

Dear Friends,

Hamas's attack and the events unfolding since yesterday are unspeakable. We are heartbroken to watch terrified civilians besieged in their homes, innocent people murdered in cold blood on the streets, at parties, and at home. Dozens taken hostage and dragged into the Gaza Strip. Every one of us knows someone who has been tragically affected. We could go on and on about their cruel and criminal actions, or focus on how our Jewish-supremacist government brought us to this point. But as hard as it is, our job as former Israeli soldiers is to talk about what we were sent to do.

Israel's security policy, for decades now, has been to "manage the conflict". Successive Israeli governments insist on round after round of violence as if any of it will make a difference. They talk about "security", "deterrence", "changing the equation".

All of these are code words for bombing the Gaza Strip to a pulp, always justified as targeting terrorists, yet always with heavy civilian casualties. In between these rounds of violence we make life impossible for Gazans, and then act surprised when it all boils over.

We talk about "normalization" with the UAE and now Saudi Arabia, while hoping the world will turn a blind eye to the open-air prison we built in our backyard. Apart from the unfathomable violation of human rights, we've created a massive security liability for our own citizens.

The question Israelis are all asking is - where were the soldiers yesterday? Why was the IDF seemingly absent while hundreds of Israelis were slaughtered in their homes and on the streets? The unfortunate truth is that they were "preoccupied". In the West Bank.

We send soldiers to secure settler incursions into the Palestinian city of Nablus, to chase Palestinian children in Hebron, to protect settlers as they carry out pogroms. Settlers demand that Palestinian flags are removed from the streets of Huwara; soldiers are sent to do it.

Our country decided - decades ago - that it's willing to forfeit the security of its citizens in our towns and cities, in favor of maintaining control over an occupied civilian population of millions, all for the sake of a settler-messianic agenda.

The idea that we can "manage the conflict" without ever having to solve it is once again collapsing before our eyes. It held up until now because only few dared to challenge it. These heartbreaking events could change that. They must. For all of us between the river and the sea.

Avner Gvaryahu, Director
Breaking the Silence