Israeli Control of the Philadelphi Corridor

written by Misgav Institute | 16.07.2024

Key Points:

1. Israeli control of the Philadelphi Corridor is required to achieve two of the war's objectives: Destroying Hamas' military and governmental capabilities in Gaza, and preventing Gaza from becoming a terrorist base again in the future. Abandoning control of the corridor will be perceived as a **Hamas achievement**, **enabling the terrorist group to rearm, and increasing its chances of surviving as the dominant power in Gaza after the war.** Conversely, Israeli control over Philadelphi will be viewed as a clear indication of Hamas' defeat following the October 7 massacre. It will also send a clear message to Hezbollah.

2. Israeli control of the Philadelphi Corridor is **crucial to prevent the rearming of terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip, especially after their weapons stockpiles have dwindled during the course of the fighting.** The IDF's control of the route and the Rafah Crossing provides Israel with the opportunity **to cut off a primary lifeline through which Hamas and other terrorist groups smuggled** weapons, manufacturing materials, terrorist instructors, military experts, and special capabilities, often with Iranian involvement.This is also an opportunity to **correct one of the fundamental weaknesses that have influenced the security reality in the Gaza Strip over the past two decades and to implement the principle that Israel will always defend itself by itself.**

3. The terrorist group's processes of rearming and rebuilding their military capabilities occur far from public eye and at a gradual pace. Past experience demonstrates that over time, the enforcing authority's determination and ability to prevent such processes decreases, due to the complexity and price of thwarting them. It is therefore critical that Israel adopt today robust solutions to the threat of future rearmament that will remain effective over time.

4. Physical barriers and technological means of detection are not sufficient to prevent smuggling. In addition to such systems and infrastructure, **an independent and readily-deployable operational capability is required, one capable of operating in the field at short notice to thwart smuggling attempts**. Reliance on international actors and foreign countries as an alternative **has failed repeatedly over the years, and there is no reason to assume that this time will be different**.

5. Abandoning control of the Philadelphi Route, which was achieved after the terrible price Israel paid, is **an almost irreversible step**. If Israel withdraws from the Corridor now, it **will find it difficult in the future to ensure the legitimacy (domestic and international) needed to return and retake control.**

6. Additionally, abandoning control of the Philadelphi Corridor and agreeing to rely on international actors will lead to intense international pressure in the future **to adopt a similar approach with regards to Judea and Samaria and to Israel's border with Jordan.**

7. Israeli control of the Philadelphi Corridor will also involve costs to Israel on the operational, diplomatic and legal levels. Yet while the severity of these costs will vary over time as a result of international conditions and Israeli counter-measures, it is certain that abandoning control of the Corridor will entail very high costs for Israel.Israel's presence in the Corridor will allow it to advance arrangements in the operational, physical, diplomatic and humanitarian spheres that will enable Israel to protect its core interests and security.

8. In our assessment, a determined stance by Israel on this issue may also assist in increasing internal pressure within Hamas to adopt positions that will contribute to a comprehensive solution to the issue of hostage release.

Signed by: Meir Ben Shabbat, Ronen Levi, Col. (res.) Prof. Gabi Siboni, Brig. Gen. (res.) Yossi Kuperwasser, Moshe Fuzaylov, Ruth Pines Feldman, Asher Fredman, Elie Klutstein.