

An open query to all people of good will (from two curious professors)

Please define for us and our fellow Israeli citizens what you consider a "proportionate" response

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We write to those of you, who like ourselves, are almost overwhelmed by witnessing the incredible suffering and loss of life of so many innocent citizens on both sides of the Hamas-Israel conflict; and with no obvious solution in sight.

We work just a few score kilometers from Gaza and have approximately 45 seconds to find shelter when Hamas lobbs its rockets our way — a not-infrequent occurrence

Tragically, the present war is not the first, but just the most recent of a string of conflicts, each one initiated by Hamas and ending in a ceasefire, but which is then invariably followed by a recurrence of conflict.

In each round, Israel is usually supported in its initial response to repeated Hamas rocket fire on Israeli civilian targets and other terrorist attacks by Hamas from Gaza. However, with time and mounting casualties, especially on the Palestinian side, shortly thereafter Israel is usually denounced, even by many of its friends, for what is termed her "disproportionate" response.

We therefore turn to all open-minded scholars, military experts, political scientists, philosophers, ethicists, specialists in health as well as to all other responsible and thoughtful citizens. Please define for us and our fellow Israeli citizens: what do *you* consider a "proportionate" response?

To help, here is the Cambridge Dictionary's definition: "too large or too small in comparison to something else, or not deserving its importance or influence"

Please keep in mind that Israel's response is to a neighbouring organization, the members of which invade your sovereign territory, kill 1,200 innocents, and abduct some 250 of your citizens. As a part of this unprovoked attack, whilst embedded in Palestinian civilian neighborhoods, the organization then goes on to fire some 12,000 missiles (and still counting) at civilian targets all over Israel, over just three month's time. To offer some "context" (the need for which seems so timely), this aggressor openly and consistently declares repeatedly its intention to destroy your country.

One of our questions: is it acceptable for us to fire up to a similar number of missiles in response — more, less? Is this too many, or as is a part of the definition (see above), perhaps too few? How does one measure an ethical and effective response to such unbridled aggression?

The response endorsed by the UN General Assembly, in the name of the WHO, and by so many in the world media and even by a significant number of well-meaning friends of Israel, is an “immediate ceasefire”! We might concur; except that such a step has been tried repeatedly — and has been proven totally ineffectual, time and again. As has been expressed somewhat colloquially, “When you find yourself in a hole, stop digging!”

To our perhaps unsophisticated minds it seems clear that only an unequivocal defeat of Hamas and its total removal from Gaza would represent an appropriately proportionate response to their past, present and ongoing threat — to the civilian populations of both Gaza and Israel. Furthermore, if Gazans had not attacked Israelis, there would be no need for *any* Israeli response — proportionate or not.

One of us (SG) is old enough to have lived through World War II and both of us are historically literate. The other’s (AMC) father fought in the Canadian army for more than four years during that conflict. The facts show that it was only the Allies’ dogged enforcement of an “unconditional surrender” of Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan, despite the huge cost in civilian lives of those countries, that proved to be the *only* proportionate response to the Axis aggression.

A supplementary question, while we still have your attention: “What would *YOU* do if your country were attacked in this manner? An honest answer please. How would you want your country to respond if its civilians were set upon by such a monstrous terrorist entity as Hamas?

We reckon that your sensible answer would be: with as much force as necessary to protect yourselves from being murdered; certainly no more – but surely not less.