

ROSH HASHANAH

# GILEE: Jews, Public Safety and the BDS Threat

Criticism of Israel is legitimate, yet the efforts of BDS are not meant to correct flaws in Israel.



By **ROBBIE FRIEDMANN**   
September 13, 2017, 2:58 pm



A GILEE delegation gathers outside the Knesset in Israel in July, 2017

The [International Institute for Counter-Terrorism](#) holds its annual conference in close proximity to Rosh Hashanah, and I have just attended its 17th annual conference, which certainly provided for some good reflection.

The pattern continues: Again, Israel, the United States and many other countries around the world (particularly Belgium, France, Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom) did not have a very good year. The public safety prospects for 5778 are likely looking even worse.

The prospects of increased terrorism loom ever larger. On Monday, Sept. 11, we commemorated 16 years since the worst terrorist atrocity in the world's history.

While the danger to personal safety is still far larger from vehicular accidents, drug abuse, health malpractice, natural disasters and numerous other factors, none captures the same imagination, attention, and often misperception of individuals and states as man-made disasters — namely, terrorism.

Indeed, more of the same continues to be expected this coming year. It is the working assumption among experts that terrorists are planning something more spectacular and horrific than 9/11, and many point to the likelihood of using

nonconventional means to carry out such operations.

For us, as Jews, there is yet another dimension. There is little consolation in the universalization of terrorism around the world — that it is targeting not only Israel and Jews. In that sense, the trouble of many is the consolation of fools.

Of course terrorism is an international menace, and its aims are more than Israel. In fact, to date, the largest group of victims of terror are Muslims killed by Muslims. But that has more to do with the pyrotechnics of terrorism — the mode of attack. If it shoots, explodes, stabs or rams vehicles into people, it gets wide media attention.

But there is another mode of attack that is specifically aimed at Israel and Jews, and that is a modern incarnation of the old anti-Semitism.

On Aug. 20, Palestinian Al-Aqsa mosque cleric Sheik Ali Abu Ahmed criticized the Arab rulers who condemned the Barcelona terror attack as being rulers of the “wicked mini-states” sending weapons to fight in Iraq, Syria, Libya and Yemen instead of fighting the Jews, “the most despicable of Allah’s creations.”

Abu Ahmed prayed to Allah to “annihilate all the Jews” and to “enable us to kill them,” and he was answered with “amen” from his listeners.

While politicians in Israel and some columnists and experts of the day rush to pass judgment that the boycott, divestment and sanctions efforts to undermine Israel have failed, that judgment is premature. Perhaps the economic impact is, for now, less than BDS advocates aim for, but the long-term effect of undermining the very existence of Israel is far from weakening.

BDS activities are not just anti-Israel, but also thoroughly anti-Semitic. Such activities are on an exponential rise on U.S. (and European and other) university campuses, and the vitriolic incitement is often translated into intimidation and violence.

A case in point is France, but it is not limited to that country. That is why Israel has recognized BDS as a strategic threat that needs to be handled seriously.

In that regard, it is encouraging to see that Frankfurt, Germany, has declared BDS as anti-Semitic, and it appears that it will rule its activities illegal. It’s a good role model from Germany to emulate elsewhere.

Criticism of Israel is legitimate, yet the efforts of BDS are not meant to improve and correct flaws in Israel. Rather, BDS aims to eliminate Israel altogether. Under the guise of human rights, BDS is striving to deny those exact rights to Israel and Jews.

The fact that some Jews and Israelis take an active role in the BDS campaign does not make it any less anti-Semitic. It is not who you are but rather what you do that defines your actions.

The BDS movement is attempting to debase Israel’s moral foundation by calling it an “apartheid state,” by claiming that Israel is a “colonialist settler entity,” by saying it “stole the land” from its “rightful owners,” and by making a host of similar, unfounded claims that are nothing less than a modern and sophisticated version of the Big Lie technique.

In Atlanta, as in other cities, BDS is focusing on cutting the ties between local police and the Israel Police through the efforts of a coalition of pro-Palestinian groups joining forces as strange bedfellows driven by “intersectionality.”

Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed has publicly said he is “not going to do that,” and he refused the demand to divest the police budget for other purposes.

This past year the rhetoric has worsened. Now such groups “demand to stop the deadly exchange,” blaming Israel for training U.S. law enforcement to “kill blacks and Native Americans.” Sadly, this campaign has been steered by the so-called Jewish Voice for Peace.

And this is where the gloomy yet realistic characterization of the outgoing and coming years turns optimistic. Reed has demonstrated what public resilience can be in the face of such attacks. More should follow his courageous leadership.

We cannot ignore, wish away or hide from the problem. The onslaught is vigorous, well-funded and deadly serious (metaphorically and physically).

Israel developed an expertise in fighting terrorism, and the Israel Police has accumulated professional and organizational knowledge that makes it one of the best police forces around the world. It works in partnership with sister agencies in many countries and has a great deal to contribute to better policing and is eager to do so.

GILEE is proud to play a role in bringing together law enforcement agencies in closer partnership, not only between Israel and other agencies, but also with many countries and many states. GILEE is proud to mark 25 productive and effective years of service to the community.

These partnerships and knowledge sharing constitute a contribution to and an impact on public safety. Real public safety, not pseudo-human-rights propaganda. In that sense, law enforcement agencies should be viewed as the best protectors of human rights.

Undermining Israel will not contribute to the betterment of life of Palestinians nor of their supporters. By denying Israel what is seen as elementary for anyone else, the BDS efforts are doomed to fail, but only if we proactively cope with this threat.

The lessons of strong partnerships can and should be adapted from police practice to civil society. Partnerships offer an effective way not only to better serve citizens, but also to display fortitude and resoluteness against looming threats.

Perhaps not less important, being proactive through building partnerships provides a moral compass that reinforces our well-being and sends a message to those who wish us harm that we are not to be taken for granted.

With best wishes for a shana tova. May it truly be a good year.

*Robbie Friedmann is the founding director of the Georgia International Law Enforcement Exchange ([www.gilee.org](http://www.gilee.org)) and professor emeritus of criminal justice at Georgia State University's Andrew Young School of Policy Studies.*

**READ MORE:**

• [rosh hashanah](#) • [Opinion](#) • [GILEE](#) • [Columns](#)