

Keep the gas on the counterterrorism pedal

written by Meir Ben Shabbat | 06.08.2026

In Gaza and Lebanon, Israel is compelled to play the diplomatic game being led by Washington in order to continue enjoying its support and avoid being portrayed as the recalcitrant party. But Israel must not allow that game to constrain its freedom of action to destroy terrorist infrastructure and eliminate terrorists wherever they may be.

Over the weekend, Israel rejected current plans to disarm Hamas. Its reasons were clear: Despite the efforts of the United States, the terrorist organization has no intent to do so.

While the CEO of the Board of Peace, Nikolay Mladenov, has maneuvered between the intricacies of the “20-point plan” and the “15-point framework” to reassure Israel, Hamas has made its intentions regarding the commitments contained in these agreements perfectly clear.

“We do not intend to hand over the weapons to Israel,” says senior Hamas official Ghazi Hamad. “No disarmament process will take place before Israel completes its withdrawal from the Strip.”

For those who may have difficulty remembering, this is the same Ghazi Hamad who, just days after the massacre of 1,200 people in southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, explained in media interviews that Israel is “a state that we want to bring down” and promised that the “‘Al-Aqsa Flood’ is only the first time. There will be a second, third and fourth time. We have the resilience and the ability to fight and pay the price.”

This is also the same Ghazi Hamad who, in an interview last week with English broadcaster Piers Morgan, insisted that Hamas had never intended to kill civilians on Oct. 7, attempting to blur—and even deny—the seminal event that ignited the ensuing war.

The long arm of Israel’s security services has not yet reached him, but the score will yet be settled.

Either way, if anyone had any doubts, Hamad's words make clear that Hamas views the diplomatic talks merely as leverage to drive the Israel Defense Forces out of Gaza, without relinquishing either its military power or its ruling infrastructure.

Meanwhile, with the assistance of the Board of Peace, Gaza terrorists have received, free of charge, a 14-day respite from the blitz of Israeli targeted counterterrorism strikes that had been hitting them until a week ago.

Hamad's tune can also be heard in Lebanon. Hezbollah's leadership is making it clear in its own voice that the diplomatic arrangements do not tie its hands. The organization's secretary-general, Naim Qassem, recently declared emphatically that "we did not commit to anyone not to resist aggression or respond to it" and categorically rejected any relinquishment of its weapons at the present time.

For its part, Israel's response to attacks on its soldiers must be immediate and disproportionate. A restrained response that does not hurt the enemy will not merely fail to deter it from attacking again but will be perceived by the enemy as an acceptable price to pay for the damage that it inflicted upon Israel.

As for the question of whether the deadly explosive device that killed two Israeli soldiers last week was planted by Hezbollah before or after the ceasefire agreement, Israel should not get into this game. Either way, Israel must respond fiercely.

When terrorist organizations understand that this is Israel's approach, they will have to ask themselves whether it is worthwhile for them to leave devices in the field that were planted in advance or whether they should act to dismantle them before they lead to trouble. Conversely, if Israel takes into consideration the claim that the explosive device was planted before the agreement, we may, God forbid, find ourselves facing additional devices that explode against our forces, only to be told that these were "pre-agreement devices."

Hezbollah and Hamas have no intention of voluntarily disarming themselves, and no one will do the job for Israel. What disrupts their ability to build up their strength or carry out attacks is the constant pressure of targeted counterterrorism operations. It would therefore be a strategic mistake to ease that pressure.

As long as they remain under a constant Israeli threat, the organizations' senior leaders and operatives are forced to live as hunted men—in hiding, maintaining a low profile and taking security precautions that complicate their daily operations.

Moreover, to prevent a surprise attack against Israel, it is essential to deny the enemy the ability to organize and prepare. Halting or significantly reducing counterterrorism operations will give the enemy the confidence and sense of immunity that it currently lacks.

Instead of getting bogged down in legalistic hairsplitting over the wording of the various plans and frameworks, Israel needs to keep things simple on both fronts. It must not relinquish its freedom of action to conduct counterterrorism operations; it cannot withdraw from any territory currently held before the terrorist groups have been dismantled; and it should respond forcefully to every attack or attempt to attack Israel.

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