

The IDF has got its act together

written by Meir Ben Shabbat | 03.11.2023

The ground operation of the IDF is achieving its objectives. The first line of defense of the enemy in the Gaza City area has been breached. In the northern part of the strip, one can clearly feel the “circles of fire of the Israeli army” – the term used in Arab media reports to describe the extensive aerial and heavy artillery attacks that preceded the ground forces and have accompanied their movements.

In close combat with Hamas terrorists emerging from tunnels, mosques, and hidden locations prepared in advance, our soldiers have had an upper hand. The battle is not easy. The enemy operates according to a doctrine for urban warfare, based on a network of tunnels, boobytraps, ambushes, and extensive use of anti-tank missiles. From the overall picture that is unfolding for us, our forces are conducting themselves with professionalism and a sober assessment of the challenges they face; the IDF has managed to get its act together after the initial surprise on Oct. 7. Its commanders and soldiers fight with great determination, showing courage and a resolve to win. They will continue until victory is achieved.

Effective cooperation between ground, air, and naval forces, with intelligence and the Shin Bet significantly enhances defense capabilities and serves as a force multiplier for the offensive power. This has led to many achievements so far. Regrettably, it is impossible to completely prevent the cost of friction with the enemy.

The maneuver in Jabalia is a successful model for continuing the operation. The attack on the western part of the area provides a unique contribution to the experience of the forces because of its high density – among the most dense areas in the world – the network of secret tunnels, shooting infrastructure, and various means of warfare. During this combined attack from both ground and air, the compound was destroyed, killing its people inside. The commander of the battalion, Ibrahim Biari, who was responsible for numerous attacks and deeply involved in the surprise attack on October 7, was killed. Dozens of Hamas terrorists were killed. This attack provides an illustration of the challenges our forces will face as they continue to breach the shell of Gaza. The operation in Jabalia should serve as a model for how to deal with the rest of the campaign.

The siege on Gaza is not a “desirable but not necessary” means of warfare; it is a vital means of combat, like all other means employed by the IDF in the conflict. In this war, the siege has a dual purpose: to exhaust the enemy and limit its capabilities, and to contribute directly to Hamas’ loss of control over the population. Its effectiveness depends on three conditions: how porous it is; the level of enforcement; and the duration. A siege that allows for exceptions, or one without enforcement, is not a siege. This applies to the need to rebuff demands of expanding humanitarian aid, fuel supplies, or ideas regarding a humanitarian ceasefire. From Hamas’ perspective, fighting Israel takes precedence over any other need; this means that anything that enters the strip will be used for that purpose. As long as Hamas holds hostages and ignores all humanitarian values, a tough policy should be maintained, allowing goods into Gaza only as required, and only to the southern part of the strip, and under strict supervision.

Disrupting the internet and communication in Gaza is crucial to disrupting Hamas’ control, preventing efficient coordination among its governing mechanisms, disrupting its propaganda efforts, increasing the confusion on the ground, and preventing the flow of information that could hinder our forces’ operations. Even though there may be advantages to keeping the internet on, they are outweighed by the disadvantages. Disconnecting the internet and communication will indeed increase chaos in Gaza and make the fog thicker. But there is no need to be concerned about this. The chaos is likely an inevitable stage on the path to a reality where Hamas does not dominate Gaza.

Discussing the question of the “day after” the war in Gaza is premature. Discussing this may convey a message contrary to the correct line that Israel has adopted in defining the war’s objectives. Furthermore, it is clear that the “day after” will be influenced by the scale of Israel’s military achievement and by the dynamics and opportunities that will have arisen as a result. These cannot be predicted at this stage. At this point, it is suggested to present a framework for the “day after” in the negative sense: in Gaza, there should not be a Hamas government, military capabilities threatening Israel, an arms industry, or any limitations on Israel’s activities. “If the war ends without the destruction of Hamas, it will be a victory for Hamas and a big defeat for Israel and the free world,” the Saudi journalist Abdul Aziz Al-Khamis told Kann news. His words reflect the sentiment shared by the leaders of countries in the region and beyond.

What we say and do may not necessarily always align with what we want to

achieve deep inside, but this desire has the ability to create quiet understandings as to the way to deal with Hamas – in Gaza and beyond. After October 7, the world realizes that Israel is the last line of defense against the spread of extreme Islam of Hamas and ISIS. The world will be a better place when we defeat Hamas.

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