**Ban Ki-Moon's Shameful Message In Israel's Hour Of Need**

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It is hard to imagine two more unwelcome, uninvited visitors to Israel in the middle of a war against Palestinian terrorists than UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and US Secretary of State John Kerry.  But even more unwelcome is that they are working together.

Their common cause is that although Israel has a right of self-defense in theory, Israel ought to be prevented from exercising this right in practice.

Events over the past week have provided an extraordinary demonstration of this reprehensible nexus.

On July 16, 2014, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) issued a report stating: “the Israeli military delivered text messages to virtually all the residents of Ash Shuja’iyya and Az Zaitun neighborhoods in eastern Gaza city, approximately 100,000 people, warning them to leave their homes by 8 am today (16 July), ahead of attacks to be launched in the area.”  The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) also made phone calls and distributed leaflets.

OCHA then describes what came next:  “Subsequently, the Palestinian Ministry of Interior in Gaza reportedly instructed the residents to…not flee the area.”  As a result, OCHA admits: “the vast majority decided to stay.”

This story tells us both that Israel adhered to the Geneva Convention demand of providing “effective advance warning” to civilians and that Hamas violated the rule forbidding parties to “direct the movement of …civilians in order to shield military objectives from attack.”

What was Hamas trying to protect when it used Palestinians as human shields in Shuja’iyya?

The IDF refers to Shuja’iyya as the Hamas’ “terror fortress” in the Gaza Strip. The IDF has found more than ten openings to tunnels in Shuja’iyya and since July 8, Hamas has fired over 140 rockets at Israel from this neighborhood alone. As IDF Chief of General Staff Benny Gantz put it: “Hamas has built a war machine in residential areas.”

This is another violation of the laws of armed conflict. By deliberately locating its terrorist infrastructure in the midst of Shuja’iyya’s civilian population, Hamas violates the prohibition on “locating legitimate military targets within or near densely populated areas."

Following the warnings, the IDF went into the Shuja’iyya neighborhood – and is still there – for the purpose of destroying the tunnels that have been designed and used to attack Israeli civilians.  This is Hamas’ most basic war crime of all. In the words of the Geneva Conventions, civilians “shall not be the object of attack.”

On the night of July 19, 2014 in separate incidents in the Shuja’iyya area, Israel lost 13 soldiers, more soldiers in a single night than Israel lost in the whole of the three week 2008-2009 ground offensive Operation Cast Lead. These soldiers died in an ambush. An anti-tank mine. Trapped in a burning building.

The IDF affords us the context.  They “encountered fierce Hamas fighting in the dense urban environment” as Hamas tried “to defend their tunnel infrastructure.”

In these circumstances, Palestinian civilians who remained in Shuja’iyya – despite the warnings –  died.  Data on fatalities, in OCHA’s own words, are “preliminary and subject to change based on further verification,” so the number of civilian casualties is unclear.

What is clear is the outrageous reaction of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.  On July 20, 2014 he said: “dozens more civilians, including children, have been killed in Israeli military strikes in the Shuja’iyya neighborhood in Gaza. I condemn this atrocious action. Israel must exercise maximum restraint and do far more to protect civilians.”

Ban Ki-moon said nothing about Hamas having failed to protect Palestinian civilians.  He said nothing about Hamas having put Palestinian civilians directly in harm’s way.  In fact he said nothing about any “atrocious action” by Hamas.  He also made no demand that Hamas “restrain” itself from fulfilling its stated goal, namely, that “Israel will exist and will continue to exist until Islam will obliterate it.”

For the UN, no move that Israel makes short of surrender to the Palestinian mob, will ever be sufficient.

When Palestinian civilians did heed Israel’s warnings and did not die, on July 16, 2014 OCHA complained “the relocation experience has been…traumatic…Women have reported stress due to their inability to maintain…modesty norms…[in] overcrowded spaces...”

Five million Israelis have just seconds to run for a bomb shelter and save their lives. Older people have died from heart failure when the sirens go off. Small children flee rockets raining down on their kindergartens and spend hours trapped between four walls day after day. Let alone the parents and brothers and sisters of the 50,000 plus heroic young men and women on the front lines who spend every waking minute dreading a phone call, haunted by the prospect of kidnapping by very real monsters.

The truth is the UN doesn’t give a damn about the suffering of Israelis.

On July 18, 2014 the giant UN apparatus assembled in Geneva for the world press.  There was OCHA, and the World Food Programme (WFP), the World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF, and the UN Palestinian refugee agency (UNRWA).  Not one of these organizations said one word about Israelis.

This is not merely indifference; it is gross negligence and collaboration. On July 17, 2014 UNRWA confessed to “discovering” rockets in one of their schools, then refused to make the photographs public, and promptly gave the rockets back to the rocketeers – or as UNRWA spokesman Chris Gunness delicately called them, “the local authorities.”

UNRWA had the audacity to claim “this incident is the first of its kind…” knowing full well that Hamas has directly involved UNRWA schools in its war crimes before – with video evidence over the past decade to prove it.

Canadian reporter  Patrick Martin happened to be visiting UNRWA’s Fakhoura School on July 15, 2014 and described the experience this way: “Heading toward the exit, we were overwhelmed by the jet-like sound of two rockets being launched from somewhere near the school. Hamas, or some militant group, clearly is hoping the Israelis won’t strike at the launchers…because they’re close to the school.” He adds that the kids were enthusiastic and knowledgeable about the weaponry; “as the Hamas-made missiles screamed off into the sky...the kids all cheered,” and one boy identified the make and model as the kind aimed at Tel Aviv.

Israelis, by contrast, are not cheering Palestinian civilian deaths.

On June 20, 2014, the UN Secretary-General gave a major speech on UN action on Syria and unashamedly declared: “Since June last year…the United Nations has not been issuing any statistics of death tolls.  It is impossible and very sad and tragic to count all these dead bodies.” The UN does not count Syrian dead because it’s too sad, but throwing around unverified numbers of Palestinian civilian casualties serves a more palatable political endgame.

When Ban Ki-moon comes knocking, therefore, his bona fides are non-existent. So why is Secretary Kerry by his side?

On June 20, 2014, responding to a question from CNN’s Wolf Blitzer about Palestinian civilian casualties, Prime Minister Netanyahu said that Israel is “trying to be as pinpointed as we can.”  Shortly thereafter, Secretary Kerry was caught on camera by Fox News talking to an aide who was apparently briefing him on the CNN conversation. Kerry reacted “It’s a hell of a pinpoint operation.”

Set aside the 273 civilians across Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia, who have been killed unintentionally during the Obama administration’s limited endeavors to reduce terrorism. Think back to the President’s speech on America’s right to self-defense in the context of Syria – a country not on the U.S. border and not posing an imminent threat to three-quarters of the American population. Addressing the nation on September 10, 2013, Obama declared “the United States military doesn’t do pinpricks.”

One rule for Israel and another for everybody else, evidently appeals to both the UN and the Obama administration. A shameful scheme in Israel’s hour of need.