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## Rockets Over Sderot

### What should Israel do to stop this outrage?

Three years ago, Israel abandoned the Gaza strip and evicted the over 8,000 Jewish residents who had lived there for generations and who had created an island of civility, industry and prosperity. What has been Israel's reward for its generosity?

#### What are the facts?

**Israel's many mistakes.** In its six decades of history, clouded by almost uninterrupted warfare against it, Israel has made many mistakes. Relinquishing the Sinai to Egypt, Southern Lebanon to Hezbollah, and Gaza to the Palestinians were the most egregious. One lesson to be learned was that one cannot make peace with one's enemies by giving away pieces of one's country.

The greatest folly, of course, was the abandonment of Gaza. Virtually since the first day of Israel's disengagement from the area, the Gazans have launched daily rocket attacks on the city of Sderot. So far "only" about twenty Israelis have been killed. Many more have been wounded.

But it is only a matter of time that one of these rockets is going to hit a school, a hospital or an apartment building, causing unacceptable casualties. Then Israel's forbearance and patience are likely to snap.

These Qassam rockets, however, are only the beginning. Large quantities of explosives and more advanced weapons systems – presents from Syria and mostly from Iran – are supplied daily through sophisticated tunnels from the Sinai into the Gaza territory. That happens under the "watchful eyes" of the Egyptians, who have foolishly been allowed to be the guardians of the border between Egypt and Gaza.

There is no question what any other country would do if it found itself in a position similar to that of Israel. What would we do if bombs or rockets launched from Mexico landed in San Diego? Obviously, we would obliterate the source of such attack and inflict sufficient additional damage to totally discourage such behavior in the future. But what does Israel do? Does it use its powerful army or its superb air force to destroy the areas from which these rockets are launched? Surprisingly not. Guided by its own moral compass and always concerned about "world opinion," Israel attempts to pinpoint the source of attacks, taking enormous care not to hurt "innocent civilians." But

The real tragedy is that the bitter experience with Gaza will make Israel quite unresponsive to our government's desire to achieve a "two-state final solution" before the end of the year. No such solution is possible in this or in any other year unless Israelis are convinced that the Palestinians wish to live in peace and friendship with them. If, under the pressure of our government and of many other countries, Israel would commit the folly of giving up control of Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank"), not only the Palestinians, but also Syrians and Iranians – with heavy armament, planes and tanks – would pour in and would dominate the Judean ridges and the heartland of Israel. That would finally achieve the long-hoped-for end of the Jewish state. It would bring about what many wars and "intifidas" were unable to accomplish.

the concept of "innocent civilians" is nonsense, of course. Anybody who allows his backyard to be used as a launching pad for rockets should expect his home to become a target for counterattack and for casualties to ensue.

**Lessons to be learned.** For reasons that are not at all clear, Israel finds itself in the thankless role of being responsible for Gaza's welfare, adequate supply of food, fuel and electricity. Occasionally, in feeble retaliation, Israel will slow the supply of fuel and electricity, though it never curtails the supply of food and medicine and routinely allows seriously ill Gazans access to its superb medical facilities. When it occasionally does curtail fuel and electricity, the world complains about Israel's "siege of Gaza."

Some questions: 1) Who appointed Israel to be the guardian of Gaza and responsible for its welfare and comfort? 2) Why don't the Gazans and their Iranian and Syrian friends use the sophisticated tunnels leading from Sinai to Gaza to import fuel, food, and medicine instead of explosives and weapons? 3) Why, in sixty years and in the decades before, when Egypt was in charge of Gaza, have the Palestinians been unable to build a functioning power plant that would make them independent in that respect? Surely their Arab cousins, could supply some of their abundant petroleum for that purpose.

Israel's attempt to stop the shelling of Sderot has so far been a failure. But what *should* Israel do? The answer is obvious: Israel should openly declare to Gaza and to the world at large that every rocket that falls on Sderot or on any place in Israel will immediately be responded to by a rocket aimed at where it came from. Since Gaza is packed with humanity, it is clear that such a tit-for-tat approach would cause many civilian casualties. That would be a tragedy, of course. But, it is pretty clear that the rockets would stop in short order. Sure, "the world" would object. But a country's first duty is to protect its citizens from attack. That is what *we* would do. That is the very least any country would do.

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Facts and Logic About the Middle East  
P.O. Box 590359 ■ San Francisco, CA 94159  
Gerardo Joffe, President

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