



March 14, 2011

THE IMMORALITY OF MORAL EQUIVALENCY

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On Friday night, March 11, Hamas terrorists crossed into the West Bank to the Jewish community of Itamar where they murdered a Jewish family as they slept in their beds. The victims included a mother and father, Udi Fogel (36) and Ruth Fogel (35), and their three children, Yoav (11), Elad (4), and Hadas (3 months).

The sheer brutality of the Hamas act takes one's breath away. In highly uncharacteristic fashion, the Israeli government made the decision to display graphic photos of the death scene.

Sadly, there are many Jews who, wittingly or unwittingly, facilitate Palestinian violence by failing to make a moral distinction between wanton murder on the one hand and occupation and military actions on the other.

A chilling example of this loss of perspective among ideologues in the Jewish community is revealed in a press release published by Americans For Peace Now. Although APN characterized the attack as "horrifying," and praised the Palestinian Authority for condemning the attack, APN then went on to urge leaders of Israel and the Palestinians "to fight violent extremists on both sides."

To suggest that Jewish extremists engage in acts similar to those of Arab extremists such as Hamas is to distort Jewish and Israeli reality beyond measure.

Have Jewish extremists ever snuck into an Arab home and murdered a family sleeping in their beds?

Any death in war is a cosmic tragedy of divine proportion. The loss of life and the pain inflicted on any family is beyond limits, whether the life lost is that an Israeli or an Arab.

This does not mean, however, that all reasons for taking a life are morally equivalent.

Only hard-line ideologues would argue in the shadow of this outrageous brutality that there is an equivalency of Israeli and Palestinian policy. Yet, this has become more and more commonplace in some circles.

An Israeli group of soldiers visiting North American college campuses [Our Soldiers Speak] reports how from the University of Western Ontario to Wilfrid Laurier, from Hampshire College to the University of Pittsburgh, from Oberlin to Oklahoma, students--even some Jewish students--not only accuse Israel of war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and genocide, but also justify terror attacks against the Israeli People.

The Nazi propaganda machine of Adolph Hitler proved that when a lie is repeated often enough, it becomes accepted as fact--especially by people who have no access to the truth.

The Jewish world will never relinquish its sacred obligation of self-criticism, and Israelis have well demonstrated from the moment of the birth of the Jewish State that Israeli policies will come under the fiercest of internal moral scrutiny. No serious Jew ever suggests that Israel be given a pass on the way it treats Arab Israelis or Palestinians on the West Bank. There will always be Jews pushing Israel toward its highest goals.

But there is no way to overstate the degree of damage done to the State of Israel and, ironically, to the possibilities for ever finding a peaceful resolution of the conflict that tears at both Israeli and Palestinian families, by arguments of moral equivalency. In fact, such arguments are without moral grounding themselves.

A fitting response of tribute to the slain Fogel family would be for Jews everywhere to decry the outrageous brutality that took their lives and to condemn murder without needing to soften that condemnation by suggesting Israel is somehow also at fault.