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Gaza Israel War: Condemning Israel's Vengeance (<https://www.syndicationbureau.com/gaza-israel-war-condemning-israels-vengeance/>)

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Among the many themes common to each of the Abrahamic faiths, found in the holy books of Judaism, Islam, and Christianity, is the principle of proportional justice, enshrined in the ancient phrase, “An eye for an eye.”

It's a principle that appears to have been discarded by Israel as it ignores all calls for restraint in its determination to destroy all traces of Hamas, no matter the cost in innocent lives.

Rabbinic, Islamic, and Christian scholars argue among themselves to this day about the correct interpretation of an admonition first set down, literally in stone, in an Akkadian legal text written between 1792 and 1750 BCE.

This is the Code of Hammurabi (<https://www.history.com/topics/ancient-middle-east/hammurabi>), a king of Babylon whose laws were etched in cuneiform onto a basalt stele, or stone column, which today can be seen in the Louvre in Paris.

Hammurabi, by all accounts one of the more excessive of the extremely brutal rulers of ancient Mesopotamia, would have been puzzled by the modern queasiness occasioned by a legal code that could be described as harsh, but fair.

The Code of Hammurabi left no one in his time in any doubt about the consequences for a range of acts deemed over 3,800 years ago to be serious social transgressions.

"If a son strike his father, his hands shall be hewn off." "If a man put out the eye of another man, his eye shall be put out." "If a man knock out the teeth of his equal, his teeth shall be knocked out." And so on.

A word that appears often in the code is "death," (<https://avalon.law.yale.edu/ancient/hamframe.asp>) a penalty handed out for offenses including robbery, burglary, rape and, of course, death, no matter how caused.

To modern sensibilities, weighing the value of human lives like fruit on a scale seems abhorrent – until one considers the appalling alternative.

In tragic recent history, that alternative was embraced by the United States following the 9/11 attacks, in which 2,977 were killed. According to the Costs of War (<https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/>) project at Brown University's Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs, at last count, America's post-9/11 wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have cost the lives of 14,490 US military personnel and civilian contractors.

But even that exercise in disproportionality pales against the grotesque price extracted in Iraq and Afghanistan, where more than 350,000 national military, police, and civilians have paid with their lives for the carnage wrought in New York, Pennsylvania, and Virginia on September 11, 2001, by 19 Al Qaeda killers.

Israel, bent it seems not on justice but on revenge for the 1,400 victims of the Hamas attack on October 7, has taken the same bloody, unconscionable path in Gaza.

Gaza's Hamas-run health ministry says that more than 8,000 civilians, mostly women and children, have been killed by Israeli bombs and bullets since October 7. The figure is, of course, disputed. But whether it's 8,000 or 4,000, the point remains – the loss of innocent Israeli lives is being avenged by a wholly disproportionate and indiscriminate massacre of innocent Palestinians.

The truth that ought to shock the international community is that such disproportionate slaughter is nothing more than business as usual for a state that prides itself on being "a light unto the world (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2023/10/18/remarks-by-president-biden-on-the-october-7th-terrorist-attacks-and-the-resilience-of-the-state-of-israel-and-its-people-tel-aviv-israel/>)." Instead, the world has been, and continues to be, complicit in outrageous Israeli acts carried out in the name of self-defense.

According to OCHA, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, between January 1, 2008, and the end of September this year, 177 Israeli citizens were killed, and 4,735 were wounded (<https://www.ochaopt.org/data/casualties>), by Palestinian armed groups and civilians.

Over the same period, 3,754 Palestinian civilians were killed by Israeli forces or settlers, and more than 152,000 were wounded. It is already clear that, when finally collated and confirmed, the figures from the current disaster will only add to this imbalance.

This is not justice. This is unbridled, unrestrained vengeance.

Since the establishment of Israel in 1948 in the wake of the Second World War, many nations, tiptoeing around the elephant in the room that is the Holocaust, have turned a blind eye to Israel's excesses in its relationship with the Palestinians. In doing so, Israel's friends have let it down.

It's a central article of Judaism that the Jews are "the chosen people," charged by God with the task of leading the world on the path of morality.

David Ben-Gurion, the founder of Israel and its first prime minister, spoke and wrote frequently of Israel's responsibility to be an ethical and moral beacon – the "light unto the nations (<https://sapirjournal.org/israel-at-75/2023/04/light-unto-the-nations/>)" referred to in the Hebrew Bible's Book of Isaiah.

This conceit of Israel as the moral light of the world has been passed down from leader to leader, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. In his speech to the United Nations General Assembly (<https://www.c-span.org/video/?434273-5/israeli-prime-minister-netanyahu-remarks-united-nations-general-assembly>) on September 19, 2017, on the eve of the Jewish new year, Netanyahu invoked the words of the Prophet and said that Israel's "light is shining across the continents, bringing hope and salvation to the ends of the Earth."

But not, it seems, to its immediate neighbors in Palestine.

A nation that cannot see the grotesque disparity in the scale of the death tolls in Israel and the Palestinian territories has not only lost sight of the ancient principle of an eye for an eye but has also forfeited its claim to being the world's beacon of morality.

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