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1. US-Iran-Konflikt spitzt sich zu

Nach dem Tod dreier US-Soldaten, die nahe der syrischen Grenze im Nordosten Jordaniens durch eine Drohne getötet worden waren, befahl US-Präsident Joe Biden mehrere Vergeltungsschläge gegen pro-iranische Milizen. Vorläufig vermeiden die USA einen direkten Angriff auf iranischem Gebiet. Bei einem US-Luftangriff in Bagdad kam ein Kommandeur der von Teheran finanzierten und aufgerüsteten libanesischen Terrororganisation Hizbollah ums Leben. Er war offenbar für den Tod der US-Soldaten verantwortlich. Seit Beginn des Krieges im Gazastreifen kommt es verstärkt zu Angriffen auf US-amerikanische Außenposten im Nahen Osten. Zu den pro-iranischen Milizen gehören auch die jemenitischen Huthi, die erklärtermaßen aus Solidarität mit den Palästinenser_innen im Gazastreifen mit regelmäßigen Überfällen den zivilen Schiffsverkehr im Roten Meer behindern. Die USA sind wiederholt mit Luftangriffen gegen die Huthi-Milizen vorgegangen. Bei den einen wächst die Sorge, bei anderen die Hoffnung darauf, dass die USA früher oder später Iran direkt angreifen. Zudem droht eine Eskalation an der israelisch-libanesischen Grenze. Zigtausende Menschen haben ihre Häuser im Norden Israels vor Monaten verlassen müssen und wissen nicht, wann sie werden zurückkehren können.

The Iran-Israel war by proxy

(...) the chaos has reached its peak (...) on one side, Iran and its proxies, and on the other, the US and Israel. This conflict is likely to escalate (...). Israeli strikes against high-ranking Iranian figures can contribute to deterring the Iranian regime and its proxies. (...) There undoubtedly will be rapid security reviews to consolidate the exposed leaders targeted by Israel, whether in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen, or the Palestinian territories. (...) What is clear now is an indirect war between Iran and Israel. Iran's role in supporting militias with weapons, equipment, and in planning and executing attacks is no longer hidden. (...) What is happening in the Red Sea has no connection to the war in Gaza, as the Houthis and the Iranians claim. What is happening is that they are employing this war to achieve Iranian strategic goals – to gain more regional influence, demonstrate the ability to threaten maritime security, and pressure to reduce the US naval presence in the Gulf and the Gulf of Aden. Iran sees this region as an exclusive sphere of influence. (...) Iran wants to convey a message that it can ignite or calm the Middle East, and it is a major player that cannot be ignored. The current rapid escalation cannot be understood apart from the plans and proposals circulating about the fate of Gaza. Iran does not want to see a retreat or final exclusion of one of its key proxies, Hamas. The absence of Hamas from all "day after" discussions is bad news for Iran. (...) An Iran without Hamas is like a Lebanon without Hezbollah and a Yemen without the Houthis.

Salem Alketbi, JPO, 01.02.24

Biden's calculated offensive targets Iran's regional power structure

Some 85 targets were struck by fighter jets and cruise missiles, far more than the 10 or so attacks after previous and even more deadly attacks on U.S. forces. (...) This was not a response to the source of fire or direct retaliation against the militias who launched the killer UAVs at the American base. These were strikes targeting the logistical and operational center of the Shi'ite militias which Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps had established for them on the border between Syria and Iraq. (...) The Americans exercised caution in their strikes in Iraq, where 2,500 troops remain deployed. (...) Since the start of the Gaza war, U.S. troops in Iraq, Syria and Jordan have come under attack 160 times. In retaliation against pro-Iranian militias in Iraq, the Shi'ite-led government in Baghdad has demanded their withdrawal. Negotiations over this demand are ongoing, albeit slowly. The more limited strikes in Iraq are likely to expedite the process under Iran's pressure, which aims to remove the American military presence near its border. The American attack (...) indicates an expansive strategic operation that the Western coalition, under the leadership of the U.S., intends to continue in order to rebuild deterrence and rehabilitate the U.S. position in the region and in the face of the Iranian-Russian-Shi'ite axis supported by China. (...) What is becoming apparent is that the U.S. decided to systematically destroy the military network of Iran's proxies as well as that of the IRGC, used to attack Israel and the West. (...) What the U.S. and the UK along with their allies are doing by attacking the IRGC and their proxies is akin to what Israel is doing to Hezbollah across its northern border. In addition to defensive action against the Iran-backed group's attacks, Israel is systematically destroying Hezbollah's operational and military infrastructure so as to impact their ability to carry out their attacks for a prolonged period, while sending Israel's own message to the regime in Iran.

Ron Ben-Yishai, YED, 04.02.24

There's a Third Way for Israel to Approach Lebanon: U.S.-led Border Negotiations

(...) Eisenkot, a former army chief of staff and a respectable politician, confirmed that he and his party colleague Benny Gantz had prevented a deterioration of the conflict in the Gaza Strip into a regional war. If Israel had attacked Lebanon – as was planned just prior to Gantz and Eisenkot joining the

coalition – it would have made good on the strategic vision of Yahya Sinwar, Hamas' leader in Gaza, to immediately bring the entire Syrian-Iraqi-Iranian axis into the war against Israel. That vision should now be in the mind's eye of every political adversary who ridicules Gantz for (again) being prepared to take it on the chin from a swindler of a prime minister as well as from every commentator who presses Eisenkot to run away from that cuckoo's nest. (...) Amos Hochstein, Biden's special adviser, (...) said we shouldn't make do with a cease-fire to enable Israelis and Lebanese to live securely. He has a mandate from the White House to continue negotiations to move the shooting away from the border area. (...) If the northern front does ignite nevertheless, Israel's willingness to negotiate over the border would strengthen it both regionally and in the international arena, particularly with the Americans. (...) Akiva Eldar, HAA, 04.02.24

“Attack the head of the octopus” - It's time to confront Iran directly

The killing of three American soldiers and the injuring of 25 at a military base in Jordan by Shi'ite militias operated by Iran in Syria should be the decisive turning point in the Middle East. This attack against Americans is an attempt by the Islamic Republic to test whether the West, in general, and the United States in particular, are capable of responding. (...) There can be no more pretending. This is a direct Iranian attack on the United States, and it should be treated as such—otherwise, the Iranians will continue to attack, with more courage, more force, and much more bloodshed. (...) Israel's legitimate war in Gaza is an excuse for Iran to demonstrate power and control a significant portion of international shipping routes. (...) Iran's goal is clear: a threat to international maritime shipping affects trade and the economy worldwide, energy supply, food, infrastructure, humanitarian aid, political stability, environmental protection, international relations. International maritime shipping is vital to the functioning of the global economy, cooperation between countries, the standard of living of countries, and the prevention of conflicts. (...) The efforts of the revolutionary guards are part of their broader strategy to weaken the entire West. (...) The Houthis' attack on maritime shipping is part of this war. (...) This axis of evil seeks regional dominance for the sake of larger imperialist ambitions. Hamas, Hezbollah, Islamic Jihad, the Islamic Republic, and al-Qaeda suspicions are just arms of the octopus. Any attempt to cut off an arm will lead to the rapid recovery of the

body. Therefore, if you want to neutralize the arms, you must attack the head. (...)

Vahid Beheshti, JPO, 05.02.24

The international community must hold Hezbollah accountable

The Hezbollah threat to northern Israel continues and must be confronted eventually. Hezbollah (...) possesses a large arsenal of rockets as well as drones, anti-tank guided missiles, and other weapons. It has festooned southern Lebanon with bunkers, tunnels, and bases. (...) Eighty thousand Israelis have been evacuated because of the ongoing threats. Over 2,000 rockets have been fired in four months. In addition, Hezbollah has used drones and anti-tank missiles. (...) There is an increasing sense that Israel should do something to remove the Hezbollah threat from the border. So far, Israeli leaders have preferred diplomacy. This makes sense because fighting a two-front war against Hamas and Hezbollah is not in the public interest. (...) Nevertheless, if diplomacy doesn't work, Israel must be prepared to change the situation. Israelis cannot continue to live in a situation where they will be evacuated each time a terrorist group pops up. (...) The international community and the UN must do their jobs and get Hezbollah to withdraw and stop its illegal attacks. Now is the time. (...)

Editorial, JPO, 07.02.24

De-escalating to disaster: Why the West can't deter Iran

The single dominant idea within Western commentary on the subject of the proper response to Iran's continuing attacks is escalation, specifically its danger and the consequent need to avoid it, or more explicitly to 'de-escalate'. This is a nonsensical approach. Its practical implication is that any aggressor, not just Iran, can attack the West, and then be shielded from effective countermeasures by the perceived necessity to avoid a so-called 'escalators cycle' (...). America can and should (...) follow the example Israel has set, by dropping a bomb on the head of Mr. Al-Kaabi, whom it has already sanctioned as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist. (...) Israel's actions, as reported by the press, show how Iran can be dealt with. Multiple air strikes in Syria which have killed its military personnel have led Iran to withdraw senior officers from the country (...) Iranians do not like to have their officers killed and are afraid that Israel will kill many more if Iran were to attack Israel directly. (...) It is most unfortu-

nate that American policy is currently incapable of following such a course. (...) The situation cannot and will not continue as it is. Either the course of Western policy will change, or Iran and others will assume that the West has become completely incapable of defending itself effectively, and all Western and pro-Western forces in the Middle East will come under continuously growing pressure. (...)

Dan Zamansky, YED, 07.02.24

Biden, it's time to strike Iran; it will lead to your reelection

The year 2040 is supposed to be our end. The Supreme Leader of Iran, Ali Khamenei, has set this date as the deadline for the liquidation of Israel. If there is anything we learned on the morning of the outbreak of the war – and not for the first time, to be honest – it is that these threats of annihilation must be taken completely seriously. (...) the Islamic Republic is patiently building its famous pincer disposition: Gaza in the south, Hezbollah and the militias in the north, and the Palestinians – whom Iran is arming heavily – inside Israel. At the same time, it is of course developing a military nuclear capability (...). Even before it has nuclear capabilities, Iran is causing the Americans much hesitation. (...) The strongest superpower in history is wary of Iran, like a lion afraid of a mouse. (...) Biden does not want war, and he is not the first. (...) In the end, according to his murderous vision, Iran will strike Israel. Then, and only then, will America wake up. (...) Preempting the blow, which will surely come, will avert a costly war. (...) Lacking nuclear weapons and without Hamas - which Israel is dealing with - Iran's expansionist efforts will unravel. It will be permanently cripple. In the worst-case scenario, it will retaliate with a missile attack on the Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Israel – a price that the countries of the region are definitely willing to pay. (...)

Ariel Kahane, IHY, 09.02.24

2. Krieg im Gazastreifen

Die Grenzstadt Rafah soll nach Ankündigungen von Israels Regierungschef Benjamin Netanyahu schon bald das nächste Ziel der israelischen Bodentruppen im Gazastreifen sein. Problematisch für ein Vordringen der Soldaten_innen ist die Tatsache, dass UN-Angaben zufolge mehr als eine Million Menschen in die Stadt geflohen sind, in der in Friedenszeiten nur rund 200.000 Palästinenser_innen leben. Aus New York, Washington und auch aus Berlin kamen aus Sorge vor einem noch schlimmeren Blutvergießen

deutliche Warnungen an Netanyahu und die Forderung, die Zivilbevölkerung im Gazastreifen stärker zu schützen. Problematisch ist aber auch die Nähe zu Ägypten. Seit 1979 besteht ein Friedensabkommen zwischen den Nachbarstaaten. Kairo fürchtet eine Massenflucht aus dem Gazastreifen und hat gedroht, im Falle eines israelischen Großangriffs auf Rafah den Friedensvertrag mit Israel aufzukündigen.

The Philadelphi Corridor: A Problem for Israel

(...) Rafah, which lies adjacent to Gaza's border with Egypt and serves as a gateway for humanitarian aid earmarked for Palestinians, is the last remaining Hamas stronghold still fully controlled by Hamas. (...) roughly half of Gaza's 2.3 million Palestinians have crowded into and around Rafah, whose population was about 200,000 until recently. (...) Israel wants to take control of the Philadelphi Corridor, a narrow strip of land 100 meters in width and 14 kilometers in length running along Gaza's border with Egypt, the first Arab country that officially recognized Israel. (...) Egyptian President Abdul Fattah el-Sisi (...) fears that an Israeli offensive in Rafah would impel tens or hundreds of thousands of Gazans to stream into the Sinai. He will not cooperate with any Israeli effort to depopulate Gaza at its expense. This is not an idle fear. Fifteen years ago, when Egypt was ruled by Hosni Mubarak, thousands of Gazans broke through the Egyptian border and decamped in Sinai. (...) According to the most recent reports, Israel has conveyed assurances to Egypt that a military operation in Rafah will not cause the mass migration of Palestinians into Egyptian territory. (...) At the end of the day, the dispute over Rafah and the Philadelphi Corridor leaves Israel on the horns of a dilemma. If Netanyahu abides by Egypt's wish and refrains from invading Rafah, Israel will fall short of its objective of crushing Hamas and removing it from power. But if Israel storms into Rafah and reoccupies its side of the Philadelphi Corridor, it may well undermine its peace treaty with Egypt, a cornerstone of stability in the often volatile Middle East. (...)

Sheldon Kirchner, TOI, 05.02.24

The Only Solution to the Gaza War: Mass Protests by Israelis and International Pressure

(...) Why did the army ignore the clear signs of Hamas' preparations for an attack? (...) Why did Benjamin Netanyahu ignore for 10 years the intelligence that Hamas was planning a ground attack on the neighboring Jewish settlements, including the kidnapping of civilians and soldiers? The failure this

time is greater and several times more disastrous than that of October 1973. (...) The synergy between Netanyahu's strategy that "Hamas is good for us" (namely for his rule) and the army's "deterrence" strategy is what brought Israel to the October 7 massacre and disastrous retaliation. Yet negotiated solutions could have prevented them. (...) Was the ground invasion a "war of choice"? The answer is yes. But (...) the responsibility now lies not only with Netanyahu and the heads of the security establishment, but also with the media and the opposition, who updated the settlers' 2000 slogan, "Let the IDF win," to the national slogan, "Together we will win," and pushed the army to victory in a war that was a foregone failure. (...) Getting Israel out of Gaza, rescuing the kidnapped from captivity and bringing back the soldiers sinking there in the mud are not top priority now, not as long as the political and military leadership continue to advocate victory and reject political solutions. (...) But what still can be used as instruments to reverse this disastrous response is Hamas' moral obligation to release the hostages, and the international mediation that's striving to stop the fighting. This can lead to the opening of a political process, which can lead to a political settlement of Palestinian independence alongside the State of Israel. (...) Only mass protests in the streets and international pressure might wake up the political system from its deep slumber and help the military announce, as it did in 1988, that there is no military solution to the Palestinian question, only a political solution.

Lev Grinberg, HAA, 06.02.24

Egypt Must Accept Refugees at Rafah Per Int'l Law

Israel is not keeping Palestinians in an "open-air prison", the whole world is, with a nonsensically global embargo on Palestinian refugees who otherwise may voluntarily wish to leave Gaza and seek asylum elsewhere. This Arab-pushed policy of not accepting Palestinian refugees, contrary to world's policy of helping all other refugees relocate, oppresses the Palestinians by forcing them to stay in a conflict many may not wish to be part of. (...) Under International law, Egypt cannot turn away Palestinians who seek asylum and entry at its Rafah border with Gaza as refugees, temporarily or otherwise. Egypt's refusal to do so, and instead, its building up of border fences to keep Palestinian refugees from seeking asylum, is illegal. (...) Regrettably to Israel, innocent Palestinians are caught in the middle of the conflict. (...) Whether a Palestinian's political opinion

is pro-Israel, or pro-Hamas, they are in danger from the circumstances of the conflict, even if Israel is trying its best to limit that danger to innocent civilians. (...) Regardless what Israel is doing, Egypt has an obligation to allow entry to those Palestinians fleeing the conflict in Gaza and requesting asylum and entry into Egypt. (...) This has nothing to do with whether Israel is expelling any Palestinians or not. It is solely about the rights and status of those Palestinians who voluntarily wish to leave Gaza, temporarily or permanently, and Egypt's obligations to accept them. (...) It's time we as a world, desiring to help, apply the same standard to Palestinian refugees that we do to all other refugees. Help them. (...)

Daniel Ben Abraham, TOI, 09.02.24

Without total victory there can be no new regional order

(...) Saudi Arabia plays a key role in the vision of regional integration. The establishment of normalization between Riyadh and Jerusalem is also one of the most important incentives that Washington has in order to exercise leverage on Israeli policy. The recent announcement from the Saudi foreign ministry making the discussions on normalization contingent upon the resurrection of the talks on a Palestinian state and an end to the war in the Gaza Strip is wholly consistent with the existing desire in Washington and may even have been coordinated in advance between the two. (...) the idea of the "New Order" does not tally with the way Hamas currently views the situation – which at this stage of the game is still acting as though it believes it can put the squeeze on Israel and dictate terms that will not only ensure the survival of its men but also its continued rule in the Gaza Strip. (...) the most important issue is still Israel's deterrence. Israel must not end the war without restoring the deterrence that simply totally collapsed on October 7. (...)

Meir Ben Shabbat, IHY, 11.02.24

Killing Sinwar won't stop the ticking bomb in Gaza

(...) no doubt: The IDF is winning the war despite the intelligence gap that we pay for in with the lives and health of our soldiers, and the demand to continue the war stems from a government that is not willing to face the overall cost. This victory is a matter of feeling. (...) In our case in Gaza, even if we kill Yahya Sinwar, we won't feel like we've won. Our spirits won't be lifted. Most Israeli citizens well be guided by feelings of bitterness and anger. (...) even

Netanyahu understands that Sinwar is just a tactical challenge and his elimination will not stop the strategic challenge, which is 2.5 million Gazans who are not going anywhere and are now like a ticking bomb, one that requires some kind of "war" (...).

Ron Edelist, JPO, 14.02.24

3. Kein Handel zur Befreiung der Geiseln

Eine kurze Atempause für Israel gab es im Krieg gegen die Hamas, als zwei israelische Geiseln aus den Händen der Terroristen befreit werden konnten. Bitter für die restlichen Verschleppten und ihre Angehörigen ist hingegen, dass die Verhandlungen um eine weitere Feuerpause und den Tausch von Geiseln gegen palästinensische Häftlinge vorläufig keine Früchte tragen. Israels Regierungschef Benjamin Netanyahu will erklärtermaßen den „wahnhaften Forderungen“ der islamistischen Organisation nicht nachgeben. Die Hamas hatte einen vollständigen Waffenstillstand, den kompletten Truppenabzug sowie die Entlassung von zunächst 1500 palästinensischen Häftlingen verlangt, darunter zu lebenslanger Gefängnisstrafe verurteilte Männer. Die von den USA, Ägypten und Katar vermittelten Verhandlungen werden nichtsdestotrotz fortgesetzt.

Prime Minister, bring them back no matter the cost

(...) The truth is that you do not want to image someone close and dear to you being held hostage, because the horrifying, horrendous and awful reality of that captivity is worse than anything imaginable. (...) Our hostages there are wounded physically and emotionally. They are hungry and thirsty, because the little food and the murky water they are given cannot fill their stomach or quench their thirst. Their body is increasingly weakened, and their soul suffers intolerable pain. (...) It is impossible to sleep with an AK-47 aimed at you 24/7, not knowing whether its day or night. It's impossible to sleep because the fear is debilitating, and the worse thoughts are unrelenting. Mr. Prime Minister, time is running out. (...) They are citizens of the country you lead, and they are without air or food. (...) Don't fear making the necessary and courageous decision, that leadership demands. Don't be distracted by any consideration. Make a deal as quickly as you can. (...)

Nili Margalit, YED, 01.02.24

The debate over a hostage deal is excruciating, and disagreements are reasonable

Those of us without loved ones that Hamas is holding captive in Gaza cannot fathom the horror the hostages are going through or the agony their relatives are experiencing. We can feel deep sorrow and grief at the plight of the hostages, and we can sympathize and empathize with the families, but we cannot really feel their pain. (...) Consequently, none of us can judge them for their efforts to ensure their loved ones return. Most of us would do the same were it our brothers or sisters, mothers or fathers, sons or daughters languishing in the bowels underneath Gaza: organize demonstrations and vigils, lobby politicians around the world, demand at every opportunity and from every microphone that the government must "bring them home now." And now, amid increasing signs that some deal for the hostages' release is in the works, the country will need to grapple with the question: "at what price?" (...) At the price of emptying Israeli jails of all the Palestinian security prisoners, including mass murderers, which is reportedly one of Hamas's demands? At the cost of permanently stopping the war in Gaza and withdrawing the IDF, another Hamas demand? These are excruciatingly difficult dilemmas.

Editorial, JPO, 01.02.24

I was in Hamas captivity – don't keep my husband there

(...) Mr. Prime Minister, I was there, I know. I know how they feel, I know (...) about the feeling of being suffocated, the hunger, the thirst, the pain, the fear and the paralyzing dread, the sleepless nights, the days of sorrow and anxiety. I also know that if I had stayed there another week, I'm not sure I would have survived. (...) when I was there (...) I did not know if I would survive the hunger, the horrors, the bombings. (...) what kept me going was the knowledge that the state would do everything to bring us all back home. It was the knowledge that we would never be forsaken that kept me alive. (...) But now I am left in the dark. I do not know the condition of the captives left behind (...). I do not know what your considerations and those of the War Cabinet members are. (...) the last time I saw my husband Ohad when he was forcibly taken from our home, shot in the shoulder, and whispering in pain that he was having trouble breathing. Mr. Prime Minister, I looked into your eyes and you looked into mine and you nodded. Mr. Prime Minister, I do not know what that nod means (...). Mr. Prime Minister, end this saga that has tormented all of us, bring back my husband Ohad and all the kidnapped now!

Raz Ben Ami, IHY, 01.02.24

Do not pity the dead, pity the living

It has been four months since October 7th, when my (...) family members, Hodaya and Tair, were declared missing (...). Together with many good partners, we established the Hostages and Missing Persons Families Forum. We desperately wanted to bring them home. Unfortunately, we failed our mission. Six days into the event, we learned that the bodies of Hodaya and Tair, were found in the Beeri forest after being slaughtered and burned. I lost my family, but gained a new one – the hostages' families, for whom I will do everything to help bring their loved one's home. Currently, there is a debate about the 'price' for releasing the Hostages. (...) Releasing murderers with blood on their hands undoubtedly comes at a heavy cost. Perhaps some of the released murderers were involved in the killing of my family near Beeri. This thought disturbs me, but my concern for the Hostages, who face physical, sexual, and mental abuse on a daily basis in Hamas's tunnels in Gaza, is greater. (...) If the hostages are abandoned, there will be no resilience for the State of Israel, and we won't be able to restore our faith in our country and the values it represents. For the families of the hostages, their loved ones are priceless. (...) The government must not miss any opportunity to bring them home. Their time is running out. (...)

Asaf Pozniak, JPO, 06.02.24

Israel Must Not Accept a Second Abandonment of Hostages Held by Hamas in Gaza

(...) No one can deny that Israel is being asked to pay a heavy price, both in regard to continuing the offensive and the release of Palestinian prisoners. But the price Hamas is asking reflects the high value that Israelis assign to the lives of its civilians and soldiers, and so Israel must focus on what it will be receiving in exchange. Hamas has been holding captive dozens of Israelis of all ages, civilians and soldiers, for four months. No one can put a price on the value of them returning home. (...) Every day that passes, every minute that goes by endangers the lives of the hostages. The Wall Street Journal reports that only 85 of the 136 hostages held by Hamas are still alive. The Israeli media reports that the number of dead may be even higher. Delaying a deal is tantamount to a death sentence for some hostages, if not all of them. We cannot allow that to happen. (...) The political force that is willing to

sacrifice dozens of Israeli hostages must be opposed by people who are willing to speak out forcefully in favor of continuing negotiations and striving for a deal. (...) giving up on a deal would mark the second abandonment of the hostages, and a disaster that Israel must not accept.

Editorial, HAA, 07.02.24

Only a deal will bring all or most hostages home, but IDF should be given the time to do its best

It was an operation that would be studied in the history books and was the material films and television shows are made of: IDF forces, along with Shin Bet operatives and the police anti-terrorism unit went in to a building in Rafah and extracted Louis Har and Fernando Marman who had been held hostage by Hamas terrorists since October 7. (...) In preparation for the extraction, the forces considered as much information as was available but ultimately a level of uncertainty in such a surgical operation persisted. That is why it had been postponed a couple of times before it was finally executed. It is not enough to award the troops with an A, or to describe how precise their work had been, especially that of the anti-terror forces and the Shin Bet. They proved that they are the best in the world at their craft. The success brought a sense of elation to Israelis after long days of stalemate in efforts to free hostages from Gaza. It is therefore time to consider tactical and strategic takeaways from the operation. (...) it is important for the public to know what the troops are focused on and for Hamas to learn first-hand what the Israeli security forces are capable of. (...) Israelis are tired of the trauma and want to see their brothers and sisters, home. But when the IDF asks for time, we must give it to them so that they can do what they do best.

Yossi Yehushua, YED, 13.02.24

With the 'Perfect' Hostage Rescue Operation, Israel's Dehumanization of Palestinians in Gaza Reached a New Low

(...) The raid that released Louis Norberto Har and Fernando Marman sparked a crescendo of joy coupled with a resurgence of national pride. (...) It was a perfect operation, said all the intelligence experts – with zero casualties.

It was indeed an impressive operation and cause for joy, but it wasn't perfect and it certainly wasn't "zero casualties." The fact that at least 74 Palestinians, including women and children, were killed during the operation was hardly mentioned in Israel. Perhaps those deaths were inevitable. Perhaps even if the

number of Palestinian deaths was seven times greater it wouldn't have dampened the celebration. Two very sympathetic Israeli-Argentiniens were released and all the rest doesn't matter. The images I saw from the hospitals in Rafah on the day of the rescue were among the most horrific I have seen in this war. Children ripped to shreds, convulsing, looking helplessly upon their deaths. The horror. There is no need to go into the moral dilemma of whether the release of two hostages justifies the deaths of 74 people – that question is superfluous in such a cruel war – in order to point to Israel's complete disregard for collateral deaths. (...) We were all happy that they were freed, and the operation in itself was moral and fully justified. But the disregard for the deaths of dozens of people as if they were not human is an outrage. Release more and more hostages, as many as possible. Marvel, rejoice and be proud – but at least mention the terrible price paid by Gazans for this just operation. The children ripped to shreds played no part in seizing the hostages. They have been destined to pay the cruel price for what Hamas did. Alongside our joy, one cannot help but think of them and their fate. (...)

Gideon Levy, HAA, 14.02.24

A homecoming from hell

(...) Israel proudly announced that two hostages had been rescued as Marman and Har flew to Israel's Tel Hashomer Hospital, where they were reunited with their families. (...) Israel's operation in Rafah has come under international scrutiny. Indeed, pro-Hamas activists love to call for a ceasefire on behalf of the terror group that infiltrated, murdered, raped, burned, and beheaded over 1200 of our citizens and kidnapped over 230 hostages. A ceasefire without the return of our remaining hostages and with Hamas remaining in power is not a reality Israelis can accept. With that, the IDF had no choice but to begin operating in Rafah. Understandably, this is causing international panic as more than 1.4 million Palestinians have fled to Rafah. (...) Israel has neutralized several Hamas terrorists who were also senior officers in the Rafah district's secret police department through targeted airstrikes. However, there is still work to be done to eliminate Hamas in that area. This is war, and it is ugly and unfair, and Israel was dragged into an operation it did not want. (...) We do not want innocent Palestinians to die; we want to bring our hostages home and rid ourselves of a genocidal terror organization. The international community may not like this, but we have learned time and time again that Jewish people can't rely on

others for their well-being. For anyone to tell Israel to ignore Hamas's threats is just a polite way of telling us to wait until the terror group attempts to murder us again.

Zina Rakhamilova, JPO, 15.02.24

4. Weitere Themen

Biden verhängt Sanktionen gegen Siedler_innen

The Problem With Biden's Executive Order Sanctioning Extreme Israeli Settlers

U.S. President Joe Biden once again proved his deep commitment to Israel and to American interests in the region when he decided to also protect the former from its own citizens. The executive order he signed (...), imposing personal sanctions on Israelis (...) involved in violence against Palestinians and left-wing activists in the West Bank waited in his administration's pipeline a long time, until officials in Washington decided that its political time had come. Additional countries can be expected to adopt similar policies. This anticipated snowball is significant news for everyone who thinks it's important to curb the settler militias, whose actions have become increasingly frequent and uncontrolled in recent years. (...) the order is a clear first line demarcating the boundaries of American tolerance for the phenomenon. (...) Jewish violence in the territories does not exist in a vacuum, (...) it neither begins nor ends with individuals and (...) the perpetrators have a spiritual and political leadership. This recognition also highlights what is missing from the executive order: recognition of the overall political framework that enables this violence every day. (...) the four Israelis on whom the sanctions were imposed (...) could not have acted were it not for the Shin Bet security service and the Israeli army (...) and for a political wing that influences these systems to leave them alone. (...) One hand denounces while the other permits, with a wink or without it. (...) It's obvious why the Biden administration prefers to ignore the problem, just like the majority of Israelis from across nearly the entire political spectrum prefers to ignore it.

Noa Landau, HAA, 04.02.24

Why is Biden sanctioning Jewish settlers in the West Bank now?

US President Joe Biden and his staff undoubtedly have much on their minds. Re-election is likely at the forefront (...), in an attempt to stem the tide of

progressive Democrats threatening to boycott the election (...). Maybe it's against that backdrop that we can begin to understand how less than four months after Israel's 9/11, when 1,200 people were massacred and 240 were taken hostage in Gaza, Biden signed an executive order placing sanctions against violence by Israeli extremists who attack innocent Palestinians in the West Bank. (...) While targeting four specific individuals, Biden's order establishes a system for imposing financial sanctions and visa restrictions against individuals who are found to have attacked or intimidated Palestinians or seized their property, two senior Biden administration officials said.

(...) The issue of settler violence is indeed a serious one. (...) Whether or not there is a need for the executive order, the problem with issuing it at this time is that it appears to be a misguided and potentially dangerous attempt to create a moral equivalency between the genocidal atrocities of Hamas and Jewish attacks against Palestinians. (...) The Israeli extremists in the West Bank are a fringe and scattered group of outlaws who, for the most part, have been involved in violent, but not murderous, incidents that are primarily under investigation. (...) Biden is sending a message to the world (...) that Hamas terrorism is no worse than Jewish settler violence. Drawing that equivalency will only embolden Palestinian terrorists to continue their campaign to eliminate Israel.

Editorial, JPO, 05.02.24

US-Israel-Beziehungen stark belastet

Ben-Gvir is the gift that keeps on giving for the Left

(...) The position of the minister of national security (...) towards the US president is not only interesting, but also representative – of the government in which he sits (...) in the essential-public sense. Ben-Gvir has increasingly become the "face of the government." (...) His words resonate not because they are considered "words of the wise", but because most of them cause damage – especially to the right-wing camp. Ben-Gvir is the hottest commodity on the Israeli Left, a mouth that does not stop giving gifts to the battered camp whose vision of two states for two peoples is drenched in regional blood, sweat, and tears. Therefore, Ben-Gvir is one of the engines that arouse vitality and hope on the Israeli Left for the vision of the two states. From the Left's point of view, he is the optimal flammable material for fueling

international motivation to push for the establishment of a Palestinian state. (...) And if salvation does not come from international pressure, Ben-Gvir's performances push more and more Israelis who define themselves as "right-wing" to vote for Yair Lapid or Benny Gantz. (...)
Zvi Hauser, IHY, 05.02.24

Biden, you can't call our PM an a*hole – only we**

(...) Surely, many people in Israel feel, like Biden reportedly does, that Netanyahu prefers to keep the war going for as long as possible, for his own political needs: keeping the coalition in place, and staving off the eventual state probe and the likely ruling for his dismissal. And with every Gazan that is killed in the war, Biden is losing political support for his reelection campaign from the progressive side of his Democratic constituency. While both men have their own motives for their actions, that shouldn't get in the way of some irrefutable facts. (...) Biden may hold a grudge against Netanyahu, but the truth is that war cabinet Minister Benny Gantz – who some see as the great moderate alternative to Netanyahu – supports the broadening of fighting in southern Gaza and Rafah. (...) We are now closing in on the last Hamas stronghold in Gaza, where its leadership and the remaining hostages are presumed to be. Instead of putting pressure on Israel to stop its campaign, the US and the rest of the world should be upping pressure on the genocidal terrorist group to release the hostages and surrender – and those countries so concerned with the civilians in Rafah should be working with Israel to provide safe passage and shelter for them so that the IDF can do its job. (...) ultimately, only Jerusalem can decide what the best policy to pursue is – even if it means annoying its best friend in Washington.

Editorial, JPO, 14.02.24

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