Why the UN should condemn Hamas

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In recent weeks, Israel has faced violence at the security fence separating our country from Gaza. [Tens of thousands of Palestinians](https://www.npr.org/2018/03/30/598386478/14-palestinians-killed-hundreds-more-wounded-in-violence-near-gaza-border), incited [by Hamas](https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/14/world/middleeast/gaza-protests-palestinians-us-embassy.html?mtrref=www.google.com&mtrref=undefined&gwh=AA5E17AADDDE9BEF5C3ECD1E2FE0AA39&gwt=pay) (which controls Gaza), have approached the fence -- some of them armed with guns, improvised explosive devices and Molotov cocktails to harm Israeli civilians -- to tear down any obstacle in their way and infiltrate Israel.

Rioters have used [burning tires](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/04/13/world/middleeast/gaza-fence-aerial.html?mtrref=www.google.com&mtrref=www.nytimes.com&gwh=D74443B347E04D7592E4EBE2A894C8A4&gwt=pay) and [kites to set fires](https://www.timesofisrael.com/burning-kite-from-gaza-sparks-fire-in-israel/) across Israel's southern farms and have succeeded at times at damaging critical civilian infrastructure. Hamas has coupled its violence with a widespread public relations effort aimed at repackaging the rioters as peaceful grass-roots-led protesters.

Sadly, too many have fallen for Hamas' ploys. Instead of directing their condemnations at this internationally recognized terrorist organization for their war crimes against both Palestinians and Israelis, some countries and UN bodies have not only embraced Hamas' propaganda but have even criticized Israel's right to self-defense. The Human Rights Council in Geneva has [already passed](https://www.timesofisrael.com/un-human-rights-council-votes-to-investigate-israel-for-gaza-protest-deaths) such a measure, and there are [additional attempts](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-israel-palestinians-un-resolution/u-n-council-mulls-calling-for-palestinian-protection-force-idUSKCN1IJ1P6) underway right now to pass a UN Security Council resolution aimed at curbing Israel's legitimate rights.

Such baseless charges against Israel are morally unjust. They are also a hindrance to those who truly seek to lower the tensions in the region. If the international community, starting with the United Nations, would instead rightfully choose to hold Hamas responsible for its war crimes and unequivocally condemn its dangerous behavior, then the United Nations and other international organizations could not only serve as a force for good but also enforce real change on the ground.

Those who criticize Israel's legitimate actions of self-defense are either unware, or willfully ignorant of the clearly violent nature of what's happening at the Gaza border. After all, even a senior Hamas official, Salah al-Bardaweel, [said openly](https://www.cnn.com/2018/05/16/middleeast/hamas-members-gaza-deaths/index.html) that on the bloodiest day of these so-called protests, "In the last round 62 people were martyred; 50 of them are from Hamas." Statements such as these should prove to the world that in fighting back, Israel is defending itself from terrorists committing orchestrated attacks, and not from activists leading an innocent protest.

There is no doubt that the current state of humanitarian affairs in Gaza is unacceptable. But the real tragedy is that this situation was -- and remains -- completely avoidable. Israel removed all Jewish communities and military facilities from Gaza as part of our [2005 disengagement plan](http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/AboutIsrael/Maps/Pages/Israels%20Disengagement%20Plan-%202005.aspx). In the years following, we have facilitated the transfer of billions of dollars of [direct and indirect aid](http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/foreignpolicy/peace/humanitarian/pages/default.aspx) for Gaza's local population. Only after Hamas [overthrew the Palestinian Authority in 2007](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/nov/16/israel) and started using Gaza as a launching pad for terror attacks against Israeli civilians did Israel begin to limit border access to ensure that only aid truly intended for humanitarian purposes entered the territory.

The United States, European Union, Russia and even the United Nations, as part of the Middle East Quartet framework formed to promote dialogue with the Palestinians, [fully supported](https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RS22659.pdf) Israel's decision to monitor the entry and exit of goods into Gaza. These bodies recognized that such steps were, and continue to be, necessary to limit the power of a dangerous terrorist entity -- one that has [launched thousands of rockets](https://www.idf.il/en/minisites/facts-and-figures/hamas/hamas-exploitation-of-humanitarian-aid) into Israel, and, [according to](https://www.cnn.com/2016/08/05/middleeast/gaza-aid-worker-hamas/index.html) our security forces, has stolen international aid dollars to fund its terror tunnel campaign. These are the very tunnels, dug into our territory, that Hamas has used time and again to attempt to attack Israeli targets rather than invest in the people of Gaza whose interests it purports to represent.

Countries that criticize Israel must ask themselves how they would expect their security forces to react if terrorists armed with rifles and explosives marched on their borders. Knowing that Israel will never allow for a mass infiltration that would endanger our towns and villages just hundreds of meters from the fence, Hamas is intentionally sending Palestinians to their deaths. Then Hamas uses the deaths of these Palestinians for anti-Israel propaganda on the world stage.

Hamas terrorists have destroyed and burned infrastructure along the fence, including the Kerem Shalom border-crossing terminal -- a major entry point for humanitarian aid into Gaza. These destructive activities have [primarily hurt the Palestinian people](https://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2018/05/12/world/middleeast/ap-ml-israel-palestinians.html), who will suffer even more while the electricity infrastructure and gas lines are repaired, costing millions of dollars.

In pursuit of fulfilling its openly stated goal of destroying Israel, Hamas continues to commit the double war crime it has perfected over the years: attacking innocent Israelis and hiding behind civilians in Gaza.

Put simply, Hamas values the deaths of both Israelis and Palestinians. As Yahya al-Sinwar, the head of Hamas in Gaza, [said recently](http://hamas.ps/en/post/1308/hamas-upcoming-nakba-anniversary-decisive-day-in-palestinian-history) to a group of Palestinian youth, "We favor an assassination over a natural death and are always willing to sacrifice our lives."

Members of the international community should not be falling prey to the lies of Hamas. The United Nations and others must use their power and resources to improve the situation on the ground in Gaza and enforce change. To do so they must start by condemning Hamas for attacking Israel and for holding the people of Gaza hostage. Such moral clarity will not only reinvigorate international institutions but also save lives on both sides of the fence.