



Jerusalem 6:47  
Toronto 8:14

## ISRAEL NEWS

*A collection of the week's news from Israel  
From the Bet El Twinning / Israel Action Committee of  
Beth Avraham Yoseph of Toronto Congregation*

### Commentary...

#### Five Years On, the US Embassy in Jerusalem Remains the Key to Peace in the Middle East By David Friedman

On May 14, 2018—exactly the same date and even the same hour that David Ben-Gurion announced Israel's independence 70 years earlier—I presided over the opening of the United States Embassy in Jerusalem, the eternal and undivided capital of the State of Israel. Apart from family milestones, it was the greatest day of my life, and an experience I will never forget.

Moving the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem was, of course, deeply meaningful to Israel's citizens and all of world Jewry. It was a firm rejection of the false claim that Jerusalem could or should be divorced from Israel's national identity. Even more important, it was the recognition by the leader of the free world that Jerusalem, indeed, represents the realization of thousands of years of fervent prayers by an ancient people to be restored to their national capital.

But moving the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem also said something more universal. It demonstrated that the United States would stand resolutely with its allies and would not cower in fear from threats of rogue nations or terrorists. That message resonated throughout the world—from Moscow to Teheran to Pyon Yang. When historians study the reasons why there were no new wars anywhere in the world during the Trump administration, I believe that the signals sent by the United States in moving its embassy to Jerusalem will be among the key factors.

I have often been asked, "How were you so sure that moving the U.S. embassy would not lead to outbreaks of global violence?" The answer is that I wasn't sure. Although we studied the security issues extensively, no one could be sure that no terrorist would emerge anywhere on the planet. But I believed that we were on the side of history and doing God's will, and that that would be enough to keep us safe. Indeed, the prophet Isaiah predicted many years ago that our actions would advance the cause of peace.

The paradigmatic biblical verse prophesying world peace is in the Book of Isaiah, Chapter 2, verse 4: "Nation will not lift up sword against nation nor study war anymore." So widely known and accepted is this verse that it is carved into the wall across the street from the United Nations headquarters in New York City.

But Isaiah doesn't just foresee peace on earth, he also explains how it is to be achieved. In the prior verses, he prophesied that the nations of the world will all come to Jerusalem to learn God's ways and follow his paths. Upon their arrival in Jerusalem, God will resolve their differences and then, and only then, "nation will not lift up sword against nation nor study war anymore."

How does a nation "come to Jerusalem?" By moving its embassy to that holy city. Isaiah makes clear that the road to peace runs through Jerusalem. Perhaps that is why the name "Jerusalem" means "City of Peace."

In May 2018, most of the world's pundits predicted that moving the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem would cause endless wars and unresolvable conflicts. Some 2,800 years earlier, Isaiah predicted that the move would lead to peace. Isaiah was right! After we moved our embassy, Israel succeeded in normalizing relations with four Muslim countries—the Abraham Accords.

Some have said that the Abraham Accords were achieved despite moving our embassy to Jerusalem. No, the Abraham Accords were signed because of the move. In moving our embassy, we ended the fantasy within parts of the Arab world that Israel might cease to exist or that the bond between Israel and America could be broken. We demonstrated that the United States will always stand with Israel but, at the same time, we signaled that the United States was prepared to

stand as well with nations of good faith who are prepared to combat extremism and bring about a more stable and peaceful Middle East. Our message to moderate Sunni nations was as clear then as was Isaiah's message in

ancient times: the path to better relations with America runs through Jerusalem.

This is the formula for Middle East peace and it all began on May 14, 2018, with the opening of the United States Embassy in Jerusalem. (JNS May 14)

*The writer is the former U.S. ambassador to Israel. He served between 2017 and 2021.*

#### Israel Under Fire and the West's Pusillanimous Response

By Richard Kemp

When Russia invaded Ukraine last year, Western governments, international organizations, media and human rights groups quite rightly rallied round without hesitation, recognizing the need to give unreserved moral support to a nation defending itself from violent attack.

We saw a very different picture last week as Israel was assaulted by aggressors in Gaza, to all intents and purposes a foreign country.

There is some commonality between the two conflicts, although they are on an altogether different scale. Russia and Gaza's Islamic Jihad both believe the countries they are attacking are illegitimate, have no right to exist and need to be destroyed in their current forms by violence. Neither Ukraine nor Israel has any territorial ambitions or aggressive intent against their attackers—both Ukraine and Israel are fighting purely defensive wars to protect their civilian populations.

There is another common factor. Islamic Jihad in Gaza is an Iranian proxy terrorist group, funded by and directed from Tehran. Iran's hand is behind this conflict and the ayatollahs pressured Hamas terrorist leaders to join Islamic Jihad's assault on Israel while doing all they could to prevent a ceasefire brokered by Egypt. Iran's role in Ukraine is not as significant, but we should not forget that it has supplied Russia with explosive drones to fire at Ukrainian civilians.

I do not recall any Western government or international body suggesting moral equivalence between the aggressor and the defender in the Ukraine war, but that is exactly what we have seen repeatedly in this and previous conflicts between Israel and Gaza, with the U.N. Secretary General calling on "both sides" to exercise restraint.

Unlike the immediate condemnation of Russian violence, we have seen only silence in the United States and Europe since Islamic Jihad's rockets began to fall on Israel. The best we have heard from the White House is that "Israel has the right to protect itself," a statement of the blindingly obvious. None of this is good enough when what is needed is the strongest support for Israel and the most blunt condemnation of Islamic Jihad, along the lines we see regarding the Ukraine war.

The usual media suspects, such as the BBC and CNN, both cheerleaders for Ukraine's defensive operations, have predictably been doing their best to slant their coverage against Israel. BBC commentary went as far as to imply that the killing of Gaza civilians is a deliberate policy of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his government, while a CNN interviewer claimed that Israel deliberately targeted civilians. In Israel, Haaretz published an article branding the IDF's operation as "patently illegal" and accused its soldiers of war crimes.

As we can see from the Western approach to Ukraine as well as wars everywhere, no other country that is unlawfully attacked by a foreign power is portrayed as the aggressor or at best on a par with the attacker. Yet in this conflict, the differences between the two sides could not be more stark. The IDF takes the greatest possible care to defend its civilians while avoiding unnecessary casualties

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among civilians in enemy territory, frequently aborting attacks when there is the risk of killing innocent people, and using attack profiles designed to minimize collateral damage even when targeting occupied apartment blocks.

Gaza terrorist leaders, on the other hand, make sure their wives and children are nearby and ready to die whenever there is the risk of attack against them. They deliberately position their weapons stores, missile launch sites and fighters among the civilian population, including in schools, hospitals and occupied residential buildings. The IDF will frequently warn civilians to get out of the area when preparing an attack. Understanding how this undermines their policy of inflicting maximum casualties on their own civilians in order to achieve international condemnation of Israel, terrorists in Gaza have warned their citizens that anyone who complies will be punished.

In such circumstances it is impossible for the IDF to do the vital work of destroying offensive weapons aimed against their own population and eliminating the terrorist commanders who direct them without inflicting some civilian casualties. Despite the misguided or malign commentary of some journalists, politicians, academics and human rights groups, such collateral damage is not illegal or a war crime, provided all possible measures are taken to avoid it. That is exactly what the IDF does in every engagement, to the extent that several Western generals have admitted that their own forces would be unable to achieve anything like the same standards in protecting civilian life.

In just five days, more than 1,234 rockets were fired from Gaza, 976 of which crossed into Israel—a country roughly the size of New Jersey—with the remainder falling short into Gaza itself. The nearest comparable bombardment against Western countries was in 1944, when the Germans fired rockets at Britain with a maximum rate of 100 per day. Britain responded with a bombing campaign of devastating force in which many civilians were unavoidably killed.

The question Western commentators so eager to condemn Israel should ask themselves is: how many rockets fired into their own countries would be tolerated? The Ukraine war has focused European governments' minds on this issue and their current planning includes not just improving missile defenses but also offensive capabilities to strike at the enemy in his own territory, just as Israel is forced to do today. (Gatestone Institute May 15)

*The writer is a former British Army commander. He was also head of the international terrorism team in the U.K. Cabinet Office and is now a writer and speaker on international and military affairs. He is a Shillman Fellow at Gatestone Institute.*

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### **Iron Dome is Not Enough** By Jeremiah Rozman

Let me start with a controversial proposition: Thus far, Iron Dome has done Israel no favors. The technologically brilliant missile-defense system is praised as a shining exemplar of Israeli ingenuity—a point of pride. Indeed, criticizing Iron Dome to an Israeli or someone in the pro-Israel community is akin to speaking ill of Israel's latest Eurovision finalist. However, I stand by my assertion. The latest round of fighting with Gaza shows why.

The problem with Iron Dome is not its technology. Its capabilities have impressed to the point that even the world's preeminent arms exporter, the United States, has purchased batteries, as have several advanced European militaries. Its technology can save lives if used in a strategically wise manner. But to say that it has been used in such a manner would be an unprovable counterfactual. Indeed, the evidence suggests otherwise. Since Iron Dome became a mainstay of Israel's arsenal, conflicts with Gaza have been longer, more destructive and resulted in more Israeli casualties.

A weapon is only as good as how it is used. To quote MK Yoni Chetboun, Iron Dome has become a "sleeping pill" for the Israeli government. It has allowed Israel to manage the conflict with Gaza without having to seriously degrade the threat. Instead, despite a few flare-ups each year in which Israel claims each time to have dealt a "severe blow," "changed the equation" or something along those lines, Gaza militants rebuild and emerge with greater launch capabilities and new leadership.

The truth is that Iron Dome has allowed Israel's government to

avoid decisions that require unity and stability. It does this by enabling Israel to manage the conflict through what I call a greater skew towards defensive vs. offensive denial. Denial means blocking an enemy from hitting you. Deterrence means persuading an enemy not to hit you through the threat of hitting them back to the point that they calculate it is not worth it.

As I argue in my book *Socializing Militants: How States End Conflict with Non-State Militants*, terrorist entities that are willing to die to carry out an absolutist agenda cannot be deterred and cannot be negotiated with to end a conflict. Israel cannot agree to cease to exist on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) exist to fight Israel or die trying. You cannot deter a group of people willing to die by threatening them with death. At best, Israel can achieve a strategic pause during which these groups recover and prepare for their next aggression. This is precisely the pattern we see. Hamas is rearming while PIJ provides a shield as the current magnet for Israel's strikes. Either Hamas will join in when it thinks the time is right, or PIJ will become the new big player in Gaza, Judea and Samaria. This is already taking place, with PIJ receiving an increasingly large share of Iranian support.

With deterrence off the table, Israel needs to effectively deny its enemies the ability to attack. Israel's periodic strikes do not inflict anything close to a mortal wound. Within a few months, PIJ and Hamas will be better prepared than before this latest round and Israel will have better intelligence, precision and missile defense. So where does this go? The answer is a continuation of the same dynamic.

For Israel, this is a loss. It is an abnegation of the duties of a government for Israel to allow its south and increasingly its center to become war zones every few months. Israel must realize that effective denial requires offense, seriously degrading its enemies' capabilities instead of relying on defensive capabilities that allow it to become increasingly comfortable with an ever-growing threat. Some call this strategy "mowing the lawn." To effectively mow the lawn, Israel needs to use its army, not just its air force and missile defense. It requires ground forces to do more than take out tunnels. It requires a prolonged operation to kill off thousands of terrorists and destroy their arsenals. Israel has the capability. But does it have the will?

Israel paid with the lives of one percent of its population to emerge as a sovereign state in 1948. If in the past Israel had been unwilling to take casualties to prevent a noose tightening around its neck, it would never have been able to score its strategically crucial victories over its adversaries in 1948, 1956 and 1967. If Israel is no longer willing to pay the butcher's bill, it will never have security.

Some ask why Israel needs to strike Gaza at all since it has Iron Dome. I heard a senior IDF officer answer: "Just because I'm wearing a cup doesn't mean I will let you kick me in the groin all day." For nearly two decades Israel has allowed its southern communities to be pummeled and abused, its children growing up under fire. Israel should use Iron Dome not to forestall military action but to defend the home front while it cleans house. Israel's government must be willing to take risks. This requires the government, the media and the people to stop filtering every action or inaction through the lens of domestic politics. National security must supersede political bickering.

The Zionist ideal was a Jewish state willing and able to defend itself, not a state that is a punching bag for jihadists. Using Iron Dome to avoid risking IDF casualties and to put off tough decisions is not working. It is time to use the IDF for its intended purpose. Every soldier understands their duty to risk their lives to defend civilians. If given the order, Israeli soldiers will bravely take the fight to these terrorist organizations instead of allowing communities to be bombarded. This decision lies with the government. If Israel does not wish to retake control over Gaza, it must at least mow the lawn, and thoroughly this time. Iron Dome should enable this, not prevent it.

*The writer is a publishing adjunct at the Miryam Institute. He served as an infantryman in the IDF from 2006-2009. He is currently a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army. (MirYam Institute May 16)*

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## The Gaza Strip and Learning to Live with Insoluble Problems

By Jonathan S. Tobin

Upon its conclusion, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu rightly lauded the Israel Defense Forces for its brilliant work during “Operation Shield and Arrow.” The five-day campaign exacted a heavy toll on the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) terrorist organization as the IDF took out several of the group’s leaders, along with rank-and-file members, as well as a considerable amount of its armaments and infrastructure. And thanks to the Iron Dome air-defense system, PIJ did very little damage to Israeli targets, making the terrorists much less likely to risk their remaining personnel and rockets on another barrage on the Jewish state in the immediate future.

But like every other previous exchange with Gaza-based terrorists, even the most successful strikes do not solve the problem Israel created in 2005. Israel is unwilling to pay the price to wipe out the Hamas organization that rules Gaza with an iron fist and continues to terrorize Israeli civilians. This gives the Islamist groups a degree of freedom of action enabling them to start hostilities time and again, disrupting Israeli life with relative impunity.

This raises an important question that is hard for both Israelis and Americans to answer: How do you live with an essentially insoluble problem?

The answer from most Israelis is the pragmatic one that Netanyahu and the country’s security establishment have settled on, albeit reluctantly.

The IDF doesn’t have the opportunity to defeat the terrorists in a conventional military manner, in which they would be disarmed and stripped of their ability to inflict future harm on Israelis—let alone fire, as PIJ did last week, more than a 1,000 rockets and missiles at the Jewish state. Only a few got through, including one that scored a direct hit on a building in Rehovot and killed an elderly woman, and another that ironically killed a Palestinian from Gaza who was working in Israel.

Still, the Israelis do have the capability to inflict considerable harm on the terrorists, forcing them to rebuild and rearm, essentially continually kicking the can down the road. The IDF calls this “mowing the grass,” an inelegant yet descriptive metaphor for a strategy whose optimal result is to preserve an unsatisfactory status quo or at least push off the threat to an indefinite future.

Not everyone in the country agrees with this.

For example, Finance Minister Bezalet Smotrich reacted to the end of the latest fighting by saying that it was “inevitable” that Israel would be forced to undertake a “major ground operation” in Gaza to get to “the root of the problem,” and dismantle and disarm the terrorist infrastructure.

That’s logical, though few other Israelis have any appetite for such a fight.

In 2005, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon withdrew every Israeli settlement, settler and soldier from the Strip in the hope that this gesture would lead to the Palestinians creating a model for peace and development. Sharon assured skeptics that if the Palestinians used their control of Gaza to begin firing into Israel, the IDF would be able to easily deal with the situation and even reverse the withdrawal.

But that’s not what happened.

Gaza became an independent terrorist state in all but name. And it became apparent almost immediately that the cost of going into Gaza to end the terrorist threat—in terms of Israeli and Palestinian casualties, and equally, international support—would be too high for any Israeli government to pay.

And so was born a problem to which there is no answer. For the past 17 years, much like Smotrich, many Israelis have said that the current situation cannot go on. And yet, it does.

In this way, dealing with the terrorists in Gaza has become very much like the conundrum in Judea and Samaria, where much of the world believes that the Palestinians should be allowed to set up yet another independent state, either with or without Gaza.

In the 56 years since Israel unified Jerusalem, and took control of Judea and Samaria, pundits and foreign-policy “experts” have been saying that the status quo cannot go on for much longer. Yet it has.

Despite the talk of doom and gloom for an Israel that continued to

“occupy” the heart of the ancient Jewish homeland and guaranteed its security by ensuring that no hostile army could set foot on the western bank of the Jordan River, those predictions were proven wrong.

Rather than being swamped by a demographic problem that (thanks to Jewish population growth and Arab emigration) was nowhere near as serious as many thought or subjected to a South Africa-style isolation campaign that broke its ability to go on, Israel has continued to thrive. It now has a First World economy and is a regional military superpower that counts several formerly hostile Arab and Muslim states as allies and strategic partners—developments that were unimaginable when the “occupation” began.

How was that possible?

For one thing, the perennial belief on the part of the foreign-policy establishment that “solving” the Palestinian problem was the key to dealing with all of America’s problems in the Middle East was completely wrong. Even if the Palestinians got everything they wanted, which basically means Israel ceasing to exist, it wouldn’t do a thing to deal with Islamist terrorism in the region or Iran’s quest for regional hegemony.

First Egypt in 1979, then Jordan in 1994, and in 2020, as a result of the Trump administration’s Abraham Accords, other Arab and Muslim states realized that allowing themselves to continue being held hostage to Palestinian intransigence was madness that did nothing to help their countries.

And as unpleasant as the task of dealing with terrorism in the territories continues to be, it is not so onerous as to prevent Israel from becoming a relatively prosperous and strong nation.

The same is true for having to suffer the existence of a terrorist enclave on Israel’s southern flank. It’s a problem that remains expensive and frustrating. But it’s not so difficult as to inflict anything but superficial damage to Israel’s economy or security.

That’s doubly frustrating for those American governments that have always wrongly viewed the conflict with the Palestinians as a territorial dispute that could be solved by compromise. Even former President Donald Trump, who led the most pro-Israel administration to date, harbored delusions about being able to broker the “deal of the century.”

But that was no more true for the former real estate mogul than it was for Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton, George W. Bush or Barack Obama.

They all failed because the conflict is not about real estate or the result of misunderstandings to be overcome with reason and compromise. The Jews have been agreeing to compromises for decades, including the 1947 U.N. Partition Plan and the 1993 Oslo Accords, and subsequent offers of Palestinian statehood made by Ehud Barak and Ehud Olmert. But each such effort has failed for one reason: The century-old Palestinian war on Zionism is a zero-sum game. The Palestinian goal isn’t a state alongside Israel of one size or another. It’s the destruction of Israel, period.

Once that becomes clear, then learning to live with the anomalous situations in Judea, Samaria and Gaza isn’t that hard to understand.

In a war in which one side cannot be appeased by anything short of their opponent’s complete destruction, compromise is impossible. Just as important, total war solutions employed to end conflicts in other parts of the world are not available to Israel. The Jewish state has no appetite for unleashing mass devastation on the other side’s population and wouldn’t be permitted by its allies and international opinion to do so.

That doesn’t satisfy Israelis who want an end to the Gaza terrorist nightmare or Americans who cling to myths about “land for peace.”

The conflict will end when the Palestinians finally admit defeat and acknowledge that Israel is the victor in their long struggle. Since Israel can’t do what is necessary to convince them of the futility of their struggle to erase the history of the last century, for the foreseeable future, maintaining the status quo is the best anyone can hope for. (JNS May 15)

## Can Israeli Resilience Inspire Alienated Americans?

By Jonathan S. Tobin

Israelis had a rough week. The country was subjected to a barrage of nearly 1,000 rockets and missiles fired at it by Gaza-based Palestinian Islamic Jihad terrorists. Though for the most part, the Iron Dome air-defense system did its work admirably, stopping 91% of projectiles, one got through and scored a direct hit at an apartment building in the central Israeli city of Rehovot, killing one elderly woman and wounding five others.

But as is usually the case when their country is under attack from foes who wish their destruction, Israelis pulled together, united behind their government, and carried on with normal life as much as possible.

The resilience of Israelis in the face of challenges that might break other people is one of the most remarkable aspects of life in the Jewish state. The country has been torn apart in recent months by a bitter, divisive and often disingenuous battle that was supposedly about Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's plans to reform the judiciary but was really a naked struggle for political power.

While it would be an exaggeration to say that this was all forgotten amid the fighting, sirens and air raids, this past week's events demonstrate that even in the worst of times, the vast majority of Israelis are able to rise above their differences and present a fairly united front to an often hostile world. Indeed, it was enough to frustrate the gaggle of anti-Zionist columnists at the Haaretz opinion section, who lamented the way Israelis put aside their politics and stood by their right to self-defense against people trying to kill them.

The same can't be said about many American Jews looking on at the struggle in the Middle East with their usual mix of support, criticism and plain-old indifference.

It's true that most of those who play leadership roles in the Jewish community made statements expressing solidarity with Israel and opposition to the terrorists. But as Jewish communities are in the process of holding some of their Israel Independence Day festivals timed to May 14, there was no massive outpouring of support for the Jewish state, as was the case in previous generations when it was under attack.

With each passing anniversary, the hoopla among American Jews about Israel's birthday becomes less a matter of unified support and more a function of the growing alienation that some feel about the Jewish state—even the very idea of one.

While many blame this on dislike of Netanyahu and his policies, it has little to do with him and everything to do with the changing demography of a community increasingly assimilated and lacking in a sense of Jewish peoplehood. With the fastest-growing sector of American Jewry being what demographers label "Jews of no religion," it's little surprise that a sectarian idea like Zionism would be a hard sell for those who feel no particular loyalty to their group identity.

Still, and despite the cynicism and criticism heard from the liberal establishment about the Jewish state, we know that, as proven by the success of Birthright trips, connection with Israel helps build a stronger sense of Jewish identity among Americans, especially at a young age. Though some on the secular left find it hard to admit, Israel remains the center of Jewish life and a singular source of inspiration for a people that date back 3,500 years.

But the growing drift of Democrats, to whom most Jews remain loyal, away from Israel is a measure of the alienation that cannot be ignored.

More to the point, there was also little anger or political backlash when Democrats went silent about the way antisemitic progressives were allowed to hold a gathering lamenting the birth of the Jewish state—"Nakba 75"—at a Senate office building under the sponsorship of Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders.

The event was the project of Rep. Rashida Tlaib (D-Mich.), who supports not just the antisemitic BDS movement but openly calls for the destruction of Israel. She was thwarted from holding her nakba fest (an Arabic word that corresponds to "catastrophe," as in Israel's modern-day establishment in May 1948) in the House by a decision of Speaker Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.). But no one in the Democratic leadership of the Senate, including Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) or the Biden administration, sought to keep a program aimed at pushing for the destruction of the one Jewish state on the planet and a key U.S ally off government property.

While some Jewish liberals might dismiss this as unimportant, nakba commemorations, which center around declaring Israel's birth to be a crime that must be expunged, matter because it was a symbol of the growing influence of the intersectional left. Far from being isolated, the anti-Israel faction among Democrats is growing in number. More to the point, even at a time when Israel is under attack, the silence about the "Nakba Day" affair from Democrats was telling.

Tlaib and her fellow "Squad" member and antisemite, Rep. Ilhan Omar (D-Minn.), remain popular among the Democratic base. Moreover, even figures like President Joe Biden are careful to cultivate them. That was made clear when both were invited to the White House last month for an Eid al-Fitr event and the president singled them out for compliments. Democrats often blame Republicans for not isolating some of their more extreme members, like Rep. Marjorie Taylor-Greene (R-Ga.), who, though a supporter of Israel, has made bizarre comments easily interpreted as antisemitic. Democrats are unwilling to do the same with Tlaib and Omar, despite their open and unabashed antisemitism and hatred for Israel, due to their being viewed as both progressives in good standing and pop-culture rock stars.

Their increasing influence is not unrelated to what's been happening in Gaza and Israel.

Four days of efforts by the Israel Defense Forces—dubbed "Operation Shield and Arrow"—to take out the Islamist group's military capabilities and its leadership did not succeed in completely silencing their fire. The IDF took its usual care in limiting the impact of their strikes on Palestinian civilians, but the inevitable casualties are being trumpeted by Israel's opponents as crimes, even though many of those killed and hurt in Gaza were hit by Islamic Jihad projectiles that fell short of their intended targets in Israel.

The contrast between the Israeli and Palestinian casualties is depicted as the result of a disproportionate IDF response to the rockets. Yet what it really shows is the difference between the two sides' priorities. In the Gaza Strip are plenty of bomb shelters (underneath the entire Strip also lies a massive network of tunnels and fortified strongholds used for terrorist purposes), but they are used as weapon storage facilities for the people firing them. Israel has prioritized the defense of its people with both defense systems and mandatory bomb shelters.

That hasn't stopped the media from engaging in the usual Israel-bashing as the actual intent of Palestinian groups like Islamic Jihad, as well as their Hamas and Fatah rivals who are downplayed or ignored.

That has taken a toll not so much on general American support for Israel, which is rooted in the overwhelmingly positive sentiments expressed by conservative Christians, evangelicals and Republicans, while liberals and Democrats are more sympathetic towards a Palestinian cause that demands the extinction of Jews.

The good news is that while American Jews are influenced by critical media coverage of the Jewish state, most Israelis know better than to treat their efforts to survive as depending on the goodwill of the international media. The vast majority understand that there is no point in listening to the elite chattering classes of the West, who wrongly view them as colonists or "white" oppressors in their own country.

For all of its problems—and they are legion—Israel seems uninterested in debating whether or not it has a right to exist or defend itself. American Jews would do well to learn from this, rather than think they need to save Israel "from itself."

As the anniversary of Israel's birthday is observed in the secular calendar this coming week (along with the Palestinians' nakba), American Jews should pause and think of the stress Israelis face as they dash in and out of bomb shelters trying to get their kids to school (and to sleep) and take care of their neighbors, including the sick and the elderly.

But they should also be inspired by Israel's resolution in defending its people against those who seek their deaths, as well as by the ability of Israelis to temporarily put their differences aside in the face of deadly threats. This is a moment to recognize that the Israeli people's attitudes are not just admirable. Their strength and determination represent the future of the Jewish people.

(JNS May 12)