

Partnerships Teach Society Lessons

COLUMNS - BY JEWISH TIMES - SEPTEMBER 11, 2015

By Robbie Friedmann | Georgia International Law Enforcement Exchange Founding Director

Writing from Israel (attending the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism's 15th annual counterterrorism conference) on the eve of the new year of 5776, I actually reflect on the Haggadah, which says: "In every generation they rise up against us to destroy us."

Regardless of one's position on the Iran deal, it is hard to ignore the truism of this saying, as seen with the constant Iranian threats to annihilate Israel and similar threats from Hamas, Hezbollah, Al Qaida, Islamic State, scores of other nonstate organizations, and even Arab countries that have peace treaties with Israel (Egypt and Jordan).

These threats were part of Jewish communal existence the past 2,000 years and are now directed against the Jewish state, expressed in vile rhetoric, military preparations, terrorist acts, and the political BDS movement, which is working incessantly to undermine Israel's moral right to exist.

Against these odds Israel has made remarkable and unparalleled achievements and continues to do so with vigorous energy, know-how and determination.

Israel has a political system that renders it ungovernable, and tremendous and valuable resources are wasted on internal political feuds and lack of unity even under times of war. Yet the people's strong spirit of living beyond surviving is evident in every aspect of life in Israel. From science to medicine, from industry to culture, from agriculture to art, and from R&D to export, Israel wants to play at the center of the world and not merely on the cusp of it.

In many metrics Israel is an amazing success story. Israelis would want nothing more than being in the news for all these and not for terrorist acts, security tensions, threats of war and actual war.

Indeed, this proactive spirit is evident and is perhaps worthy of acknowledging. Even as the Middle East is decaying and disintegrating, Israel is seeking not only to protect itself, but also to forge new alliances — some unfathomable until now (Saudi Arabia).

Being proactive is important not only against military threats and terrorism, but also against crime. It is not merely the opposite of being passive. Rather, being proactive means a concentrated effort at understanding what and how a problem is created and therefore focusing on minimizing the likelihood of the problem from developing in the first place.

To a large extent, this is the role of public health agencies, and for the past 20 to 25 years police agencies have adopted this approach, albeit with variable success.

The Israel Police is undergoing a leadership crisis after the forced resignation of several top commanders because of sexual abuse and corruption and is still leaderless because the new commissioner-designate became embroiled in a major public controversy. Yet the organization is strong enough to weather this storm and come out even stronger.

Israel has one national police force that is charged with fighting crime and handling terrorist incidents. Its officers are well trained as versatile public servants and are dedicated and capable.

The Israel Police has accumulated professional and organizational knowledge to make it one of the best police forces around the world. It works in partnerships with many sister agencies in many countries, and it has a great deal to contribute to better policing and is eager to do so.

GILEE is proud to play a role in bringing law enforcement agencies into closer partnerships — not only between Israel and other agencies, but with many countries and many states as well.

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

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

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

