



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on October 20, 2011

Israel Willingly Compromises Its Security with Hamas Prisoner Swap

Shalit, reportedly the only Israeli soldier released by Hamas in some 26 years, said that he always believed he would be freed one day, adding that he was happy for the Palestinians to be released “if they don’t return to fight us. I very much hope that this deal will advance peace.”



Such a hope appears to be futile. As the hundreds of terrorists and others were freed, many expressed their eagerness to be cycled back into the terrorist attacks for which their parent organization is well known. “As long as there is going to be occupation over all of Palestine, martyrs will be there to resist and to fight, and I will be among the first of the strugglers,” Wafa al-Bis, one of the freed prisoners, told the UK’s [Daily Telegraph](#). The 27-year-old young woman was captured in 2005 as she was on her way to an Israeli hospital to detonate 22 pounds of explosives hidden on her body. “This is an honorable thing and I would be a suicide bomber three times over if I could,” she proclaimed.

According to the [Associated Press](#), Hamas leader Khaled Mashaal pledged “that those released ‘will return to ... the national struggle,’ a comment that only stoked Israeli fears that they may pay a heavy price for the deal.” Abu Obeida, a spokesman for Hamas’ military wing, predicted that “Gilad Shalit won’t be the last [soldier abducted], as long as the occupation holds Palestinian prisoners.”

Explaining the apparently lopsided trade, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said,

We had to return home a soldier that we sent out to fight for us. As a soldier and as a commander, I was sent out by the army for dangerous missions, but I always knew that if I or one of my friends would fall in battle, the government of Israel would do whatever it could to bring us home.

As reported by the [European Jewish Press](#), Netanyahu said “he understood the pain of Israeli families who have lost relatives in Palestinian terror attacks, but added that Israel’s ethos of doing everything possible to bring its soldiers home safely forced him to act.”

“I know very well that the pain of the families of the victims of terrorism is too heavy to bear,” Netanyahu said in [comments after Shalit’s release](#). “It is difficult to see the miscreants who murdered their loved ones being released before serving out their full sentences. But I also knew that in the current diplomatic circumstances, this was the best agreement we could achieve, and there was no



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guarantee that the conditions which enabled it to be achieved would hold in the future. It could be that Gilad would disappear; to my regret, such things have already happened.”

The Prime Minister emphasized that the trade did not mean Israel was acquiescing to terrorists: “I would like to make it clear — we will continue to fight terrorism,” he declared. “Any released terrorist who returns to terrorism — his blood is upon his head.”

He added that Israel “is different from its enemies. Here, we do not celebrate the release of murderers. Here, we do not applaud those who took life. On the contrary, we believe in the sanctity of life. We sanctify life. This is the ancient tradition of the Jewish people.”

[Con Coughlin](#), executive foreign editor for the *Daily Telegraph*, noted, “It is an article of faith for Israelis that they will make huge sacrifices to secure the release of their own, and even though securing the release of a single soldier means that scores of convicted murderers will be set free, the overwhelming majority of Israelis believe it is a price worth paying.” Israel’s [Ynetnews.com](#) reported that, according to one national survey, 79 percent of the Israeli citizens were in favor of the deal.

But while most Israeli citizens rejoiced over the young soldier’s release, those who were victims of Hamas terror expressed their disappointment. “Alan Bauer and his son were wounded in a suicide bombing in Jerusalem nine years ago,” reported [CBN News](#). “A screw lodged in Bauer’s arm and a piece of shrapnel went through his son’s brain.” Bauer Told CBN that even though he and his family were happy for Gilad’s return home, “we feel it’s a definite failure on the part of the Israeli government to allow the release of such an enormous number of terrorists.” He said that it has been proven “that 60 to 80 percent [of released prisoners] have traditionally gone back to terror, and there’s an incredible disregard not only for the victims, but also for the legal system.”

Frimet and Arnold Roth, whose daughter was killed over 10 years ago at the hands of one of the released terrorists, called the prisoner trade a “colossal failure” on the part of the Israeli government. “I’m happy to hear that Gilad Shalit is alive and well,” Frimet Roth told the Israeli news site [Haaretz.com](#). “That’s a great relief and happy news. But it’s accompanied by other feelings, the difficult ones. There is sorrow, anger; we’re having a hard time understanding and digesting it. There is also fear. I’m very scared.”

Similarly, Haim Karisi, whose daughter’s killer was another of the terrorists released, told [Ynetnews.com](#), “What they did to us is like a slap in the face.... Everyone is happy and dancing in our blood, and with all due respect to Gilad’s smiling mother, there are hundreds of parents whose heart is bleeding today.”

Before the swap was put into motion, Israeli Cabinet minister Uzi Landau, who voted against the trade, warned that the deal would give an “immense incentive” to terrorists “to kill Israelis and to carry out further abductions. This deal will be a huge victory for terror. It will be a blow to Israel’s security and deterrent capability.”

Nonetheless, Netanyahu expressed his belief that “we have reached the best deal we could have at this time, when storms are sweeping the Middle East. I do not know if in the near future we would have been able to reach a better deal or any deal at all. It is very possible that this window of opportunity, that opened because of the circumstances, would close indefinitely and we would never have been able to bring Gilad home at all.”

While it is difficult for the average American to comprehend a deal that freed one solitary soldier while putting several hundred avowed terrorists back into commission, Elliot Abrams (a member of the



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Council on Foreign Relations), writing in the neoconservative [Weekly Standard](#), explained that Israeli citizens think differently about their military personnel than do Americans. Unlike the United States, Israel “has a conscript army consisting of young people like Gilad Shalit, and military service is nearly universal,” he wrote. “For the great majority of Israelis, then, the soldiers are their children — or at least their neighbors’ or cousins’ children — and they must be brought home.”

He noted also that the policy that led to the ransom of Shalit “has deep roots in Jewish history: The ransoming of captives has been practiced by Jews for many centuries and has been regarded as a greater obligation than charity for the poor.”

Conservative constitutional attorney Jay Sekulow, president of the [American Center for Law and Justice](#), recalled that when Netanyahu sought approval from his cabinet for the trade, he said: “Our sages teach that those who save one Jewish life, it’s as if they have saved an entire world.”

Sekulow wrote that such was the mindset that inspired Israel to cut a deal that could well make life difficult for its citizens. “That Israel would make such a seemingly lopsided trade, which will likely set back its security achievements, should tell the world something about its national fabric,” wrote Sekulow.

Noting that Israel “is a nation whose tenuous existence is constantly clouded by the threat of war and whose survival depends on the willingness to fight,” Sekulow wrote that in making such a large sacrifice for one of its sons, “Israel reaffirmed its deepest values — and not just to the rest of the world, but to its own people and other Jews around the world. They are the values of life over death, peace over the sword, and freedom over totalitarianism.”

Photo of Gilad Shalit: AP Images



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