

# What Israel needs right now

written by Meir Ben Shabbat | 15.09.2024

Where are we headed? This question seems to preoccupy Israelis more than any other issue these days. The ongoing war of attrition with Hezbollah, with northern residents displaced from their homes, coupled with the emerging security routine in the Gaza Strip and the lack of progress on the hostage issue, create an impression of stagnation and stalemate. The escalation in the West Bank - with Iran's indirect involvement and Hamas leadership pushing for renewed suicide attacks - raises tension levels and attention to this arena.

The eastern border is not quiet, and the threat of a Shiite invasion of Jordan has not diminished. Spokespersons for the regime in Tehran continue to promise revenge for the elimination of Ismail Haniyeh, while on the other side, the Houthi leader in Yemen repeatedly vows to respond harshly to the Israeli attack on the port of Hodeidah. On the international stage, the prosecutor in The Hague continues to press for arrest warrants for top Israeli officials. If all this weren't enough, there's growing concern about the war's impact on the economy, the radicalization of discourse between sectors of Israeli society, and internal polarization.

Against this backdrop, clarifying the government's objectives, the "organizing idea" for achieving them, and providing a (general) report on progress in this regard is essential. This is crucial for directing and fine-tuning the activities of governmental systems, each in its domain, to engage the public, or at least reduce confusion and uncertainty in this dynamic reality. This is particularly important given the large number of challenges and arenas of action, and in light of the tensions and interconnections between them.

The reality we should aim for within a year should include the following components:

**Gaza Strip:** Militarily demilitarized, under Israeli security control, without Hamas's governmental and organizational capabilities, and after the return of the hostages (as soon as possible). The "Generals' Plan" is one way, but not the only one, that could address the existing tension between the pursuit of Hamas's collapse and the desire to return the hostages quickly. It is suggested that the

political echelon adopt it or develop an alternative that achieves the same effect.

**West Bank:** After root treatment to dismantle terrorist strongholds, crushing Hamas's organizational and economic power, strengthening the defense of the seam zone, and exhausting leverage on the Palestinian Authority regarding the encouragement of terrorism and adversarial activities against Israel.

**Northern Front:** Removing Hezbollah from the direct threat range to northern settlements and safely returning residents to their homes.

**Iran:** In the midst of an international diplomatic, security, and economic campaign to deter it from nuclear ambitions and dismantle the ring of fire it has built around Israel.

**Expanding normalization** agreements between Israel and countries in the region and beyond, and forming a regional coalition from a position of strength and after victory.

**Israel:** In the process of implementing an unprecedented national plan for empowerment in all areas and dimensions, while harnessing all forces to alleviate internal tensions and increase cohesion and agreement.

The ability to achieve these goals, at least some of them, depends to a considerable extent on the policy of the American administration. Truth be told, some of the things heard last week grate on Israeli ears. In this context, it is right to clarify: Israel will not compromise on achieving its goals in Gaza and the north. Its existence requires a stubborn struggle that it is ready for. It is not in question, for the eternity of Israel will not deceive.

Published in Israel Hayom, September 15, 2024.