Securing Israel’s borders is paramount, the public are right to demand it

written by Ruth Wasserman Lande | 23.07.2024

The borders of Israel are permeable. The need for a commission of inquiry into the failures of October 7 is crystal clear and the timing for this probe is still to be determined. However, it can already be said quite clearly that technological means – however advanced – must be backed up by the physical presence of soldiers in order to secure the borders.

We must never again allow a situation in which the citizens of Israel live hundreds of meters from potential terrorists, as was the case on October 7. An impassable buffer zone of significant size must be enforced and any factor that enters it – no matter what it may be – must be immediately ranged.

Currently, many villages in the North experience the same reality of having absolutely no buffer zone. The small town of Ghajar, for example, is located on the Israeli-Lebanese border, and its inhabitants, originally Syrian Alawite Muslims, now have Israeli citizenship. Until recently, they lived in a surreal reality in which Hezbollah terrorists were allowed to approach within a few meters of their homes.

Many Jewish communities on the northern border live in similar circumstances. The UN forces, whose sole role is to make sure that the buffer zone is free of terrorists, are not fulfilling their role either because of a lack of will or because of a lack of real ability to stand up to Hezbollah.

The border crossing in the narrow “waist” of Israel, in the northern Sharon area, was, until October 7, 2023, almost completely permeable and served as a haven for the illegal and unauthorized entry of Palestinians into Israel.

Towns and villages along the wall, in the part of the border where a wall does indeed exist, such as Bat Hefer, Yad Hana, Kibbutz Bahan, and others, are located right alongside it, while living with the knowledge that there are countless loopholes in the fence that was set up in the remainder of the border area.

Following the Hamas terrorist attack of October 7, significant military forces secured the area and extensive activity was carried out, and continues to be carried out, by IDF forces in the area, aiming to eradicate Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and other terrorist operatives who have been supported by Iran for years. However, the border crossing is not at all hermetic and there are too many cases of illegal infiltration of Palestinians into the country, with the help of Israeli citizens, most of whom are Arabs.

Most infiltrate to work in agriculture and construction, but this can certainly not be counted upon. There is the possibility that they could be recruited to perform terrorist attacks similar to the one perpetrated on October 7 in the South. The creation – and enforcement – of a significant buffer zone on the other side of the borderline is undoubtedly an issue of life and death.

Jordanian intervention

THERE IS a very long border of over 300 km. between Israel and Jordan. This is a border that, until recently, was secured almost exclusively by Jordanian security forces that have prevented attempts by terrorist elements to infiltrate from Jordan into Israel.

Iranian activity in Jordan and the subversion against the Hashemite monarchy have been going on for several years, although the issue has received almost no media coverage. A significant obstacle – a draconian buffer zone and an Israeli military presence in that area – are an unquestionable necessity.

Approximately one month ago, the Jordanian king made a first-of-its-kind public announcement against the continued Iranian subversion, and Tehran's encouragement of Hamas to try to carry out a Palestinian coup in the small and fragile country.

The Iranians' proposal to send Shi'ite militias from Iraq to Jordan to "help" the king against potential rebels was met with an unequivocal "No!" The Jordanian soft-spoken approach toward Iran and Hamas had become aggressive and uncompromising, understanding that the Iranian modus vivendi is to disintegrate a country from within and then come in with its proxies to practically take it over. It has done so in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Yemen, to name but a few countries.

However, will Jordan be able to stand alone against Iran's repeated attempts to undermine the kingdom and its sovereignty and harness the Palestinian population in Jordan to march into the State of Israel?

Will Jordan be able to eradicate Iranian ambitions to create chaos within the kingdom while subjecting the population to the Hashemite regime? These attempts in Jordan are particularly dangerous since an Iranian takeover of the country would create a territorial continuum of Iran – through Iraq – and potentially through Jordan to Israel's eastern border.

The lack of enforcement against polygamy among Bedouin in the Negev has led in the past decades to an increase in the number of Palestinian women from the Gaza Strip and the southern Hebron Hills living in Israel's South and raising their children on the values they had secured in Gaza. While polygamy is prohibited by Israeli law, Sharia courts in the country – which are authorized to rule on matrimonial and family law matters among Muslims – allow it.

The difficulty of creating an actual barrier between the southern Hebron Hills area and the Negev must be addressed immediately. No explanation or rejection can be accepted, given the significant risk inherent in the current situation.

Long before the events of October 7, and even more so following them, there can be no legitimacy for the lack of significant and very stringent border security enforcement. The Israeli public has every right to demand this and decision-makers are obliged to respond to the issue without hesitation.

Published in The Jerusalem Post, July 23, 2024.