

MESSAGE FROM THE AMBASSADOR FOR 23 MAY 2021

Dear friends/Shalom chaverim,

Despite of there currently being a ceasefire declared, I want to thank you for your unwavering support and solidarity with the State of Israel and its citizens. Unfortunately, I can not be here with you in person.

On Friday, at 11am New Zealand time, Prime Minister Netanyahu declared a ceasefire without any pre-conditions.

Up until a couple of days ago, though, Israel was under attack and engaged in a major campaign: "Operation Guardian of the Walls". Throughout the whole of last week, around 4000 rockets were fired into Israel from Gaza, killing women and children and forcing thousands into bomb shelters. Hundreds of these rockets fell onto Gaza, killing civilians, but these killings of their own population, inflicted by Hamas, did not cause them a moment of self-reflection.

Earlier, the IDF responded to hundreds of Hamas and Islamic Jihad terrorist targets in the Gaza Strip, placed viciously amongst civilian centers, even in school yards. Throughout the Operation we have eliminated dozens of terrorists, including senior commanders. We have bombed Hamas command centers and toppled buildings that we know were being used as operational facilities. We also destabilized parts of the approximately 100 kilometer tunnel network, dug with using money and materials that could have turned the lives of Gazans into better and more prosperous ones.

I would like to repeat that Hamas deliberately situated its facilities in the heart of the civilian population, including multi-story buildings that contained several military targets. Hamas used the civilian population as a human shield and indiscriminately attacked population centers in Israel.

In Israel, we grieve those who have lost their lives. We lament also unintended loss of civilians in Gaza, but while Israel made it its priority to make sure that its citizens are safe by building bomb shelters at every house, Hamas used their billions of Dollars in International aid funding to build underground tunnels and missiles to attack Israel. Hamas pretends to represent the Palestinian people but is consistently depriving them from their basic needs.

Dear Friends, Israel has the right to defend its citizens and will always take every action necessary to do so. It will not allow the terrorist organisations to attack the civilian population without a protective response. It is the right and duty of every state to protect its citizens and that is what Israel did, does and will do!!

Israel now wants quiet to be restored but it has to be done right. The wrong type of ceasefire is one that gives Hamas the time to rest, to regroup and rearm. If Hamas can attack again in a week or a month, then nothing has been achieved. If Hamas gets used to the idea that it can shoot thousands of rockets at Israel and then have the International Community demand Israel to stop protecting and retaliating to military Hamas targets, then why would Hamas ever stop shooting rockets at Israel.

But, we are hopeful for the ceasefire to last. The Israeli IDF Chief of Staff and the military briefed Israeli Ministers on Israel's significant achievements in the Operation, some of which are unprecedented.

The political leadership emphasizes that it is the reality on the ground that will determine the future of the Operation.

Dear Friends again, I truly value the fact that you all being here in support for Israel. However, I also need you to keep fighting the biased media reports as I see them published daily in the newspapers and on our screens! Therefore, I encourage you to follow our Embassy on Twitter and Facebook and keep up to date with the current developments in Israel and use that information to write to your local MP, to the editors of the newspapers and to share with your friends and family, because together we need to retort the anti-Israeli narrative the average Kiwi is being fed on a daily basis.

Friends, just imagine your country and cities attacked by terror rockets in the thousands. Nothing can justify that. No Nation can accept that. Not today. Not ever!

Again, your support is valuable, courageous and meaningful! You are informed and realise the stakes involved in giving into terror. I know you will not give in.

Thank you all, Nga mihi nui and Shalom!

Ambassador Ran Yaakoby