


# UK Oct. 7 Commission Report Chills and Instructs

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By Peter Berkowitz

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Last week, following Iran-backed Hamas' rejection of America's proposal to extend the Jan. 19 Gaza ceasefire and release all 59 hostages, the Jewish state resumed military strikes. The renewed fighting makes it all the more important to recall the scope, magnitude, and goal of the jihadists' surprise attack on the Jewish state on Oct. 7, 2023. On that terrible Sabbath, Hamas gleefully executed an elaborate plan to massacre civilians in southern Israel. The terrorists killed some 1,200 persons, mostly civilians; raped women; mutilated bodies; kidnapped 251, mostly civilians; and plunged the Jewish state into a Tehran-sponsored, multi-front regional war.

Coming to grips with the deadliest and most gruesome assault on Jews since the Holocaust is about more than scrupulous historical bookkeeping and clarifying the near-term and long-term causes of today's fighting. Grasping the jihadists' war aims, tactics, and atrocities is crucial to understanding the threats faced not only by Israel but also by the United States and other rights-protecting democracies.

Several factors beyond the ordinary passage of time obscure the Oct. 7 horrors and their larger implications.

In general, as the digital revolution deluges the world with information, attention spans decline, intellectual standards deteriorate, and predilections for the shallow, juvenile, and vitriolic proliferate.

More specifically, vicious anti-Israel propagandists, often driven by hatred of America, work assiduously to invert reality. They portray Israelis as the perpetrators and the Palestinians as the victims of the sexual violence and attacks on civilians in which Hamas reveled on Oct. 7. The most prominent recent example is the report issued earlier this month by the notoriously anti-Israel United Nations Human Rights Council. Despite lacking access to Israel's rules of engagement, the UNHRC's Commission of Inquiry accused the Jewish state of committing against Palestinians the very war crimes – many of which were captured in living color on the terrorists' GoPro cameras – that on Oct. 7 Hamas perpetrated against Israeli civilians. In the process, the UN commission altered well-accepted evidentiary standards. "In a shameless attempt to incriminate the IDF [Israel Defense Forces] and manufacture the illusion of 'systematic' use of SGBV [Sexual and Gender Based Violence], the CoI [Commission of Inquiry] deliberately adopts a lower level of corroboration in its report, which allowed it to

include information from second-hand single uncorroborated sources,” stated The Permanent Mission of Israel to the United Nations in Geneva. “This is inconsistent with established UN verification standards and methodologies.”

Furthermore, Hamas’ war of extermination against Israel – including Iran’s additional anti-Israel fronts in Judea and Samaria, Lebanon, Iraq, Yemen, and Tehran itself (in December 2024, the Syrian front collapsed with the fall of Iran-backed dictator Bashar al-Assad’s government) – shrouds the jihadists’ Oct. 7 savagery. Western diplomats, fueled by Biden administration diplomacy, have tended to view Israel and Hamas as mutually aggrieved parties who should accept a ceasefire and negotiate a hostilities-ending compromise. Since, however, Israel had no designs on Gaza, and Hamas undertook to destroy Israel, the Biden administration from the outset should have led other nations to consistently and forcefully demand Hamas’ unconditional surrender and immediate release of all hostages.

The jihadists’ key tactics, moreover, flagrantly violated the international laws of war. These prohibit the targeting of civilians. They also require combatants to wear uniforms to distinguish themselves from civilians and to operate apart from their own civilian populations. Yet as part of a war plan years in the making, the jihadists targeted Israeli civilians and civilian infrastructure; dressed as civilians; and, conducting military operations in and under Gaza’s cities, used noncombatant Palestinians as human shields and Palestinian civilian infrastructure as fortifications.

Hamas turned Palestinian residential neighborhoods into combat zones not only to lure Israelis into back-alley ambushes and booby-trapped buildings but also to ensure that Israel’s exercise of its right of self-defense would produce appalling collateral damage. Hamas could then exploit Palestinian civilian casualties and tens of thousands of tons of rubble to portray Israel as a lawless aggressor. This grotesque propaganda has proved effective among the gullible, the blinkered, and the dogmatically partisan, who are disproportionately represented in international tribunals and commissions and among formers of global public opinion.

Released on March 18, the 318-page “7 October Parliamentary Commission Report” counters the forgetting, the propaganda, and the fog of war by meticulously describing the jihadists’ war plans and their execution of the slaughter. Lord Roberts of Belgravia – Andrew Roberts is a master historian and author of more than 20 books dealing predominantly with diplomatic and military affairs – chaired the All-Party Parliamentary Group for UK-Israel, which produced the extensively documented and chilling report.

Driven by moral outrage at the evils Hamas inflicted on Israel, the Roberts report’s purpose and methodology reflect the spirit of coroner and pathologist rather than that of judge and jury. Addressing the widespread denial, coverup, and celebration of the Oct. 7 attacks, the report aims “to lay down incontrovertible proof – for now and for the years to come – that

nearly 1,200 innocent people were indeed murdered by Hamas and its allies, and very often in scenes of sadistic barbarism not seen in world history since the Rape of Nanjing in 1937.” To that end, the report draws on the historian’s traditional tools. “By compiling survivor testimonies, eyewitness accounts, first responder narratives, and expert analyses, this project has sought to create an authoritative historical record,” writes the commission. “This report will serve as an enduring resource for governments, educators, and civil society, safeguarding the truth against denialism and distortion.” After reviewing the harrowing facts painstakingly set forth by the report, no competent judge and jury will reasonably doubt the odiousness of Hamas’ war crimes and the malignancy of its mission.

The Roberts report illuminates the Oct. 7 massacre by placing it in political and ideological context. Following Israel’s 2005 withdrawal from Gaza and, in 2007, Hamas’ violent ouster of the Palestinian Authority, the terrorists built up their arsenal of mortars and rockets. The IDF undertook several operations in Gaza between 2008 and 2023 to counter Hamas’ aerial bombardments of civilian targets in Israel. Gross violations of the international laws of war, Hamas’ attacks on Israeli noncombatants were from the jihadists’ perspective skirmishes in a large-scale undertaking. As the report observes, Hamas’ “1988 charter called for the murder of Jews, the destruction of Israel, and in her place, the establishment of an Islamic state in ‘historic Palestine.’”

The report focuses on the attack itself. At 6:29 a.m. on Oct. 7, under the cover of thousands of mortar shells and rockets, jihadists at approximately 24 points burst through the border fence protecting Israel from Gaza. Other terrorists flew on paragliders and invaded by sea. Some 7,000 individuals took part in the assault. While Hamas coordinated the attack, around 2,200 combatants from among Gaza’s 16 or so other terrorist groups also joined in the murder and mayhem. Palestinian civilians, including women and children, exploited the chaos and carnage to invade Israel and plunder and lay waste to Israel’s besieged communities. Many individual Israeli police officers, soldiers, internal security services members, and civilians fought valiantly to fend off the onslaught, but the military establishment and the political echelon were caught flatfooted. It took Israel until around 9 p.m. on Oct. 8 to regain control over the Gaza Envelope (the southern Israeli communities near Gaza).

The death toll was staggering, both relative to Israel’s small population of roughly 9.8 million and in absolute terms. “It was the deadliest per capita terrorist attack since the Global Terrorism Database started data collection in 1970, with just over 1 person killed per every 10,000 Israelis,” according to the Roberts report. “The 7 October 2023 attacks are also the third deadliest terrorist attack to date, following the 11 September 2001 attack perpetrated by al Qaeda that killed nearly 3,000 people in the United States, and the Camp Speicher massacre in Iraq by the Islamic State in June 2014 that killed approximately 1,700 people.”

Hamas' cruelty to the hostages – male and female, and infants to the elderly – eviscerated civilized norms. “During the hostage taking process, several of the hostages were subject to abuse captured in video footage,” the report states. “The abuse included both physical assault, verbal abuse, sexual assault and humiliating and degrading treatment.” Worse was in store for the hostages who reached Gaza alive. “Based on the testimony and medical assessments of hostages who have been released, the abuse of hostages” held in Gaza “has included sunlight deprivation, starvation, binding, beatings, sexual abuse, and other degrading and humiliating treatment.”

The jihadists' use of sexual violence as a weapon of war was premeditated down to the issuance of commands in Hebrew. “Phrasebooks found on the bodies of Hamas militants included translations for ‘Take your clothes off!’ ‘Spread your legs!’ ‘Get down!’” according to the report.

Such depravity stems from ruthless Islamist indoctrination. Consequently, the next ceasefire, or even formal termination of hostilities, is bound to fall far short of bringing peace to Israel or stability to the region.

There will be no rest for Israel – or for rights-protecting democracies at a distance from the front lines – until the Islamists throughout the Middle East cease educating their children to hate Jews, Israel, America, and the West.

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