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Israel

“Israel prefers a dead soldier over a captured one”: From Protective Edge to Operation Hannibal

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In the Israeli government there are apparently secret admirers of Stalin, who during WWII treated every captured soldier as a traitor. For Israel, a dead soldier is preferable to a captured one. How Operation Protective Edge became Operation Hannibal.

For whatever reason the famous Carthaginian General Hannibal's name was selected for an Israeli military procedure: the Hannibal Protocol. This refers to the directive whose task is to prevent, at all cost, the capture of an Israeli soldier. The protocol determines that the kidnappers must be eliminated, with no consideration for the possibility of harming the soldier; it is clear that Israel prefers a dead soldier over a captured one. According to the Israeli television Channel Two reporter on 1 August, the army has thus far used this directive on three separate occasions, all of which failed.

On Friday 1 August, during Israel's war on Ghetto Gaza, the Hamas fighters succeeded in capturing an Israeli soldier: Second Lieutenant Hadar Goldin, age 23. Immediately following the incident, the Israeli army implemented an expanded Hannibal protocol, i.e. the opening of fire on site and in every possible direction. Amos Harel wrote in Haaretz (3 August): "According to the descriptions, it appears that the army implemented in the most extreme manner ever the Hannibal protocol for disrupting a kidnapping". And indeed, ground forces, tanks and bulldozers, artillery and planes were immediately set in motion in an attempt to prevent the soldier from being captured. Amongst other things, the air force used one tonne bunker busters with the aim of killing the captive along with his captors. Operation Protective Edge thus became Operation Hannibal.

The speed and effectiveness of the Israeli response is not simply a result of technological developments or rigorous training, but a protocol tried in the past and studied thoroughly. An attempt was made in the past to implement this directive on Gilad Shalit, two years after his capture. At the time this protocol was hidden under another name given to the operation: Cast Lead. It isn't nice to repeat one's own words, but this is an unfortunate necessity when your country repeats its follies, similar to a dog returning to his own vomit. At the height of that war, on 15 January 2009, I wrote:

"Why has Israel embarked on a war at this time against the huge ghetto in Gaza, killed over 1,000 Palestinians, awakened mass fury in almost all countries, committed war crimes that will supply material to international courts for many years to come and demolished a 360 kilometre strip of land with shelling, phosphorous bombs and bunker busters? Who is the underground enemy sought after by the war's initiators, Barak, Livni and Olmert? The answer is as simple as it is horrifying: Gilad Shalit.

The Israeli captive, the price of whom they are bargaining over for two years, has become the symbol of their failure and incompetence in everything concerning state leadership. Whether they would free Palestinian captives with 'blood on their hands', as they say, in exchange for the freeing of the Israeli soldier, or whether they would continue to refuse a prisoner exchange and leave Gilad in prison, the public - with encouragement of the challenger Netanyahu - would have ripped them to shreds in the ballot box. Their sole choice was between political death or political suicide.

And thus the captive soldier, whose leaders were not willing to exchange him for Palestinian captives, became the common enemy of Livni and Barak. Would Shalit's disappearance from the scene be a side benefit of the war or, no less possible, was it the primary goal of the operation, with the incitement and war atmosphere so loved by politicians merely a side benefit? This question will obviously remain open. With the facts, however, one cannot argue: the government of Israel refused every suggestion for continuing the calm in the south. Instead of this it sent out its flying

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hangmen of the air force. Israel was equipped with the same bombs created by the Americans for the holes in which Saddam Hussein did not keep his weapons of mass destruction, and the phosphorous bombs which generate fires and consume the oxygen in basements, tunnels and shelters. So far Gilad Shalit has survived two years in the Hamas prison. Will he also succeed in surviving the bombs sent to complete the Hannibal protocol? “Gilad Shalit indeed managed to survive the attempts of the state in whose army he served to eliminate him. Following a public campaign and five years in captivity, he was exchanged for more than 1,000 Palestinian captives. Unlike Shalit, Second Lieutenant Goldin didn't succeed in surviving the targeted assassination of our forces. So as not to again be in a situation of prisoner exchange, Israel is willing to commit every conceivable crime. In the process of 'verifying and killing' the Israeli captive, Israel caused the "collateral damage" in the form of a slaughter of more than 120 uninvolved Palestinians, men, women and children. In total in the current war on Gaza, some 1,800 people have been murdered and 9,000 injured, a majority of them civilians.

There is no escaping the conclusion that in the Israeli government there are apparently secret admirers of Stalin, who during WWII treated every captured soldier as a traitor. Stalin at least openly admitted this. His hidden admirers in the Israeli leadership are not only despicable, but also cowards. Every Hebrew mother should know what the possible future of her soldier son could be, when in Gaza a process of genocide is taking place. What will be the fate of the soldiers participating in this process, if they are caught by the enemy, and who then will be the real enemy that will take their lives?

At the stage in which no proof was yet found concerning Goldin's death, when Israel announced it will leave Gaza, many patriots suggested treating the 1.8 million residents of Gaza as an enemy in time of war. According to the suggestion of Professor Bligh of Ariel University and Major General (ret.) Giora Eiland, Israel must halt the supply of food, electricity and water to Gaza residents, in order to create an overall civil disaster that would force Hamas to return the soldier or his body.

On Saturday night, 2 August, Israel announced to the family of Second Lieutenant Hadar Goldin that a rabbinical committee had determined the death of their son. It forgot to also announce that this is the first victory of the Hannibal protocol, which essentially determines that a dead soldier is better than a captive one. It is now clearer why the code name for this directive was made in remembrance of the warlord of Carthage. In the State of the Phoenicians, there was a custom to sacrifice sons to the local god, Melqart, in order to preserve unity and security of the people.

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