



Statement Marking the Anniversary of Hamas's Attack on Israel

October 7, 2024

A year ago today, Hamas led a brutal attack on southern Israel. Israelis were murdered and abducted *en masse*; among the victims were also Arab Bedouins. Some of the abducted individuals are still being held in Gaza, where they face the threat of death at the hands of terrorists, especially as the Israeli military advances with rescue efforts. Only a portion of the hundreds of kilometers of tunnels constructed by Hamas for military purposes have been discovered and destroyed. Israeli society experienced a shock that has not subsided to this day. The consequence of this inhuman attack has been the escalation of a conflict that has claimed thousands of innocent lives.

In recent weeks, the armed conflict between Israel and another terrorist organization, Hezbollah, which has created a "state within a state" in Lebanon, has intensified. Hezbollah's rocket attacks, which began over a year ago, have already forced tens of thousands of residents from northern Israel to flee their homes. Similarly, tens of thousands of people on the Lebanese side have also fled their homes in search of shelter.

The entire population of Gaza is suffering immensely due to the war. At least several thousand civilians have been killed – largely because Hamas uses them as human shields. When considering the suffering of civilians in Gaza, Lebanon, and Israel, the humanitarian disaster, the sense of threat, and the abuse of prisoners, it is impossible not to call on all military decision-makers on both sides: this war must end! Peace must be the ultimate perspective in this war.

At the same time, we must recognize that the fundamental source of military operations in Gaza and along the Israeli-Lebanese border is the denial of the State of Israel's right to exist and, more broadly, the right of Jews to this land. This view has long been shared by a large part of the Middle East's population, and now this attitude is increasingly being expressed by global opinion leaders. Those who wield the slogan "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free" suggest that Israeli Jews must either be killed, expelled, or subjected to foreign rule.

Many Palestinians live with a sense of humiliation and the belief that they do not have the same rights as Jewish Israelis – this is also one of the sources of the decades-long Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We believe that Palestinians have the right to live in freedom and without restrictions, but they do not have the right to deny the same to Jews – just as the Jews' right to their land cannot mean depriving others of the same right. We believe that all the inhabitants of the region – Jews, Arabs, and ethnic and religious minorities – have the right to live in peace and security within mutually recognized borders.

There is no easy path to this goal. How that path should look must be determined in negotiations by the people of Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza – with the support of the international community. However, this cannot mean a return to the situation before October 7, 2023, when Israel was frequently targeted with rockets from the south and north, fortunately intercepted by the missile defense system.

A peaceful solution may now seem even less attainable than a year ago, but there is no alternative other than painful compromises on both sides. Rejecting them – as we have painfully seen in recent weeks – means further escalation of wars and their spread across the entire region, already ravaged by bloody conflicts that affect millions.

The war in Israel draws particular attention, including in Poland. Part of the public opinion is becoming radically anti-Israel and, in fact, anti-Jewish. Blaming Jews for the world's ills is once again becoming acceptable. We reject this, not least because antisemitic attitudes, even subconsciously, quickly lead to broader xenophobic sentiments, strengthening anti-Muslim and anti-Arab attitudes.

There are currently other wars in the world affecting much larger areas – such as in Ukraine – or where far more people suffer – as in Sudan. However, none command attention comparable to the war in Israel. This is explained in various ways. One explanation is that this tragedy is unfolding in the biblical Holy Land, the Land of Revelation, known in Jewish tradition as the Land of Israel. If we accept this perspective, it becomes natural to recall the prophets who foretold a time when “nation will not lift sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.” Let this remain our guiding light.

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