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# October 7: 2.

When Israelis saved Israel



Since October 7, Israelis and the world have been asking the “day after” question: How did this happen? Healthy democracies need to learn from disasters, and there will be an investigation.

However, the scale (and success) of Hamas’ initial assault raises another question: How did Israel survive?

It took hours before the army freed each besieged community. Story by story, post by post, and article by article, an extraordinary picture of against-all-odds heroism is emerging.

Initially, Hamas swarmed the border defenses. The terrorists set up ambushes at each major intersection. The “cavalry” didn’t come – and when it finally did, the fights were bloody and protracted. But citizens, police officers, and soldiers, at home and on base, scrambled, improvised, and fought back fiercely. These citizen commandos not only saved countless lives: These Israelis saved Israel.

One citizen who ran toward the trouble rather than away from it was Ben Mizrachi – one of my son’s closest friends.



Ben Mizrachi, a fallen hero (Itamar Kaufman)

The 22-year-old moved to Israel from Vancouver five years ago. He finished his IDF service as a combat medic, enjoyed a post-army South American tour, and was back in Israel, building his future.

When Hamas terrorists swarmed the Supernova music festival, chaos erupted. As Ben saw many wounded, his training – and courage – clicked in. He and his buddy reached their car – but they did not flee. They ferried people to safety – two, possibly three times. He started treating the wounded.

Alas, his grieving mother, Dikla, sighed in her heart-wrenching eulogy, “he was unarmed.”

It was at his funeral last Wednesday that many of us heard for the first time about Ben’s actions.

Since that Black Saturday, I have refused to watch the Palestinian snuff and rape videos – it’s bad enough waking up daily, thinking about the some 200 hostages, knowing that kids are in dungeons and women sexually enslaved, simply for being Jewish.



A soldier based near the border with Gaza proudly displays the haircut he received from a volunteer this week.

(Chaim Goldberg/Flash90)

I refuse on principle to collaborate in this digital rape, this mass Palestinian attempt to violate the victims’ privacy and dignity. And I didn’t need the wake-up call about Hamas’ evil to then see what I won’t be able to unsee and hear what I won’t be able to unhear.

In that spirit, since last Tuesday, when we heard that terrorists had murdered Ben too, I didn’t want to know any details: what humiliations he might have endured, what terrors scarred his last moments, whether the barbarians defiled his body. But hearing about his heroism shifted the narrative in my head – creating what we all should call October 7.2.

For days, the civilized world has been steeped in stories of Hamas cruelty – and Israeli suffering – babies beheaded, families slaughtered together, the elderly father of a friend with a trident arrow pierced through his heart, countless women abused, raped, slaughtered.

I remain heartbroken about the loss of Ben, this big-hearted guy. I continue to be furious at Hamas’ savagery. I feel no less betrayed by an international political regime that romanticized Palestinians and still wants to handcuff Israelis defending themselves, or by campus commissars who now blame Israelis for being brutalized. And I certainly never judge anyone victimized by Hamas bullets, bombs, knives and, apparently arrows and shovels too.

But suddenly, the October 7 narrative flipped. It wasn’t about pogroms when Jews were powerless. It wasn’t about the Holocaust when the Nazis made resistance futile.

BEN’S STORY and the thousands of other stories about fighting back that day returned Israel to its Zionist trajectory. October 7 and 7.2 became more chapters in the roller-coaster Zionist tale about the Jewish redemption of a land surrounded by cruel enemies, and how Israelis have learned to fight when necessary, but live, build, and rejoice always.

At Ben’s funeral, one of his rabbis shared a mind-blowing story. This man, whom every reporter would call “a right-wing settler rabbi,” told me, lovingly, proudly, how on that Black Saturday, the anti-judicial reform protesters – his “political enemies” – used their networks to mobilize reservists until the army arrived.

More and more such stories are emerging about villagers on the border, who by mobilizing, defended their communities – from house to house.

eyes and cover their ears, then kicked open the door of their safe room and blasted the marauders with his M-16.

On Kibbutz Nir Am, Inbar Lieberman, 25, immediately recognized that this was an invasion – not the usual rocket barrage residents had, outrageously, learned to endure regularly. She organized 12 neighbors and coordinated operations, killing five terrorists herself as her fellow residents killed at least another 20. Their kibbutz was barely damaged.

Omri Bonim, aged 41, and five others fought off dozens of terrorists for hours until help arrived, using their knowledge of their kibbutz, Re’im, to fire from different positions, to make the marauders think many more defenders had actually arrived. As Israelis, Bonim told *Davar*, “We fight over the petting zoo, in the soccer field, for our values, our community, the place where we raise our children.

“This,” he added, “was a fight for our homes,” and our long friendship with one another gave us “the most organic energy there is.”

Meanwhile, suburbanites and urbanites, including some retirees, simply holstered their guns, jumped in their cars, and drove maniacally down South – saving their kids, their grandkids, or mere strangers. Prominent left-wing politician and 61-year-old retired Maj.-Gen. Yair Golan went back and forth as a “one-man army,” saving party-goers from the doomed rave.

We are hearing about police officers who fought to the death or close to it. One of them, Yisrael Zinger, who survived but is hospitalized, used Google Maps to find a back-road exit when terrorists blocked the two main exits from the Supernova concert, which was attended by thousands. His convoy led 500 concert-goers to safety. He then joined with other officers and soldiers in the firefight of their lives.

Israel has recovered the bodies of at least 1,500 well-trained terrorists.

PART OF the answer to “Where was the army?” is that soldiers were stuck in too many intense, hours-long gun battles in dozens of locations, some of which began as early as 7 a.m., just 30 minutes after the invasion. Zinger’s only regret when interviewed on TV from his hospital bed: “We didn’t save more people.”

Moreover, the same social networks that spread propaganda against Israel over the years, and on that day publicized those disgusting videos aimed at crushing Israel’s spirits, mobilized the first wave of defenders, the Home





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Front Commandos.

Many Israeli military corps have alumni WhatsApp groups, normally used for trading friendly gossip, updates, and occasional job offers. That day, with Israel's Southern Command and control systems neutralized, they improvised their own.

The Duvdevan counter-terrorist commandos shared pin locations on their WhatsApp group and deployed groups of two, three, and four of their veterans who lived nearby – even as the enlisted soldiers reached the overrun communities by 8 a.m. – within 90 minutes – and then fought like lions to reconquer them.

And, as Ben's rabbi stated, the political protesters mobilized.

Over the last nine months of political struggle, one group in particular, Achim Laneshek, Brothers (and Sisters) in Arms, had developed a large network of elite combat reservists, constantly interacting.

When Hamas attacked Israel, when the expected systems failed, one of the most effective networks of battle-hardened veterans existed thanks to Israel's political chaos.

Politically, the Duvdevan veterans tend to lean to the Right, while the Brothers in Arms network is Left. But political differences vanished as patriotism – and extraordinary military training – triumphed.

At 8:50 a.m., @ahimlaneshek1 called for everyone to mobilize, proclaiming: "Right now, the most important thing is the safety of our country's citizens."

Hour by hour, they shared information about where to fight, where to get help, where to flee. By 3:45 p.m., seeing a vacuum, they organized ride-sharing to get to reserve bases, to evacuate the wounded; to reunite families.

"We're here to help and support," they tweeted. (So much for their threats not to serve.)

When historians reconstruct this war, many will credit this protest network with helping to turn the tide. All will agree that, more broadly, so many well-trained, highly motivated, organically connected citizens responding so quickly stopped Hamas.

ISRAELI INTELLIGENCE found documents on captured terrorists revealing that Hamas did not only raid to kill people, seek hostages, and target children. The plan was to seize the Gaza corridor and open a pathway to Tel Aviv.

By 9 a.m., Hamas' leaders (and their Iranian backers) probably believed they had succeeded.

Only the fierce counterattack, born from the blue-and-white political alliance and then heroically executed by the IDF, saved the state.

After the 1973 Yom Kippur surprise attack, it took Israel eight or nine days to start counterattacking effectively. Fifty years later, on October 7, 2023, Hamas won the first battle. Hours later, responding instantly, Israel's plainclothes commandos won the second.

Today, we're witnessing October 7:3.

Returning from all parts of the world, reservists are going straight from Ben-Gurion Airport to their army bases. The army regained its footing and retook the initiative. And citizens, volunteering and giving 24/7, boosted by extraordinary generosity from abroad, have created what my son Aviv calls a "balagan of *trumot*," a chaotic cornucopia of donations – and love.

When the politicians failed and the IDF faltered, the people stepped in.

FOR ISRAELIS, victory does not just include breaking Hamas but rebuilding the pastoral South, which was safe and blooming, in undisputed territory behind pre-1967 borders, until Israel, trying for peace, disengaged from Gaza in 2005.

Then Israel, pressed heavily by a deluded international community, underestimated Hamas as "pragmatic."

Omri Bonim, one of the kibbutz "Rambos" who saved his community and country, says, "When we all return, we will rebuild it all, and we will show the world how beautiful our community is."

Ultimately, like ISIS, the Hamas death cult only spreads destruction and misery – among their own, too. Israel has long been willing to partner with Palestinians to build a different future.

In the meantime, while waiting for Palestinian leaders and Palestinian political culture to accept the inevitable and stop attacking, Israelis will continue doing what they do: making their lives better, making their state better, and trying to make the world a better place. ■

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