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Judging Israel

Michael Sean Winters | Jun. 1, 2010 NCR Today

The world has rushed to condemn Israel for the deaths of nine so-called pro-Palestinian activists who were killed trying to deliver supplies to Gaza. Israeli forces, which have been enforcing a blockade of Gaza since 2007, seized the vessels and, when met with armed resistance, a firestorm broke out. An investigation will determine what precisely happened to ignite the shooting. But, no investigation is needed to know that anyone who is genuinely concerned about the future of the Palestinian people will recognize that the single most important step towards peace and justice for them is for Hamas to be removed from power in Gaza. A true pro-Palestinian activist would do nothing to aid and abet that criminal regime.

One thing is clear. The pro-Palestinian activists were aiming for a fight. If their goal had been simply to supply the humanitarian needs of the people who live in Gaza, they could have delivered their aid to any one of a number of humanitarian organizations that legally supply Gaza. 15,000 tons of such supplies are delivered by Israel every week. But, the vessels involved in yesterday?s flotilla were carrying building supplies that are banned by the blockade.

Imagine for a moment if the U.S. government knew that a group of sympathizers with Al-Qaeda were delivering supplies to an Al-Qaeda stronghold in Afghanistan. Any commander who permitted the supplies through would be court-martialed. We would rightly consider the sympathizers less sympathetically because they were aiding terrorists. Make no mistake about it, the difference between the Hamas thugs who rule in Gaza and the Al-Qaeda terrorists in Afghanistan is a difference of degree not of kind. This is recognized by no one so much as by the moderate Arab states which, I am sure, are secretly applauding Israel today even while they publicly denounce her. They have more to lose in the struggle with Islamic extremists than anyone.

Evidently, some 120 of the activists on board the flotilla are currently being held in an Israeli jail. Before reaching the conclusion that Israel acted unjustly, ask yourself a quick question. If you were a human rights activist, would you rather be in an Israeli prison or a Hamas one? Or an Egyptian prison? Or a Turkish prison? It may turn out that Israel acted stupidly, or that its military forces acted rashly, but no one should deny that in their struggle against Hamas, their cause is the cause of justice and human rights.

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