



Schlaglicht Israel Nr. 1/09

Aktuelles aus israelischen Tageszeitungen

23. Dezember – 7. Januar 2008

1. Die Kämpfe in Gaza und Auswirkungen auf Zivilisten

Seit dem Beginn der israelischen Offensive am 27. Dezember halten die Kämpfe zwischen israelischer Armee und der Hamas an. Nachdem die israelische Luftwaffe zunächst eine Woche lang Ziele im Gazastreifen angegriffen hatte, marschierten am 3. Januar auch Bodentruppen in das Gebiet ein. Währenddessen setzte sich der Raketenbeschuss israelischer Ortschaften durch Kämpfer der Hamas fort – und erreichte unter anderem Beersheva in 40 Kilometer Entfernung. Laut Regierungsangaben geht es bei der Offensive insbesondere darum, diesen Beschuss, der seit Ende der Waffenruhe Mitte Dezember andauert, zum Erliegen zu bringen. In den israelischen Medien wird ausführlich über den „Krieg gegen die Hamas“ berichtet. Dabei werden auch die Auswirkungen auf die Zivilbevölkerung diskutiert. Palästinensischen Angaben zu Folge sind in den ersten zwölf Tagen der Kämpfe etwa 300 palästinensische Zivilisten getötet worden. Zudem wird die medizinische Versorgungslage als katastrophal bezeichnet, der Zugang zu Hilfsgütern ist äußerst beschränkt. Auf israelischer Seite waren drei zivile Todesopfer gemeldet worden.

Die Operation Kreisel

„Ich verstehe durchaus, dass ein Staat seine Bürger schützen muss. Aber ich weiß auch, dass es andere Wege gibt, uns zu schützen, als hundert Tonnen Bomben abzuwerfen. [...] Natürlich gilt unser ganzes Mitgefühl den Menschen in Sderot, aber können wir in unserem Herzen nicht auch ein klein wenig Platz für die Menschen in Gaza finden, diese armen, jämmerlichen Menschen, die unter einem Terrorregime leben müssen? Man muss es klar aussprechen: Wenn wir Tonnen von Sprengstoff auf ein brutales und gewalttätiges Regime abwerfen, dann beteiligen wir uns an der Grausamkeit der

Hamas gegenüber einem armen und hilflosen Volk. [...] Haben wir denn noch immer nicht gelernt, dass jeder Krieg, so gerechtfertigt er auch sein mag, ein Verbrechen gegen die Menschlichkeit ist?“

Jonathan Geffen, MAA 29.12.08

Don't pity the Palestinians

„Observers worldwide have been expressing great pity for the people of Gaza [...]. This pity may be a natural emotional reaction, yet it is unethical and immoral.

To pity the people of Gaza is to patronize them, in essence implying that they do not control their fate, the state of their government, or their own actions. It is to assume one of two things: Either that Gazans are too stupid to oust the cancerous Hamas presence in their midst, or that they are unable to do so. [...]

As long as they are told that they are helpless victims or mere pawns at the hands of terrorists, Gazans will only see their suffering prolonged. [...]

[They] say they would like their own state. Yet such state must be earned. And earning a state – a piece of land to call your own – takes much more than incessant whining to the international community coupled with a desire to drive out the Jews. It requires inner strength and the ability to create rather than destroy. [...]

Yet before the people of Gaza are able to build, Hamas must be obliterated. Moreover, Hamas' ultimate defeat must not be at the hands of the IDF, but rather, it is an endeavor that must be undertaken by Gaza residents themselves. After all, Hamas is the true reason for their misery.”

Adi Dvir, JED 04.01.09

A moral war

„Israeli sources put the Palestinian civilian death toll at some 50. Pointing this out does not diminish the dreadful loss of dozens of innocent Palestinian lives in a week's worth of fighting. It does show, however,

that the IDF continues to do everything possible to avoid 'collateral damage'. But its prime mandate is to protect the lives of Israeli civilians and minimize risks to our citizen-soldiers. [...] In fact, we'd be surprised if any other army currently on the battlefield is more conscientious about avoiding civilian casualties. Before it attacks and whenever possible, the IDF leaflets, telephones or sends text messages to residents of buildings used to launch rockets at our territory, warning them of the impending air-strike.

Conversely, what sort of 'resistance' movement deliberately uses mosques, schools and homes as weapons depots and rocket launching pads? Answer: one that also uses its children and women as human shields. [...] Those who are sincere about fostering coexistence should stop bashing the IDF and start telling the Palestinians: Stop the violence." JPO 04.01.09

A PR campaign that is three years too late

"It is very difficult for people who have not experienced life under constant missile fire - namely, most of the world - to understand just how debilitating it is. They look at the statistics, see that six years of rocket and mortar attacks have killed relatively few people and think 'no big deal.' They cannot imagine what it is like to never have an unbroken night of sleep, since even on nights without rockets, the constant anticipation of an alert disrupts slumber; to never go to the supermarket or send your children out to play without fear; to see your ability to earn a living vanish as large corporations leave town and small businesses collapse for lack of customers, since fear of being caught outdoors by a rocket keeps people at home. Even if you brandish statistics that never make the foreign media - like the fact that in Sderot, 28 percent of adults and 30% of children suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, and more than 75% of children display some symptoms of post-traumatic stress - it makes little impression. Most people can imagine death, but they cannot imagine the slow erosion of life with a PTSD child who refuses to leave home for fear of rockets."

Evelyn Gordon, JPO 31.12.08

And there lie the bodies

"As Israel has been preoccupied with Gaza throughout the entire week, nobody has asked whose blood is being spilled and why. Everything is permitted, legitimate and just. The moral voice of restraint, if it ever existed, has been left behind. [...]"

Here lie their bodies, row upon row, some of them tiny. Our hearts have turned hard and our eyes have become dull. [...]"

The suffering in the south renders everything kosher, as if the horrible suffering in Gaza pales in comparison. [...]"

Nobody is coming to the rescue - of Gaza or even of the remnants of humanity and Israeli democracy."

Gideon Levy, HAA 04.01.09

Disaster in Gaza

"The mass killing at the Gaza school Tuesday and the civilian deaths at the Zaiton neighborhood are a terrible disaster, period. Not a public relations disaster, as opposed to the dominant tone that took over public discourse yesterday. [...]"

UNWRA is an agency designated by the United Nations to take care of Palestinian refugees; it is not a terror group. Those who stayed at the school Tuesday took cover there from the bombings and raging battles. By doing so, they fully followed the instructions of the IDF, which for a week now has been urging citizens via leaflets, text messages, and public announcements to evacuate their homes located in trouble-prone areas. [...]"

We cannot just shrug it off and say that this was an operational mishap, or automatically resort to a plethora of self-righteous explanations. [...] Yet the minimum that we could ask of the official, sane Israel was an expression of deep regret over the death of innocents. [...]"

The civilian population in the Gaza Strip is not the enemy, and the terrible suffering caused to it does not serve any Israeli interest."

Uri Misgav, JED 08.01.09

2. Reaktionen israelischer Araber und arabischer Staaten

Während die Kämpfe im Gazastreifen anhalten, werden in den israelischen Medien auch die Reaktionen der arabischen Nachbarstaaten und der arabischen Bevölkerung Israels beobachtet und analysiert. Obwohl Israel in der arabischen Welt scharf verurteilt wurde, fielen Führer wie Palästinenserpräsident Abbas und der ägyptische Präsident Mubarak durch ihre Kritik an der Hamas auf.

In Israel nahmen indes mehr als zehntausend arabische Bürger an Demonstrationen teil, in denen sie gegen das Vorgehen der israelischen Armee protestierten. Auch arabische Knessetmitglieder und andere Würdenträger waren an den Protesten

beteiligt. Abgeordnete hatten sich außerdem heftige Schlagabtausche mit rechtsgerichteten Knesset-Mitgliedern wie Avigdor Lieberman geliefert.

Ägypten fürchtet die Hamas

„Aus der Sicht Ägyptens ist der Krieg zwischen Israel und der Hamas nicht auf diese beiden Parteien begrenzt, sondern auch ein Kampf zwischen zwei Lagern im Nahen Osten. Das eine Lager besteht aus dem Iran und seinen Verbündeten (Syrien, Hisbollah und Hamas), das andere aus den moderaten und pro-westlichen Staaten unter der Führung Ägyptens und Saudi Arabiens. In diesem Zusammenhang sind die Ägypter der Überzeugung, die Hamas handele [...] mit dem Ziel, die gesamte Region zum Gären zu bringen. [...]

Ägypten befürchtet auch, dass es den Gazastreifen letzten Endes am Hals haben wird, nach dem völligen Abschluss des israelischen Loslösungsprozesses von Gaza.“

Itamar Rabinowitz, IHY 30.12.08

Arab elites vs. Hamas

„Pro-Hamas rallies were organized from Teheran to Beirut, and from Baghdad to Cairo. Arab citizens of Israel observed a general strike, accompanied by sporadic rock-throwing and tire-burning. An Arab minister in the Israeli government protested by refusing to attend a cabinet meeting; Palestinian youths in east Jerusalem rioted as their elders honored the strike. [...]

That said, it is instructive to look beyond the mobs [...] and take note of a remarkable rupture in the Arab and Muslim world.

The Arab elites, comprising statesmen, academics, journalists and businesspeople, may preface their criticism with references to Israel's 'crimes,' but a significant facet of this class - it would be simplistic to label them 'moderates' - appreciates that Hamas is to blame for what is taking place in the Gaza Strip. Moreover, their hearts may tell them to bankroll Hamas, but their brains tell them that the fanaticism, political intolerance and social backwardness championed by the Islamists pose a profound threat to the Arab future. [...]

If only the Jordanian and Saudi monarchs, Gulf emirs and the Egyptian president would stand up to the Islamists.

How? They should be incrementally fostering transparent government and the rule of law, and socializing their masses to the idea of tolerance and majority rule while respecting the minority. [...]

The Arab elites need to offer their people an alternative to Islamist extremism. They could begin by redefining what it means to be pro-Palestinian and dissociating the Palestinian cause from anti-Israel rejectionism.

In this context, if Israel can deflate Hamas, it will be advancing an Arab interest as much as its own citizens' security.”

JPO 29.12.08

Die israelischen Araber: Habt Verständnis für sie

„Der Kampf, den wir derzeit führen, so gerechtfertigt er auch sein mag, entfernt uns von den Aussichten auf eine umfassende Friedenslösung. Kommentatoren [...] betonen immer wieder, kein arabischer Staat unterstütze die Hamas. Das mag stimmen, aber die arabische Öffentlichkeitsmeinung rebelliert gegen die moderaten Regime, und unüberlegte israelische Maßnahmen könnten sogar einen Zusammenbruch der Regime in Ägypten und Jordanien bewirken. [...]

Die Hetze gegen die Vertreter der arabischen Öffentlichkeit in Israel wird dazu führen, dass ihre Haltung noch radikaler wird und ihre Solidarität mit der arabischen Welt zunimmt. [...] In der tragischen Realität der Existenz eines jüdischen und demokratischen Staates mit einer arabischen Minderheit sollten wir das Recht dieser Minderheit auf Protest akzeptieren.“

Uzi Baram, IHY 30.12.08

“Die arabischen Abgeordneten geben Israel, und nur Israel, die Schuld an den Kampfhandlungen in Gaza. Ihre Haltung zeugt von völligem Mangel an Aufrichtigkeit, und die Juden in Israel können ihnen nicht zustimmen, mit Ausnahme einiger Gruppierungen, die ihre nationale Identität schon lange verloren haben. Darüber hinaus ist dieser Standpunkt eine schallende Ohrfeige für Ägypten und Abu Masen, die in ihren Erklärungen darauf achten, auch auf die Verantwortung der Hamas für die Verschlechterung der Sicherheitslage hinzuweisen.“

Dan Margalit, IHY 29.12.08

Your opinion is irrelevant

"Dear protestors, Arab Israelis, and citizens of the world:

We are in favor of the democratic right of every person to rally in favor whatever he or she feel like, even if we are talking about Israeli citizens demonstrating against their country at a time of war.

After all, we no longer have too many expectations of the Arab-Israeli leadership, headed by Knesset Member Muhammad Barakeh.

Yet nonetheless, and with all due respect, we wish to tell you something at this time: Your views do not really make a difference to us right now. At this moment, when we are fighting for the wellbeing of southern residents, the level of support we receive from you does not matter to us too much. It is irrelevant. [...]

You may be surprised about this, yet when it comes to a choice between the option of allowing southern Israel residents to continue being hurt and the option of hitting the terrorists with full force, while realizing that innocent civilians in Gaza will be hurt too along the way, we choose to side with our own citizens. [...] I almost forgot something else: We already withdrew from the Gaza Strip. A long time ago. Perhaps you repressed this minor detail, yet we uprooted settlements, just the way you like it. We expelled Jews from their homes, in line with our own decision, just in order to get out of Gaza. [...] So next time you ask us to evacuate settlements, ask yourselves what we'll be getting in return."

Hanoch Daum, YED 04.01.09

Der Loyalitätstest

"Die Regierung hätte den Vertretern der israelischen Araber von vornherein klar machen sollen, dass Solidarität mit dem Feind nicht toleriert wird. [...] Man darf es nicht zulassen, dass in Galiläa ein israelischer Kosovo entsteht. Wenn sie mit uns leben wollen, müssen sie ihre Loyalität zu Israel unter Beweis stellen."

HZO 30.01.09

Arab citizens are not a fifth column

"We are currently witnessing an aggressive campaign to delegitimize the Arab public and its right to take an opposing position. [...] The demand directed at Arab citizens is to unambiguously choose sides in the conflict. Lack of complete support for Israel is interpreted as identification with Hamas. Sadly, too many Jews cannot reconcile the identity of the Palestinian citizens of Israel with the suffering of the Palestinians in Gaza, part of their people. [...]

Strong expressions from a portion of the Arab leadership, describing the government as war criminals, are capturing high media visibility, and isolated disturbances among youth [...] are painting the broad Arab population as a general threat to public order. There is complete avoidance of the fact that the vast majority of the Arab public is continuing with life as usual - despite the pain and the worries. The police leadership acted correctly when it announced that it would allow marches and other expressions of protest. [...] It is unrealistic to expect that Arab citizens will accept the suffering and the killing in Gaza. The protest of Arab citizens must be understood as a legitimate expression of their identification with their fellow Palestinians. This protest should be seen as a source of strength and an expression of a resilient democracy."

Mohammad Darawshe, Amnon Beerli, JPO 04.01.09

Not a test of citizenship

"A war between Israel and her neighbors places Israel's Arab citizens time and again under wrenching, burdensome scrutiny. Even those who believe that the attack on Hamas' centers of operation in Gaza is justified cannot harden their hearts to the heavy price in blood this military action exacts. [...] The distress of Israel's Arab citizens has worsened in recent years because the establishment's promises about closing the socioeconomic gap between the Arab and Jewish populations have all been broken. [...] The price of this dereliction is steep, and it attests to the growing alienation of many youths from the State of Israel and its institutions. [...]

As long as Israel does not lift a finger to rebuild the trust between it and its Arab citizens, it must not blame them for failing any faux loyalty tests it sometimes subjects them to. On the contrary, it must show restraint despite the difficulty in doing so, and it must view their pain and protests with understanding."

HAA 30.12.08

3. Israels Strategien und Ziele

Spekulationen über Israels Ziele im Kampf mit der Hamas und langfristige Strategien für eine Befriedung des Südens Israels machen einen wesentlichen Teil der Berichterstattung über den Konflikt in Gaza aus. Während französische und ägyptische Vermittler sich darum bemühten eine Waffenruhe voranzutreiben, betonte die israelische Regierung, dass eine Einstellung des Raketenbeschusses durch die Hamas und Mechanismen zur Verhinderung einer Wiederbewaffnung der Organisation zu den wichtigen Voraussetzungen gehören würden. Am 7. Januar war es erstmals zu einer dreistündigen humanitären Feuerpause gekommen, die beide Konfliktparteien einhielten. Gleichzeitig bewilligte das israelische Sicherheitskabinett eine Ausweitung der Bodenoffensive, die Verteidigungsminister Barak nun in Gang setzen könnte.

Make Hamas think twice

“Hamas knows that it is about to be hit, but the group believes that it will be a ‘proportional’ blow, and that the international constraints faced by Israel would force it to maintain fair play and operate for a limited time only. [...]”

Hamas already knows that under such circumstances, it would be a matter of a day or two – or at most a week – before the photos of casualties in Gaza’s collapsing hospitals – which would be lacking electricity, water, or medical equipment – would end the Israeli move very quickly. [...]

If our cabinet decided to meet Hamas’ expectations Wednesday and chose a ‘proportional’ military operation in order to etch in the organization’s consciousness – via aerial and pyrotechnical effects – the forgotten sense of defeat, we should not embark on such operation to begin with. [...]

At this time, the objective of an Israeli military operation in Gaza must be to undermine Hamas’ desire to keep fighting, and at that point agree on a ceasefire.”

Alex Fishman, JED 26.12.08

We must reshuffle the deck

“A ceasefire that does not achieve the dismantlement of Hamas’ military capabilities would

be counterproductive and eventually lead to another round of bloodshed. New rules of engagement must be set, whereby Hamas is disarmed and a sustainable truce is achieved. [...] The only way to achieve this goal is to pound Hamas until it is forced to disarm, and then reinforce the truce with effective international force. A force that will not limit itself to tranquil UNRA-style condemnation of terror, but rather, a force to be reckoned with, one that would be reinforced or replaced by Israel if proven to be ineffective.”

Ophir Falk, JED 01.01.09

Mit noch mehr Energie fortfahren, aber auch mit politischer Logik

„Es ist anzunehmen, dass man die Hamas nicht schlagen und ihr militärisches Potential nicht vernichten wird, aber in den Tagen, die uns noch bleiben, werden wir uns bemühen, sie so zu erschrecken und zu schockieren, dass sie einem Waffenstillstand zustimmen werden, der gut für uns ist und Bestand haben wird.

Wie erreicht man dieses Ziel? Im Moment mit dem Einsatz von weiteren Streitkräften, sowohl am Boden als auch in der Luft, mit gezielten Tötungen der Hamas-Führung, aber auch mit genügend politischer Logik, um zu erkennen, wann der Moment gekommen ist, die Operation zu beenden und ihre Früchte zu ernten. Dieser Punkt ist noch nicht erreicht.“

Yoav Limor, IHY 30.12.08

Secure ceasefire now

“Israel has nothing to gain from the continuation of its assault on Gaza. Strip residents will not be rebelling against the Hamas regime there. Gaza will not see the emergence of a new regime that is sympathetic to Israel.

A ground assault on the Strip could lead to entanglement in the Gaza swamp; compared to it, the Lebanese swamp is merely a puddle. [...]

Israel has no other goal except for securing, as soon as is possible, a full and absolute ceasefire that brings tranquility and calm to our border.

Such truce would go into effect in exchange for easing the siege and closure imposed on Gaza. The earlier Israel calls for a complete cessation of hostiles on both sides of the border, with the support and mediation of Arab states that are not Hamas fans, the better it would be for us.”

Amos Oz, JED 31.12.08

The politics of airstrikes

"We might very well find ourselves in a situation where Hamas is battered, but left standing, or perhaps replaced with a corrupt and hostile Fatah-run regime. In either scenario, it will only be a matter of time before the rocket fire returns, just as it has in the past. [...]"

So now more than ever, we need to raise our voices and make clear to the politicians that nothing short of total victory in Gaza will do. It is time to reverse the disaster of the August 2005 pullout, and restore control over the area. Anything less will only mean continued turmoil and terror.

Israel did not start this conflict, nor did we seek it out. But we know how to end it, so let's make sure that, once and for all, that is what we do."

Michael Freud, JPO 31.12.08

Time for Diplomacy

"Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, who oppose a renewed cease-fire, must explain to whom they plan to hand over control after they 'destroy the Hamas regime.' [...]"

a central regime, problematic as it may be, is preferable to no regime and a military victory is not an alternative to a diplomatic solution to a conflict. [...]"

The question facing our policy makers is if striking a few dozen more Hamas members and destroying another public building are worth the loss of international support including the agreement or silence of important Arab neighbors. The cabinet must give international entities and countries such as the United States, Egypt, Turkey and France - who seek to broker a cease-fire and draft a better cease-fire agreement - the chance to do so. Even if they fail and Israel must continue the attack it will gain broader maneuverability both in the region and around the world."

HAA 01.01.09

The task at hand

"Any terrorist group that manages to face up to the might of the IDF and survive while continuing its attacks against Israel will invariably be seen as the victor. In the present fighting in the Gaza Strip, the IDF will lose if it does not win, and Hamas will emerge as the victor. [...] You only need to take a look at what has happened to Hezbollah, its stockpile of rockets and its position in Lebanon since the cease-fire to see what is likely to occur in the Gaza Strip in the wake of a similar cease-fire there. For some reason, it is Israel that has difficulty

learning that a cease-fire with terrorists is only to the advantage of the terrorists. Terrorism has to be destroyed. [...]"

In recent years some of our politicians have become obsessed with the notion that any Israeli military activity is bound to be limited by pressure from the international community, pressure to which we presumably will have to accede even if it puts our national security at risk. [...] Our job now is to keep our eye on the ball, and not be diverted from the task at hand. The IDF must continue to pursue the mission it has been assigned and put an end to the firing of rockets from the Gaza Strip. We have the ability to do so and it must be done."

Moshe Arens, HAA 07.01.09

HAA = Haaretz

HZO = Ha Tzofe

IHY = Israeli HaYom

JED = Jedioth Ahronoth

JPO = Jerusalem Post

MAA = Maariv

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