

A View from the CT Foxhole: Colonel (Ret.) Miri Eisin, Director, International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT)

By Sean Morrow and Asher Spain

Retired Colonel Miri Eisin is the Director of the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT) at Reichman University in Herzliya, Israel. Miri has a deep background in the intelligence, security, and diplomacy worlds, and is a frequent commentator on these issues in world media. During her 20 years in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), she served in a variety of positions, including the intelligence officer of a regional border brigade, the intel officer of the Israeli airborne division, and the assistant to the Director of Military Intelligence. As a full colonel, she served as the Deputy Head of the Combat Intelligence Corps. In all her positions, she was the first woman to serve in such a capacity.

After retiring from the military, Eisin served as the Israeli government spokesperson during the Second Lebanon War in 2006, and as international press secretary to Prime Minister Ehud Olmert.

CTC: Tell us a little bit about the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism's mission and how your service in the Israeli military and government prepared you to lead this organization.

Eisin: The International Institute for Counter-Terrorism [ICT] was established almost 30 years ago. Its mission is to look at both terrorism and counterterrorism as both an academic disciplinary that can impact and evolve into policy and making all of the practitioners do a better job. It was 'invented,' if that's the right term, before 9/11 in the mid-1990s with that idea of bringing into the room all of the interdisciplinary aspects that have to do with countering the terrorist threats in the world. Our main mission today is making the terrorism threat clear and trying to put together policy ideas and answers for counterterrorism practitioners.

I come from a very military background, [specifically] military intelligence. I had a lot of diverse positions within the Israeli defense forces, mainly in intel positions: S2 of a brigade, G2 of a division of our Israeli airborne division, in the research departments. I think that what I bring in is on the one hand, the practitioner's background, meaning I was inside in those arenas where you need to act. But I've been out of that for a long time, and I really do feel that what we grow inside as practitioners is something that we also need to look at from the outside. It's to help and to make the practitioners even better. Maybe we can look at things differently.

And I really do feel that stepping into this position, I kid you not, on Sunday, October 8th, it's not exactly the thing that I would wish on anybody in the sense that all of our approach to terror—terror tactics, terror armor, all the terms we use—and towards counterterrorism—how we responded or did not respond—everything is so shaken right now. I really do feel that I'm stepping in at a time when it is helpful to bring in new ideas that are pertinent

and will help us face the challenges better in the future.

CTC: ICT, for years on the anniversary of 9/11, has organized one of the world's largest and best annual conferences on counterterrorism, that brings together scholars and practitioners from around the world. This year, you'll move that to October, which is a very important symbolic move. Can you talk about these gatherings and how they create increased collaboration, smarter counterterrorism, and just strengthening allies?

Eisin: When you're talking about counterterrorism, it's not a singular event. Israel is at the forefront. So is the United States. But if you go down the 198 countries, they all have challenges, even if they each approach it differently. The International Conference every year at ICT—and it's a conference that's been around for over 20 years, that's a very long time—it started before 9/11. And as 9/11 was from our perspective the worst, most horrific terror attack until October 7, we held our conference in September to reflect on that horrific attack, to understand what it meant. Boaz Ganor, the founder of ICT and now the president of Reichman University, and I decided at the beginning of November that it would be helpful to lean on our network—all of these practitioners, together with academics, both police and the military, together with different types of governmental officials to figure out how to better contend with terror including what we were wrong about.

At the conference, we'll bring people together and talk about these different challenges: What has changed? What surprised us? What surprised us may surprise others in the future. Let's think about that. Let's not be surprised again. What will the next surprise be because we missed this one? Just like in that sense 9/11 was unprecedented, now 10/7 is, and the conference will be about bringing in the practitioners, the academics, the governments from all over and putting them together, thinking about it, talking about it, and going out with new ideas. You can't do that just by writing in journals. At the conference, everybody comes together, and it is really in that sense a very unique place to be.

CTC: You've spent much of your career thinking about terrorism threats. Talk us through that difficult day of October 7.

Eisin: Just like every single person on 9/11, you can ask any Israeli, 'Where were you?' For Israelis with October 7th, it's a series of moments. It isn't just when the first plane hit and the second plane hit. It's the siren. Where were you when the sirens went off? Because the attack itself was a multi-tiered attack that we're trying now to conceptualize because it brought about a new kind of *modus operandi*. But on the personal note, the siren goes off. To understand how wrong I was, my husband and my kids and I were like, 'Is that the beginning of an attack by Hezbollah?' Because in the

years before, all of us were waiting for a very similar kind of attack to be carried out by Hezbollah in the north. So when the sirens initially went off, we're like, 'Is that Hezbollah?' We immediately saw that it was from the south, and we did not understand what it was.

Stage number two is that by 8:20am, I had a much better grasp of what was going on because of what we had looked at for five years: Hezbollah practicing with their Radwan forces up north. The concern was they would launch a multi-force, multi-pronged [attack] from the air, the land, and the sea entering into the communities and villages, attacking simultaneously and taking hostages.

You take that scenario and by 8:20 [you immediately] understood that that's the scenario that's happening down south, only nobody was prepared for it down south. Nobody was looking at it down south. And it's that sense of this is not really happening. The third stage—that I don't think you can really understand overseas—is for the next two to three and almost four days, Hamas literally occupied an area inside our state. They didn't do it and plant a flag. They didn't come in necessarily intending to do so, but they physically occupied. They were in 25 different communities, five different military bases, and we had to reoccupy it.

There were two things that on October 7th absolutely surprised me. One was the military breadth of the planning of what was a military terror attack: to simultaneously do rockets, missiles, air assaults under that cover. This is a new kind of *modus operandi*. It is not the same as what ISIS did in Syria and Iraq. We're talking here about a quasi-state element that has ruled over a territory for over 15 years that prepared this. It's a ragtag army, but the plan in itself was a very structured plan that you understand immediately in hindsight.

The second thing that shocked me to the core that I still can't grasp, is the unthinkability of it. Why do I say unthinkability? I could not think of the kind of atrocities they did. As terrorism and counterterrorism experts, you have to understand the other side. You have to think like the other side. That's part of how you counter it. But it was unthinkable. We knew atrocities were committed by ISIS against the Yazidis, yet none of us here projected that onto a potential attack. Not by Hezbollah, not by Hamas. So that's the unthinkability.

When you don't train troops to expect atrocities, when they meet the atrocities, it absolutely impacts their capability to respond. And the worst day in the State of Israel on October 7th was the aspect of what happened to the first responders. Because overwhelmingly, the 300 military and police that were killed on October 7th were the first responders, and everybody's like, 'Why were they not able to do more?' According to those who survived, when they came in, they weren't expecting the military capabilities, because Hamas built a military plan. They did ambushes, and the first responders weren't expecting that. When you go in and you see an Israeli soldier's body whose head has been cut off, and you recognize that it's the uniform, no head ... how do you continue to fight? Do you just ignore that? There's a huge difference when you see somebody on your own who's been injured. That's one of those things that you train a lot for: You're supposed to take care of the injured and go forward. And so when I talk about our immediate military response to October 7th, I'm saying, 'In training, I hate to tell you, we have to start teaching people this because it already makes a difference by thinking about the unthinkable.'

CTC: You touched on it a little bit, specifically with the unthinkability and the broad, massive scale of the conflict. But prior to your role at ICT, you served in a variety of senior intelligence positions, and October 7th was perhaps the biggest intelligence failure in the history of Israel, on par with U.S. failures prior to 9/11. From your perspective, what went wrong, and what lessons can be learned?

Eisin: I'm going to tell you a story and then I'm going to answer. October 6 was the 50-year anniversary of the outbreak of the 1973 Day of Atonement War. We immigrated to Israel in '71, and I have memories of the 1973 war. I was in 6th grade, and my dad was drafted in the 1973 war. He was away for like four months. I know friends whose parents were killed. For me, it's something from the past, but what Israel had done in this very complex year of 2023 is in the months leading up to the 50-year anniversary, there was a lot going on, educational-wise, about 50 years since the 1973 war. And one of the biggest education endeavors was happening inside Israeli military intelligence because the colossal failure of military intelligence before October 6th, 1973, allowing on October 6 two full, standing conventional armies to attack Israel simultaneously at two in the afternoon on the Day of Atonement, and basically, nobody saw it coming. I mean, yes, a few knew, but nobody did anything.

I mention that because on Thursday, October 5th, 2023, I was doing a lot of speaking as an officer: 'What have we learned?' Because I'm a different generation. I was a kid in the '73 war, but my military intelligence career was very impacted by the military intelligence failure of 1973. We were taught all sorts of different aspects that you look not just at intentions but at capabilities, because it's very difficult to know what the intentions are. So maybe you think they don't mean to do so, but if they have the capability to do so, you may have to have a different kind of posture. On the other hand, you can't build your defense posture based on all of the capabilities, because then we won't have anything in Israel except for bomb shelters and military units. It's always that balance. It's about early warning, how you do early warning.

I say all of this because in Israel, we were talking a lot about these issues and the need for early warning, but it was all about military adversaries in the region and Hezbollah. But not about Hamas. It was never mentioned by me nor by anybody else. On October 5th, 2023, in the evening, I was asked to participate in a TV live panel: three retired colonels and the panel itself was about 50 years since the intelligence failure of the 1973 war. I was asked the first question: 'Could the failure of October 6, 1973, happen again?' And on October 5th, 2023, at 7:15 in the evening, live on TV, I said, 'Absolutely. Tomorrow morning.'

There was a big conference recently at Tel Aviv University about the methodology of intelligence, and I was on a panel which was talking about failures in the intelligence. It's something that we're talking about a lot here. It's important to recognize that you can always fail. You can fail because we don't think like a terrorist. But I'm aware that I don't think like a terrorist. That's the blind spot in that sense where I know I don't think like them, so I try to think my way out of that. In this case, there was an overall failure at all levels in which everybody was looking at Hamas in a similar way—basically, group think. Not only was there an underestimation of Hamas capabilities, everyone was wrong that Hamas didn't have the intention to carry out such an attack.



Colonel (Ret.) Miri Eisin

If somebody would ask me now, I would say that October 7th could happen again. Just like October 6th, 1973, the exact same scenario won't happen, that one we know. And 9/11 won't happen again because that one you know. Terrorism is inventive. Militaries are inventive. That's part of the whole art of war in that sense. And you need to be aware of the gap, that you can be surprised, which is why you always need to have a certain amount of forces because you don't know how you're going to be surprised.

We were too reliant on technology in our defenses. Because they took out the technological capabilities at the beginning of the attack, and that helped them very much in creating the chaos of that first day of that infiltration/invasion/attack. I don't know what to call it because I have not seen a *modus operandi* like that before from a terror organization, and they're not really a military organization, but they did something military, while also using terror tactics.

The last thing I'll say is that in special operations, especially in all of my military career, one of the things that I always found is that it's amazing how people don't see the elephant in the room because they don't think that there's supposed to be an elephant in the room. Again, these are built-in blind spots. It means that we have to call it out more. We have to look at this issue more as it was at the center of the intelligence failure. All of us made wrong assumptions, and the combination of all of them brought about a colossal failure. There were many incorrect assumptions, not one. We collectively were wrong about the capability. We were wrong about the intentions. We were wrong about the ferocity.

We were all surprised by their use of motorcycles and the pickup trucks. But of course, we knew they had motorcycles and pickup trucks. Why weren't we looking at that? We knew they'd been practicing at this forever. They showed different places where they were practicing. Why didn't we connect the dots? In hindsight, you're always smart. We're still trying to understand what went wrong. It was a colossal failure of the intelligence, on the operational

side, and also of the decision-making at the top level. In this sense, it's not the same at all as 9/11. I want to be very clear. The colossal failure is not like 9/11. Israel has a border with the Gaza Strip. We have an enmity relationship with that quasi-state over there. We have had a very long-term policy towards Hamas, meaning it's in *that* context we also made so many mistakes.

CTC: As you have already noted, the scale and the brutality of 7 October took a lot of people by surprise. Can you just speak to that as you sit at that boundary of practitioner and scholar?

Eisin: Speaking to the scale, on October 7th some 1,135 people were murdered inside Israel. The early numbers that came out was because there were so many bodies and they counted some of the terrorist bodies. Some of the terrorists were wearing Israeli uniforms. That identification has taken a long time.

When it comes to the brutality, Hamas is a terror organization based inside the Muslim Brotherhood; it's not the Islamic State, al-Qa`ida, nor has it previously behaved like them, so I think that we were all taken aback, appalled, surprised. It was totally just unthinkable in that sense. The level of atrocities and brutality. What I assess now and didn't understand then, is that Hamas over the last few years became both more extreme religiously and also took tactics from ISIS into its paramilitary structure. This is the first time ever for us in the 75 years of Israel that we have seen sexual violence being used as weapon of war against us, when it comes to the atrocities that were committed. Now, I'm a practitioner academic and am well aware that in many conflicts—World War II, the conflicts in Africa, Russia, Ukraine—sexual violence is used as a tool of war. We all know this, right? But it was never in our arena.

On October 7, Hamas for the first time used the very extreme jihadi terror tactics we saw used extensively by the Islamic State against the Yazidis. Why as an intelligence community in Israel were we not thinking that this could be a possibility? We did not see that change in Hamas. Right now, what I'm trying to learn is why weren't we looking at it, why weren't understanding it? And one of the questions that's coming up for us right now is, 'OK, so are Hezbollah different?' Because when we've been doing war game scenarios for a military-style attack by air, land, and sea by Hezbollah, we've addressed the possibility that they may attack communities and carry out kidnappings. Just not the brutality.

CTC: Hezbollah's arsenal is publicly estimated to be up to 150,000 rockets and missiles to include precision long range.¹ It's a much greater security threat to Israel than Hamas ever was. And since 7 October, about 80,000 Israelis have had to flee the north, and there's concern that Hezbollah could launch a surprise cross-border attack similar to October 7th.² What are your views about the challenge posed by Hezbollah right now and some courses of action available to protect against those threats?

Eisin: We're six months into a war. Israel and Hezbollah are at war. I state that categorically. Apart from a very brief lull during the ceasefire in Gaza, Hezbollah has attacked Israel every single day from October 8th. Every single day. Sometimes a dozen times. Sometimes two times. We're talking physically attacking inside the state of Israel with that vast array of weaponry that they have. So this isn't about a future war that could happen. We're already in it.

It's limited. It's in a limited arena, but each side broadens every once in a while. Hezbollah during the first month or two was attacking into Israel with all the different type of weaponries but into a limited area. Five to seven kilometers from the border. And that brought about both the planned evacuation and unplanned evacuation of almost 40 different communities. The city of Kiryat Shmona, they're living in other places because you can't live in proximity to the border right now because Hezbollah is firing in.

Israel initially retaliated, meaning they fired and we fired back. Israeli tactics have changed up north, and here, I am saying tactics that are part of a strategy. For the first month and a half, we were very, very involved with what was happening down in the Gaza Strip against Hamas. But Israel then changed its approach on the Northern Front to preemption to prevent Hezbollah from defining the rules of the game. It can't be that they define what goes on; we will preempt. Preempting means one, attacking Hezbollah units not after they fire, but *before* they fire. That takes enormously accurate intelligence. Two, it means doing this not just in the limited arena that Hezbollah gets to define, but where Israel wants to do so, which means it's not just right next to the border. It's a bit further in. It's not just further in; it's in Beirut. It's not just further in and in Beirut, it's in the Beqaa Valley, and it's in Syria. And the upping of that stage is the fact that at the end, all of the capabilities that Hezbollah has from A-Z period come from the Iranian regime. And then there is the connection between Hezbollah and the Iranian Revolutionary Guards through the Quds Force and the Supreme leader himself.

So, Hezbollah attacked us, and we're not letting them define the rules. We're defining the new rules. The Iranian regime, Quds Force, and the different Iranian and Hezbollah elements both in Syria and Lebanon are not going to define what happens. And Israel went on to preemption. It's a military response, but it has strategic implications. We're living them right now because Israel in December and January already killed top Iranian Revolutionary Guard, Persian-speaking generals sitting in Damascus, who were responsible for the transfer of the logistics to Hezbollah, which means all of the weaponry. The general who was killed in Damascus on April 1—Mohammad Reza Zahedi—was the highest-ranking that Israel has ever taken out; [that] also contributed towards changing the rules of the game.³

Hezbollah until now have had 290 and climbing Hezbollah terror fighter casualties. And Hezbollah, very different from Hamas, have been publicly acknowledging every single one of them. They put it out on their social media, with the photograph and where they're from in Lebanon. And it's fascinating [as an] academic as I look at this, because I need to understand why, when Hezbollah was fighting for Bashar Assad, in the decade fighting in the war in Syria, Hezbollah would never publish any of their casualties, and our estimates were always that a good 1,000 Hezbollah terror fighters were killed in Syria. But you never knew. Every once in a while, you'd see there's a funeral here. It was all very low key. But in this conflict, in their minds they're fighting for al-Quds, a much more important battle than that in Syria. That's what really concerns me. Hezbollah is talking with Hamas, and suddenly, we are dealing with Hamas-Hezbollah, with both connected to the regime in Iran.

The Hezbollah threat is Hamas on steroids. It's the best trained Iranian proxy. It's not 15,000 rockets, it's 150,000 rockets. It's the guided capabilities, the distance. The range of Hezbollah missiles cover the entire length and breadth of the state of Israel. They can fire 5,000 rockets a day for a lot of days. They can fire in hundreds

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of drones/UAVs at a time. And how much can our military capacity stop, prevent, intercept? Will our military be able to protect civilians? Hezbollah will do it at the same time on all of the cities.

CTC: We talked about Hezbollah and their direct threat to you on your border. Can you talk about just a little bit about their external operations capability and interests?

Eisin: Hezbollah named their special forces Radwan Force after Imad Mughniyeh, their top terrorist who was killed in February 2008 in the heart of Damascus. Hezbollah, of course, blamed Israel at the time, and they named the Radwan Force after him. His code name was 'Radwan.' The force was only established after Imad Mughniyeh was killed, and I say 'in his honor' but it's also to commemorate the fact that he was the top terror military planner. He is the one who planned and executed attacks against U.S. Marines and against French Marines and against an endless number of Israelis and Jews around the world. As I said, [he was] killed in 2008, and the force that they built is to me the new type of terror military forces that we need to be looking at worldwide because both Hezbollah and Hamas are like these hybrid armies. They build militaries that have a military-type of command with an enormous amount of weaponry, but they add in those terror tactics that no normal military would ever even think of doing, as they're unthinkable. What they've built is a force of thousands of ... I don't like using the word 'soldiers' because they're terrorists, but they are very well-trained military terrorists who have a lot of capability. It's like having an elite infantry force that is on motorcycles and pickup trucks, similar perhaps to what we saw with ISIS, but ISIS was not an elite military-trained force. Here, we're talking about an elite military-trained force that's been trained for years [and] what it's supposed to do is something similar to what Hamas did on October 7.

In hindsight, the Hamas Nukhba Force^a was pretty well trained up to a point. But Hezbollah has more military-trained terrorists than Hamas ever had. And they are Lebanese Shiites. They live in the villages that are along the border with Israel.

They have some of the same weaponry as Hamas, but they have way more because they have ATGMs [anti-tank guided missiles]. They have way more short- and long-range guided missiles and a variety of different types of drones/UAVs with different type

a Editor's Note: The Nukhba force, Hamas' commando unit, spearheaded the October 7 attack on Israel. See, for example, "Ministers okay prison visit to October 7 Hamas terrorists by foreign monitors," *Times of Israel*, April 25, 2024.

of payloads mainly come from Iran's military industry. Over the past six months, they've used them to attack military installations in Israel. They put out the videos to show that they're doing so, meaning they're filming the attack. They're putting out videos showcasing their advanced anti-tank missiles, the ones that have the viewers. It's an Iranian production of a Russian prototype that they're using. So we're talking third generation-type missiles that they're using, and then they're putting out the footage so it's also information warfare.

When it came to the Hamas attack on October 7, we saw only—I can say the word 'only'—1,500 to 2,000 Nukhba terror soldiers because after that, a lot of riffraff came in—very barbaric riffraff down south. But Hezbollah has 5,000 Radwan military-trained forces, and they pose a potentially very dangerous threat when it comes to a ground attack. What Israel has been demanding is that all of the Radwan Forces move north away from the border. Easier said than done. I can think of no international force anywhere in the world, except for Israel, who actually will implement that. Because the people live there. How exactly do you get them to not be there next to the border?

CTC: Do you think that Hezbollah has interests or capabilities to do anything in Europe or Latin America?

Eisin: Hezbollah is already in Europe and Latin America. It's also in Asia (Malaysia, Indonesia) and Africa. As a research institution I think we need to focus more on the Hezbollah threat in Europe. We're seeing Hamas cells now in Europe.⁴

CTC: I'd like to jump to a question about information operations and just how important they've been in the current conflict. Can you talk about the state of Israel and the IDF, and what they're doing to shape the narrative of what's going on?

Eisin: So sadly, I'm going to say that to me, the one part that we're doing very, very poorly and that I think that Hamas and Hezbollah but more so Hamas within the Palestinian world are doing very well is in the information warfare.

As part of and following the October 7 attack, Hamas has waged information warfare. And what Hamas did is essentially it put out two parallel narratives. The narratives were pushed out in different social medias. One narrative was to terrorize the people of the State of Israel whereby Hamas used the social media platforms of their victims, broadcasting people's murder to their friends via Facebook Live.

On October 7th, 1,135 Israelis were killed; 25,000 Israelis witnessed with their own eyes murder down south, but [an] additional 150,000 people saw via social media murder live, and again, that was the terrorizing aspect. This was planned and then executed.

Hamas has also put out a parallel narrative out on social media platforms in Arabic on Telegram and WhatsApp that were overwhelmingly either footage from GoPros together with what can be called 'quasi journalists' that came in with them to put out a certain narrative. The aim of that narrative was to inspire their supporters because it showed the humiliation of the Israelis.

Information warfare is something we do poorly as a country because we think we're right and everybody else is wrong, so that we don't necessarily think we have to explain. Or more correctly,

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we think we'll just explain it, and you'll understand. We also made a lot of mistakes that have to do with our explaining. And we were so overwhelmed by the atrocities of October 7th, and as it went on and we said all sorts of things, the gap between the two narratives has only gotten broader.

And this brings me to what [we] can provide at ICT. We can help properly frame the narrative. What Hamas puts out is 'we the oppressed are going against the oppressor. We who have been humiliated are now humiliating the other side.' But this mistakes the reality. When you sit and read Hamas' charter, like I did again on Saturday afternoon, October 7th, you remember that in their charter, in addition to everything else, there is horrific antisemitism, hate, [and] racism.

CTC: What lessons do you think Israel has learned from the current conflict?

Eisin: As of now, we haven't yet. I say it sadly. We are a country in trauma, and trauma does not help learning. We'll get there. It's more than the 136 hostages. It's the 136 hostages that have families and friends. It's that circle. At this stage, we've had something like 1,650 Israelis and servicemembers that have been killed in the last six months, and that's an additional circle. It's that we're fighting every single day, not just against Hamas in the Gaza Strip, but also against Hezbollah, let alone that we're all aware of the fact that the Houthis are firing at us and Hezbollah and Iraq are firing at us and Shia militias in Syria are firing at us.

I think that the added [value] of institutes like ICT is that with everybody fighting a war, even though we're all in trauma, we're trying to bring in new ideas. We can't just dwell on how we were so colossally wrong, but we also need to think about how we can better meet the challenge of the moment, for example by harnessing the power of technology in our warfighting.

CTC: You mentioned technology in your answer. Both the conflict within Israel and Gaza and Ukraine and Russia has seen a massive increase in use of drones, including household drones. How do you see intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance using drones evolving?

Eisin: The drones are something that you can buy on the shelf anywhere. Go online and buy yourself a household drone. As you

say, Hamas' initial attack on Saturday used them extensively both as suicide drones and as reconnaissance. They used a lot of them, because it's a very easy way to amplify the impact of an attack. You put a payload on it, and it has the capability to go somewhere and then you land it onto a target and it explodes. Hezbollah has such drones on steroids.

For our Israeli forces, drones are an 'eye over the hill.' One of the most important things that we learned in Israel and this horrible war in the Gaza Strip is that the most important part is terrain analysis, so you know what you are looking at. When it comes to the combat intelligence level, this war has been an enormous success in terms of the capabilities that that have been brought to bear in targeting, and I say that acknowledging the fact that Israeli forces have unintentionally killed many uninvolved civilians.

CTC: The campaign since 7 October has fractured Hamas and removed thousands of terrorists from the battlefield. But as you note, it has also exacted a heavy civilian toll. Can you address these costs and their impact?

Eisin: In answering this question, it's important to note that Hamas was a quasi-state that was in the Gaza Strip, that built for itself two military tiers of defense. [The first] everybody knows because that's what you do in counterinsurgency. It's the urban arena itself; that's part of their tier of defense. But what Hamas also did is that they built the subterranean arena [in a way] that there is no equivalent of that we know of right now. But it has been very successful. It's going to be copied.

I think that what Israel tried to do as a military was to say, 'OK, the civilians are in the urban area. I am going to attack the Hamas military capabilities. I will tell the civilians to leave.' We did that in the northern Gaza Strip. A million people were told to leave; 800,000 left, 200,000 didn't. Now you get to the military question of what you do. The military said, 'We told them to leave and now we're going in.' And we killed a lot of civilians. Every single time we went into a new neighborhood, into a new arena, we gave early warning. It's counterintuitive to what you normally do as a military. So you say, 'I'm giving them early warning and yet they didn't leave.' I don't have a moral dilemma because we had to destroy Hamas'

capability. They cannot be allowed to be able to do a combined, multi-tiered assault of the type that they did on October 7th. But before going in, I'm going to tell them to leave again. I'm going to tell them to leave again, and if they don't leave, I'm going to kill the terrorists. And I'm going to be unintentionally killing uninvolved civilians. I won't target them. I never target them.

I don't know if the Hamas numbers are correct, but we've killed thousands of civilians. And there's an accumulation of numbers there, but I do not know of any other way there would have been to destroy the capabilities, and again, they are holding our hostages. They've never told us where the hostages are and how they are. It isn't just about destroying the capabilities; it's destroying the capabilities, *and* we need to get the hostages back.

I have been openly critical of Israeli policies when it came to the humanitarian crisis, because I, in the Institute in November, we prepared a paper that I presented from defense minister down and everybody could agree with the concept. But this Israeli government would not agree with this. I wasn't the only voice there, but we said, 'Do everything that you're asked to in the humanitarian sphere because it's going to come back and bite you in the butt if you don't do everything you can.' Initially, Israel cut off the water to Gaza for like 48 hours. And that's where I came and I said, 'Are you guys crazy? That's collective punishment. You're going to lose [international support].' Some of the Israeli ministers made very clear-cut statements that we were cutting off the water, including the defense minister. I was like, 'You don't cut off water to people.'

CTC: When you think about the next terrorist threat in Israel, what keeps you up at night?

Eisin: I'm actually worried right now about a threat in which antisemitism meets the far-left meets the far-right and which casts Israel as a world pariah and therefore targets Jews and Israelis or anyone who supports them anywhere. I think that there's going to be a tough war against Hezbollah and we need to prepare for the repercussions of that. I'm also worried about this narrative emerging that legitimizes terrorism and casts the sovereign state of Israel as illegitimate. That's the one that keeps me up because I don't see how we contend with it at all. **CTC**

Citations

- 1 Oded Yaron, "150,000 Missiles Aimed at Israel: How Far Does Hezbollah's Deadly Arsenal Reach," *Haaretz*, October 23, 2023; Benjamin Allison, "Hezbollah's Precision Threat to Israel," *Lawfare*, October 31, 2023.
- 2 Melanie Lidman, "Evacuees from Lebanon border harbor few hopes they'll return home anytime soon," *Times of Israel*, March 19, 2024.

- 3 Editor's Note: See Susannah George and Mohamad El Chamaa, "Israeli strike on Iranian Consulate in Damascus kills key commander, Iran says," *Washington Post*, April 1, 2024.
- 4 Editor's Note: See "Germany arrests over alleged Hamas anti-Jewish plot," *BBC*, December 14, 2023.