of cars.

What has changed since October 7 is that now we know that terrorism can morph from an ambush into a global strategic threat, first by killing unsuspecting civilians, police officers, and soldiers and then endangering Jewish communities and travel worldwide. The terrorists call on world powers, primarily Iran and Russia, for support for their aggressions in the Middle East and the West.

From my window, I look down at the street at night, and I am afraid, for the first time in my life, in which I have seen so many terror attacks, that I will see white pickup trucks coming from the nearby Arab cities of Ramallah or Bethlehem. I know that the security forces are prepared now, but the terrorists also realize it. I have immense faith in the courage of the soldiers that they will prevail; I speak of this in the book's pages. But I think it is a long battle that involves everyone, that does not allow distractions or blunders, nor pacifist interpretations of the meaning of the word "truce," which is fine when it does not mean "time in which those who wish to kill you get organized." I also think that in the cities of Italy, those who cried " Hamas, kill all the Jews!" will come to burn every flag that is counter to their ambitions of domination, and that if a stance of psychological and practical deterrence is not soon adopted throughout the world, a true global disaster, like that of 85 years ago, can befall all the democracies.

Therefore, this book is a journal to ensure that the memory is recorded immediately before being exorcised, but it is also an invitation to defend ourselves and to defend yourselves.

To conclude, I go back to what appears to be the most challenging phenomenon to contend with – how to understand the insistence with which institutions, colleagues,

and friends you meet at work and for meals continue to call for a “ceasefire” with resolutions, articles, and speeches. When people continue to hope that there will soon be a ceasefire or peace will reign in the Middle East again, it is not a good sign, nor a wish that will come true.

The genuine wish for peace is only that which understands patience, namely long and difficult support for a painful but necessary war against Hamas. This was the case with Al Qaeda and ISIS. Moreover, it should be understood that, just as to achieve peace, it was necessary to fight the Nazi menace until its eradication, including Hitler, his officials, and governing infrastructure, so today this must be repeated because it has been demonstrated again that cruelty can go beyond the bounds of the most demonic imagination.

Therefore, let us hope for a victory over evil, a triumph of what we love and believe in. Let us hope for democracy and common sense, not for a premature ceasefire, but only when evil is stamped out. Peace will be achieved only with the patience and courage of today’s soldiers on the battlefield.



Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs

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The Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs is one of Israel's leading policy, diplomacy, and communications institutes. Established in 1976, the JCPA has transformed from its longtime primary focus as a research institute on regional security, strategy, and international law.

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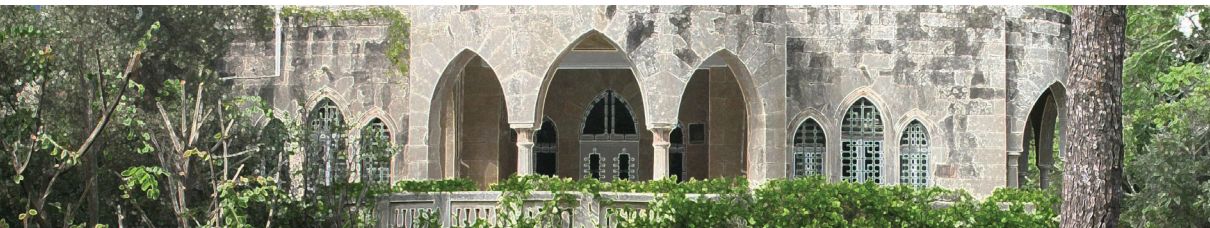
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