Never again?

written by David M. Weinberg | 14.11.2025

With almost all Israeli hostages held by Hamas in Gaza now freed, and before Hamas seizes more hostages, Israel must reconsider its policy on this matter and take decisive steps to settle the score.

First of all, it is time to acknowledge that reasoned public debate on this important issue has been squelched by the overpowering campaign of the Hostage Family Forum – in support of the mass release of Palestinian terrorists in exchange for Israeli hostages *bechol mechir*, "at any price."

Any deviation from the politically correct line – "bechol mechir" – as dictated by Einav Zangauker and company led to doxxing, silencing, even violent shaming. Public discourse was distorted by the very well-funded megaphones of Kaplan Street.

After all, everyone knows - because this has been true in every previous case - that released Palestinian terrorists assuredly will strike again, with God-only-knows how many Israeli casualties in the future. The release of over 2,000 terrorists, including hardened and experienced Palestinian mass murderers, certainly will incentivize future kidnappings, pour gasoline onto the terrorist fires already raging in Judea and Samaria, and catapult Hamas towards its intended takeover of Judea and Samaria.

Thus, repeated deals over the past two years to release Palestinian terrorists for Israeli hostages held in Gaza might have been the most necessary thing in the world to do, but it also may be the most disastrous thing Israel has done. The cost will pay out over a prolonged period, and it will be steep.

Up until this year, the 2011 deal for Gilad Shalit was the worst: More than 1,000 terrorists including Yahya Sinwar were released in exchange for Shalit. In fact, almost the entire Hamas command structure that planned the Simchat Torah (October 7, 2023) assault on Israeli towns and cities, which killed over 1,200 Israelis on one day, was made up of terrorists released in the Shalit deal.

Mahmoud Qawasameh, for example, a terrorist released in the Shalit deal, planned the kidnapping and murder of the three teenagers Naftali Fraenkel, Eyal

Yifrach, and Gilad Shaer in Gush Etzion in 2014. He was re-arrested by the IDF earlier this year while hiding out with other terrorists in Shifa Hospital in Gaza City, and released again in last month's US-brokered hostage deal.

In fact, under the Trump administration's hostage and ceasefire 20-point plan, Israel released more than 1,950 Palestinian terrorists, including 250 who were serving life sentences for deadly attacks, as well as an additional 1,700 more Palestinians arrested since October 7, 2023. This is on top of a previous batch of about 2,000 Palestinian security prisoners released by Israel back in February as part of an earlier deal to free some Israeli hostages.

And once again, like all previous times, the Israeli "security establishment" confidently (and I say, misleadingly) has assured Israeli politicians and the public that it "will know how to manage the situation," i.e., how to track the terrorists and crush any nascent return to terrorist activity without too much harm done. But this has never proven to be true. Every deal involving the release of terrorists has led to much bloodshed, planned and carried out by these released terrorists.

So much so that two decades ago, Israeli leaders decided that a stop had to be put to this precarious situation. A committee headed by former Supreme Court President Meir Shamgar was appointed in July 2008 to recommend to the government principles for conducting negotiations for the retrieval of prisoners, hostages, and missing persons.

Its conclusions, apparently very restrictive (meaning that no more mass terrorist releases would ever be possible under Israeli law and policy) were purposefully held back until after Shalit's release in 2012 and then classified as "top secret" – and were never formally adopted by any government. Several legislative proposals based on Shamgar principles have since been floated, but somehow they have always flopped.

One example: Yesh Atid chairman Yair Lapid proposed legislation in 2015 that would make it illegal to free more than one terrorist for any one Israeli civilian or soldier held hostage. Unfortunately, that bill never passed.

Alas, in the face of such Israeli delinquency, Hamas and its jihadist compatriots have learned that kidnapping Israelis pays handsomely. And so, it is only a matter of time, almost an inevitability, that they will attempt to snatch and torture more hostages.

They assuredly will do so, unless Israel resolutely changes policy – defying the overwrought campaigns that until now have distorted clear strategic thinking on this matter.

DIRECTLY RELATED to the urgent necessity for a new strategic policy on handling terrorists and terrorist demands is the need to severely punish Nukhba terrorists – those barbarians who were the rapists, torturers, and executioners of October 7, many of whom proudly filmed and broadcast their atrocities.

Some 250 such sub-human Palestinians have escaped judgement until now – not one has yet been indicted – because Jerusalem feared that prosecuting them would derail efforts to free the innocent Israeli hostages held by Hamas. And so they wait peacefully in Israeli jails for a next hostage-terrorist release deal.

Now is the time to harness the full force of Israeli justice against them. In my mind, this means setting up a special court for genocide and war crimes, and applying the death penalty in some cases (with life imprisonment for the rest with no possibility of release).

This is because the monstrous attacks in which these butchers participated should not be treated merely as acts carried out by an assortment of isolated terrorists, with each terrorist tried only for his individual share of slaughter according to pinpoint evidence against him.

Rather, they need to be hauled up before an Israeli court of justice and indeed before the virtual tribunals of the world as Islamo-Nazis who knowingly were carrying out an attempt to slaughter all Israelis and exterminate the State of Israel – as Hamas leaders clearly planned and openly boasted about.

Consider this an Israeli version of the Nuremberg trials of 1945-46 against Nazi leaders, whose purpose was not only to mete out resounding justice against Nazis but to expose and record for posterity Nazi plans, ideology, and crimes. So too with Hamas. Its annihilationist agenda must be unmasked and delegitimized; its denialist supporters shamed; and its spirit crushed.

The war crimes trials of the Nukhba will provide a platform for the survivors of the southern Israeli towns and cities that were targeted by the terrorists, and for the survivors of the Nova festival massacre too, to testify in court while their searing recollections of being attacked are fresh, and before Palestinian and global anti-Israel denialism takes further root.

The war crimes trials must also inevitably expose the enthusiastic support that Hamas received from the Palestinian Authority, from Turkey and Qatar, from radical Moslem organizations (many parading as benevolent Islamic "charities" in the West), and from foul fellow travelers around the world.

I can hear the pragmatic-cautious and liberal-humanist objections already. It will be argued that show trials and death sentences only create more Palestinian "martyrs" fueling further Islamo-Nazi war against Israel; and that executions are not in keeping with "Jewish values."

I say that the "pragmatic" objection is poppycock, and the "humanist" (or faux "Jewish") objection a disgrace.

A show trial with death sentences would be worthwhile, effectual, and exceedingly ethical. It would affirm Israel's intentions to win its wars against all enemies and would assert the Jewish People's commitment to leading the world in a moral battle against true evil.

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Secure Judea and Samaria now

written by David M. Weinberg | 14.11.2025

Israel must act forcefully against Palestinian terrorism and wildcat building, and buttress its long-term claim on Judea and Samaria by building strategically in accelerated fashion, especially in the Jerusalem envelope.

A Historic Opportunity to Return to Israel's Realist National Security Doctrine

written by Dr. Raphael BenLevi | 14.11.2025

The Strategic Consequences of Departing from Realism: How Ideological Drift Undermined Israel's Security and Why a Return to Foundational Principles Is Essential.

Anger, alongside relief

written by David M. Weinberg | 14.11.2025

Blessed be the hostage dealmakers but beware nasty narratives and self-foolery that accompany the deal.

Mideast political quiz for 5786

written by David M. Weinberg | 14.11.2025

Which of the following Mideast-related events can be expected in 5786 (2025-2026)? Take this quiz and calculate the year for which you need to be prepared. (My answers are at the end.)

1. Which of the following security-diplomatic developments will dominate in the coming year?

a. A series of Iranian-inspired terrorist attacks on Israeli and Jewish targets around the world in retaliation for Operation Rising Lion.

- b. Another Israeli/American strike on Iran's nuclear program and ballistic missile array.
- c. A security accord between Israel and Syria.
- d. Release by Hamas of all live and deceased Israeli hostages held in Gaza, accompanied by a long lull in Israeli military operations.
- e. A deepening IDF drive into Gaza that lasts all year and amounts to a full-scale occupation.
- f. One million Gazans will flee into Sinai and from there to refuge around the world, despite Egypt's protestations and threats.

2. How will Israel's relationships with Sunni powers develop?

- a. Turkey's hegemonic ambitions in the Mediterranean and Syria will lead to nearwar with Israel. Israel will strenuously object to further US weapons sales to Ankara.
- b. Israel will threaten military action unless Egypt scales back its aggressive and treaty-violating military buildup in Sinai. Israel will strenuously object to further US weapons sales to Cairo.
- c. Abraham Accord partnerships with Morocco, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates will remain intact but frozen.
- d. When a ceasefire in Gaza is reached, Abraham Accord partnerships will expand to Oman, Indonesia, Djibouti, Comoros, Mauritania, and eventually even Saudi Arabia.

3. What will be in French President Emmanuel Macron's phony "State of Palestine"?

- a. The so-called "State of Palestine" (a.k.a. the "Palestinian Authority") will sign a treaty of protection with Turkey and Iran.
- b. Mahmoud Abbas will die or be overthrown by one or more of the following Fatah leaders (who will battle succession out among themselves): Hussein al-Sheikh, Jibril Rajoub, Mahmoud al-Aloul, Majid Faraj, Marwan Barghouti, and Mohammed Dahlan.
- c. Iran/Hamas will spark a wild wave of terrorism in Jerusalem and across Judea and Samaria. The IDF will have to retake Judea and Samaria to stem this assault and prevent a Hamas takeover of Macron's "State of Palestine."
- d. To shore up the "State of Palestine," Macron and other European leaders will

fund a Palestinian space program and triple their funding of UNRWA, while tightening an arms embargo on Israel.

e. The "democratic and peaceful" State of Palestine will cease to "pay-for-slay" (support terrorists and their families), dismiss soldiers and policemen who have aided or participated in terror attacks on Israelis, criminalize and prosecute religious leaders and broadcasters who rail about Jews as subhuman forces of evil, introduce peace education in PA schools, and embrace water, sewage, industrial, and other cooperative projects with Israel.

4. Israel will extend its sovereignty to the following ("annexation"):

- a. The Jordan Valley
- b. The Jordan Valley and the greater Jerusalem envelope, including Ma'aleh Adumim and Gush Etzion
- c. Area C (which includes all Israeli cities and towns in Judea and Samaria)
- d. All of Judea and Samaria
- e. None of the above, at least not until the next government is formed after the elections.

5. The 2026 Israeli election will be held in:

- a. February-March (because the current Netanyahu government will fall swiftly when the Knesset winter session convenes in late October, mainly because of the haredi draft impasse).
- b. June-July (because the government will fail to pass a state budget by the end of March 2026, mainly because of the haredi draft impasse).
- c. September-October (because that is the outside limit of the current government, by law).

6. In the 2026 Israeli election:

- a. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will triumphantly bow out of Israeli politics, after crushing Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran, pulling off additional Abraham Accord-type treaties, and feeling vindicated by a feeble end to his criminal trials.
- b. Prime Minister Netanyahu will run and win reelection, after crushing Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran, pulling off additional Abraham Accord-type treaties, and

feeling vindicated by a feeble end to his criminal trials. He will then stand for election to the post of president of Israel when President Isaac Herzog's term ends in 2028.

- c. Prime Minister Netanyahu will be run out of office by an Israeli public that holds him responsible for the security collapse on October 7, 2023, and the escalating regional conflicts that have ensued with no end in sight.
- d. The attorney-general and the Supreme Court will rule, based on some concocted legal convention, that Netanyahu is barred from running for reelection.
- e. Netanyahu will seek to postpone the election to 2027 or 2028 on the basis of an emergency security situation.
- f. A fresh crop of brave, battle-tested, and ideologically motivated leaders will enter Israeli public life, breathing hope and inspiration into Israeli politics; the heroic mid-level commanders of the current war, and the equally heroic civil society leaders of today. They will tip the balance of Israeli politics.
- g. Even after opposition parties unite into one large bloc for the purpose of winning against Netanyahu, and even after the entry into politics of new leaders and parties, the election result will be inconclusive a hung jury. No centrist or stable government will be possible without including Likud or involving either haredi or Arab representatives.

7. If Benny Gantz, Gadi Eisenkot, Naftali Bennett, Yair Lapid, and/or Avigdor Liberman were to form the next Israeli government, they would manage diplomacy and security much better than Benjamin Netanyahu has, by doing which of the following?

- a. Cutting a swift hostage release deal with Hamas, then convincing Egypt to take control of Gaza.
- b. Unilaterally withdrawing Israeli troops and settlers from significant sections of Judea and Samaria, and recognizing the "State of Palestine."
- c. Quickly reaching a peace accord with Palestinian Authority head Mahmoud Abbas, who would assume responsibility for Gaza and bring stability, good governance, and goodwill to the entire area.
- d. Dropping Israel's demand for total dismantlement of Iran's nuclear and missile arrays, and instead partnering with the E-3 and IAEA to reach an accommodation with Iran.
- e. All the above answers are ridiculous. None of this is wise nor feasible, and none

of Israel's leaders would go there, despite the fantasies of many global observers.

- 8. If, on one day, 5,000 rockets were to be fired into populated areas of Paris, London, Ottawa, and Canberra (never mind if this were to continue for two years amounting to over 30,000 rockets and missiles), and 1,200 citizens of these countries were slaughtered (not to mention raped, tortured and/or kidnapped) what would be the "proportionate response" of Emmanuel Macron, Keir Starmer, Mark Carney, and Anthony Albanese?
- a. They would seek to invest billions in the attacker's economy to improve quality of life and squelch the urge of the attackers to further hit France, Britain, Canada, and Australia. They also would cheerfully and generously pay out billions of dollars in "humanitarian aid" to feed the population that elected the terrorist attackers, without serious supervision of how the funds are used (meaning, diverted for military rearming).
- b. They would vote for a UN Security Council resolution calling on "all sides" to exercise "restraint," then convene an international conference to accord "state" status to the attacking terrorist enemy.
- c. They would erase the leadership of the attacking party from the face of the earth. And then carpet-bomb the attacking zone to kingdom come, as the Allies did in World War II.

9. The most important prayer that Israelis can offer this Yom Kippur is:

- a. A prayer for national calm and mutual consideration, even amid a controversial war and a hotly contested election campaign.
- b. A prayer for enhanced Zionist spirit and backbone, including renewed commitment to national service and winning against Israel's enemies.
- c. A prayer for the hostages, wounded soldiers, and war widows/orphans.

d. "Oh Lord God, to whom vengeance belongs: Oh God to whom vengeance belongs, shine forth! Lift up yourself, you judge of the earth. Render to the proud their recompense. Lord, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph?... The Lord is my defense, and my God the rock of my refuge. He brings (upon the enemy) their own iniquity, and He cuts them off in their own wickedness..." (Psalm 94)

e. All the above.

MY ANSWERS:

- 1. Alas, not d or f.
- 2. a and d.
- 3. b and c.
- 4. e.
- 5. b.
- 6. g.
- 7. e.
- 8. c.
- 9. e.

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Israel's strike on Hamas failed tactically but sends strategic regional messages

written by Dr. Raphael BenLevi | 14.11.2025 The Israeli strike's main achievements lie in the messages it conveyed.

Independence and partnership

written by David M. Weinberg | 14.11.2025 Time for reset in Israel's diplomatic world.

Specious protestations and declarations of sovereignty

written by David M. Weinberg \mid 14.11.2025 On the hypocrisy of Western countries that condemn Israel's hit on Hamas in Qatar.

Trump will no longer let international law get in his way

written by Prof. Zaki Shalom | 14.11.2025

The Trump administration is making it clear to the international system that the principles of international law will no longer constitute an obstacle on the path to achieving its objectives.

Thou doth protest too much

written by David M. Weinberg | 14.11.2025

This country is on the verge of complete chaos. Every single interest group thinks it can block roads and airports and besiege the homes of public figures. Every sect and splinter faction feels that it holds absolute truths that justify shutting down the country whenever they feel like it, until they get their way – no matter how inconvenient this is for others in the country or how close this takes us to civil war.

This has to stop. There must be limits to dissent and demonstration.

Alas, threats to "burn down the country" and instigate "civil war" are becoming standard language in various protest movements, say, among the hostage freedom "fighters" and the haredi (Ultra-Orthodox) anti-draft "shock troops." And the protests themselves are becoming more violent every day.

Hostage freedom campaigners burn tires on the main roadways in wildcat style, and residences of the prime minister in two locations have been assaulted. The beat of bullhorns with ugly accusations of "war crimes" and concrete threats to personal security have become de rigueur outside the homes of government ministers – at 6 am, at 11 pm, and any other ungodly hour of the day or night. Even protests outside and inside of synagogues are not out of bounds.

"Kaplanist" protesters have even taken to pursuing government leaders and their families, hunting them down, literally chasing them down the street and marching outside the schools of their kids. The latest anti-government extremist slogan speaks about lighting a "ring of fire" around every minister and every army general who is implicated in government "crimes" related to continuation of the Gaza war and "abandonment" of Israeli hostages.

HAREDI FURY at the failure of the government to pass a military draft exemption law for their masses of yeshiva students (alongside anger at the arrest of a few draft deserters and the denial of budgets to such shirkers of military service) has led to mass demonstrations that choke off entrances to major cities like Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, and Ashdod.

Haredi chutzpah extends to blocking Ben-Gurion Airport too. "No one will fly, if

we can't fly," they threaten - referring to the possibility that draft-dodging acolytes of Rabbi Nachman of Breslov could be arrested at the airport en route to the rebbe's gravesite in Uman (Ukraine) before Rosh Hashanah. They even demand the Israeli government pay for part of this pilgrimage!

Last weekend, I saw gigantic haredi street posters (known as *pashkevilim*) with a one-word screaming headline: "War!" For a moment, I thought to myself, oh good, the haredi community finally has woken up to the fact this country is fighting a long and difficult war against its external enemies and that haredi people need to pitch in too.

But no, "War!" meant war against the haredi community's perceived internal enemies, meaning most Israelis, who seek to draw Ultra-Orthodox young men into some form of national or military service.

The posters went on to describe the "evils" of mainstream Israeli society (perhaps that is the source of term *pashkevil*?) and to threaten to "burn" (*lisrof*) and "destroy" (*lehachariv*) the "Zionist state" if yeshiva boys are forced out of their study halls or kollel men are denied discounts in municipal taxes and HMO fees.

The demonstration free-for-all runs amok across the gamut of the upset: Distraught Ethiopian, Eritrean, handicapped, and LGBTQ communities. Angry settlers, disgruntled port workers, dissatisfied farmers, disadvantaged residents of the peripheries, displeased teachers and doctors. Even upset butterfly enthusiasts and bottlecap makers (just kidding, but only by a bit). They all think that they can demonstrate on major highways at rush hour with the declared intention of gridlock, until and unless they get their way.

Everybody else affected by such narrow-self-interest protests – which of course are self-defined by the protesters as emergency rallies of the highest and broadest national priority – be damned.

Unfortunately, the notion that a police permit is necessary before launching a protest or a march in the streets – is wholly out the door. Nor are the police "allowed" to arrest any illegal protesters; that becomes a cause for accusations of "dictatorship" and for additional protests.

COORDINATION WITH the police, not defiance of the police, is the logical

approach in a democracy, where balance in civil order is paramount. It is the job of internal security leaders to uphold the important right to protest against, or advocate for, a specific policy, and balance this with the rights of other citizens (who are not party to the voguish cause-of-the-moment) to conduct their lives without undue interference.

And yes, balanced policy requires fair and uniform application of the law across societal sectors and the political spectrum.

By way of example, we all know what would have happened if so-called settler "hilltop youth" or haredi hooligans had climbed onto the roof of the National Library in Jerusalem or firebombed a car outside the Prime Minister's home. These things actually happened this week.

But since the ruffians are left-of-center protesters against the Netanyahu government, well, don't expect many arrests and certainly no arrests that lead to actual criminal prosecutions. The politicized Attorney General would never allow that.

I won't rehash here the horrible disengagement from Gaza in 2005 but recall this: Sixteen-year-old Religious Zionist girls who merely were on their way to protest the destruction of Gush Katif settlements were incarcerated by very aggressive policemen, held incommunicado in jail for weeks, and then hit with severe criminal indictments.

For the sake of both civil sanity and minimal national unity, I therefore support the plan of National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir to limit the ability of protesters to block major roads, aggressively besiege personal homes, assault synagogues, etc. This includes highways, access roads to Ben-Gurion International Airport, hospitals, emergency routes, and roads whose closure would isolate communities.

The plan would not interfere with the large anti-government protests taking place on Kaplan and Begin streets in central Tel Aviv every Saturday, if they are coordinated with police (and generally they are, although extremists frequently have broken through barriers to block the Ayalon Freeway).

"The right to demonstrate is not an inherent right, but rather a relative right... and cannot come at the cost of human life and public safety," reads the new policy

document.

I also support the bill placed before the Knesset by coalition chairman MK Ofir Katz that would impose mandatory heavy fines on protest lawbreakers – be they "Kaplanists" or "Breslovers," settlers or asylum seekers, Ultra-Orthodox, ultra-Right or ultra-Left. The legislation sets fines of NIS 14,400 (\$4,300) for blocking critical roadways, and more than twice as much (NIS 29,200 or \$8,700) for burning tires or placing dangerous obstacles on such roadways. A repeat violation would cost the lawbreaker another NIS 22,000 (\$6,500).

Indeed, I wonder whether these fines are set high enough.

The broader point here is not (just) "public safety" or "public order" – and I am not seeking to give tools to a controversial government (whether this one or the next) to stifle dissent and punish all protesters. Nor am I indifferent to the desperation felt by hostage families, or *lehavdil* (big distinction!), haredi families.

Rather, the point is to place fetters on our passions that will allow for more civil debate and discourse; that will re-teach us to respect the concerns, viewpoints, and needs of others (yes, travel on unobstructed roads is a basic need); and that will set guardrails so that we collectively don't drive off the roadways into the ravine. Civil sanity and minimal national unity demand no less.

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