

Opinion

Israel Can't Imprison Two Million Gazans Without Paying a Cruel Price

Friday 8 December 2023, by [LEVY Gideon](#) (Date first published: 9 October 2023).

Behind all this lies Israeli arrogance; the idea that we can do whatever we like, that we'll never pay the price and be punished for it. We'll carry on undisturbed.

We'll arrest, kill, harass, dispossess and protect the settlers busy with [their pogroms](#). We'll visit Joseph's Tomb, Othniel's Tomb and Joshua's Altar in the Palestinian territories, and of course [the Temple Mount](#) – over 5,000 Jews on Sukkot alone.

We'll fire at innocent people, take out people's eyes and smash their faces, expel, confiscate, rob, grab people from their beds, carry out ethnic cleansing and of course continue with [the unbelievable siege of the Gaza Strip](#), and everything will be all right.

We'll build a terrifying obstacle around Gaza – the underground wall alone cost 3 billion shekels (\$765 million) – and we'll be safe. We'll rely on the geniuses of the army's 8200 cyber-intelligence unit and on the Shin Bet security service agents who know everything. They'll warn us in time.

We'll transfer half an army from the Gaza border to the [Hawara](#) border in the West Bank, only to protect [far-right lawmaker Zvi Sukkot](#) and the settlers. And everything will be all right, both in Hawara and at the Erez crossing into Gaza.

It turns out that even the world's most sophisticated and expensive obstacle can be breached with a smoky old bulldozer when the motivation is great. This arrogant barrier can be crossed by bicycle and moped despite the billions poured into it and all the famous experts and fat-cat contractors.

The Gaza Palestinians are willing to pay any price for a moment of freedom. Will Israel learn its lesson? No.

We thought we'd continue to go down to Gaza, scatter a few crumbs in the form of tens of thousands of Israeli work permits – always contingent on good behavior – and still keep them in prison. We'll make [peace with Saudi Arabia](#) and the United Arab Emirates and the Palestinians will be forgotten

until they're erased, as quite a few Israelis would like.

We'll keep holding thousands of Palestinian prisoners, [sometimes without trial](#), most of them political prisoners. And we won't agree to discuss their release even after they've been in prison for decades.

We'll tell them that only by force will their prisoners see freedom. We thought we would arrogantly keep rejecting any attempt at a diplomatic solution, only because we don't want to deal with all that, and everything would continue that way forever.

Once again it was proved that this isn't how it is. A few hundred armed Palestinians breached the barrier and invaded Israel in a way no Israeli imagined was possible. A few hundred people proved that it's impossible to imprison 2 million people forever without paying a cruel price.

Just as the smoky old Palestinian bulldozer tore through the world's smartest barrier Saturday, it tore away at Israel's arrogance and complacency. And that's also how it tore away at the idea that it's enough to occasionally attack Gaza with suicide drones – and sell them to half the world – to maintain security.

On Saturday, Israel saw pictures it has never seen before. Palestinian vehicles patrolling its cities, bike riders entering through the Gaza gates. These pictures tear away at that arrogance. The Gaza Palestinians have decided they're willing to pay any price for a moment of freedom. Is there any hope in that? No. Will Israel learn its lesson? No.

On Saturday they were already talking about wiping out entire neighborhoods in Gaza, about occupying the Strip and punishing Gaza “as it has never been punished before.” But Israel hasn't stopped punishing Gaza since 1948, not for a moment.

After 75 years of abuse, the worse possible scenario awaits it once again. The threats of “flattening Gaza” prove only one thing: We haven't learned a thing. The arrogance is here to stay, even though Israel is paying a high price once again.

[Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu](#) bears very great responsibility for what happened, and he must pay the price, but it didn't start with him and it won't end after he goes. We now have to cry bitterly for the Israeli victims, but we should also cry for Gaza.

Gaza, most of whose residents are refugees created by Israel. Gaza, which has never known a single day of freedom.

Gideon Levy

P.S.

• Haaretz. Oct 9, 2023:

<https://www.haaretz.com/opinion/2023-10-09/ty-article-opinion/.premium/israel-cant-imprison-2-million-gazans-without-paying-a-cruel-price/0000018b-1476-d465-abbb-14f6262a0000>