



ISRAEL: THE WORLD'S MOST MORAL ARMY

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There are two views of the Israeli Military – what you hear in most of the media, and the truth. I'm going to tell you the truth.

I was the Commander of British Forces in Afghanistan. I have fought in combat zones around the world including Northern Ireland, Bosnia, Macedonia and Iraq. I was also present throughout the conflict in Gaza in 2014.

Based on my experience and on my observations: the Israel Defense Force, the IDF, does more to safeguard the rights of civilians in a combat zone than any other army in the history of warfare.

Why is this so?

Firstly, Israel is a decent country with Western values, run on democratic principles. Israel has no more interest in war than Belgium does. In fact, Israel has never started a war. The only reason it ever goes to war is to defend itself. And it has to defend itself because, unlike Belgium, it is surrounded by countries and armed groups that want to destroy it.

Secondly, Judaism, with its unsurpassed moral standards, remains a major influence on the citizens of Israel. I say this as a non-Jew.

Thirdly, the army is composed overwhelmingly of citizen soldiers.

Israel is a small country with a small professional army. To fight a war it depends on its conscripts and its reservists. These are ordinary citizens, from professors to plumbers, called upon to defend their homes. They don't want to be fighting and they don't want to harm others.

Nowhere was the essential morality and decency of the IDF more evident than in the Gaza War of 2014. If ever there was a purely defensive war, this was it.

The war was started by Hamas, the terror organization, designated as such by the US State Department, that runs the Gaza strip. In the first six months of 2014, Hamas launched hundreds of rockets at Israeli civilians.

After repeated warnings from Israel to stop, the Israeli Air Force finally conducted precision strikes to halt the rocket-fire. And the IDF advanced into Gaza to destroy a network of terror tunnels that Hamas had constructed to attack Israeli communities near the Gaza border.

The IDF took extraordinary measures to give Gaza civilians notice of targeted areas, dropping millions of leaflets, broadcasting radio messages, sending texts and making tens of thousands of phone calls. Let me repeat that. The Israelis called Gazans on their cell phones and told them to leave their residences and move to safety. Never in the history of warfare has an army phoned its enemy and told them where they are going to drop their bombs.

Many IDF missions that could have taken out Hamas military capabilities were aborted to prevent civilian casualties, increasing the risk to Israeli citizens and soldiers.

Despite all of this, of course innocent civilians were killed. Every war is chaotic and confusing, and mistakes are frequent. But mistakes are not war crimes.

Hamas, on the other hand, committed war crimes as official government policy.

Hamas deliberately positioned its military assets among the civilian population, hiding weapons in schools and hospitals, and placing rocket launchers alongside apartment buildings, then forced those civilians to stay in areas they knew would be attacked. They also instructed their people to report the lie that every Gazan killed was a civilian, even if they were actually fighters.

And if there were no civilian deaths, Hamas made them up! Numerous Internet sites show Palestinians elaborately staging sniper victims and smashed ambulances, among other phony horrors. It's so common there's even a term for it – Pallywood, as in Palestinian Hollywood.

Ironically, it's the leaders of Hamas themselves who best understand the extraordinary measures the IDF will take to protect innocent civilians. They take full advantage of Israel's decency and adherence to the laws of war.

No army takes such risks in order to protect civilians as the Israeli army does. I say this as a professional soldier. I say it because it's true. And people who care about truth should know it.

I'm Colonel Richard Kemp for Prager University.