

ISRAEL'S SELF-DEFENCE

Israel 101: Page 32-35

Rationale and Goals

- To stress that the long history of terrorism has forced Israel to become the world's leading expert in defensive measures.
- To stress that Israel sets a high priority on humanitarian values but is constantly forced to weigh those values against its security needs.
- To correct much of the misinformation surrounding Israel's counterterrorism measures by breaking them down into categories and accurately describing them.
- To give students a sense of the dilemmas Israel and individual IDF soldiers face as they defend themselves against terrorists who target civilians and who use human shields for protection from Israeli counterterrorism operations.
- To show how effective Israel's counterterrorism measures have been.

Discussion Questions

- Think of other conflicts. What defensive measures have been taken to spare civilian populations in these conflicts?
- What do you think about the defensive measures that Israel has adopted? To what extent do you think they are humanitarian? To what extent do you think they are effective? What other measures can you suggest?
- How do you think the U.S. or other democracies would react if their civilians were regularly attacked by terrorists and their cities were being shelled by rockets? What policies would you recommend to protect your citizens?
- The rules of war were established to regulate how established national armies fight one another and to protect civilian populations and prisoners of war. Today, Israel finds itself in an asymmetric war, fighting nonstate terrorist groups that do not follow the accepted rules of war. How is this kind of war different? What new principles and rules should be established for this kind of asymmetric warfare?
- When a government determines defensive policies, how much should it put its own civilians and soldiers at risk in order to spare or ease the lives of innocent civilians of the other side? What principles should it establish for making these decisions?

Activities

Activity 1

Balancing Self-Defense and Humanitarian Values

Preparation:

Estimated Time: 1.5 class periods • **Materials:** Each of the following dilemmas should be distributed to the class.

Background: Since its inception, Israel has had to balance its self-defense needs with its humanitarian values. The pre-Israel defense organization, the Haganah, had a strict policy of protecting the lives of innocent Arab civilians, which they called “the purity of arms” (tohar ha-neshek). The policy of protecting innocent civilian life continues to be a guiding principle of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). The following activity focuses on the dilemmas that face Israeli policy makers, officers and combat soldiers while implementing this policy.

Activity:

- Have students skim the information on pages 32-35 (i.e., students should read the titles and subtitles, look at the pictures and skim the text).
- The teacher or a student volunteer should read aloud the text on page 32 regarding Israel’s challenge of balancing its self-defense needs and its humanitarian values. After reading “The Guiding Principles of Israel’s Policies,” ask students to comment. Do they agree with these principles?
- Turn to page 34. Tell the students you are going to read quotes of real people, including a Jihad terrorist. Discuss these quotes. How far is the Israeli army willing to go, in combat situations, to protect innocent Palestinians from being harmed?
- Introduce the topic of “precision attacks.” What do they know about this term? How did they learn about it (the media, computer games, Hollywood action movies, etc.)? Have students read aloud the first three columns on page 34, which represent the main methods Israel uses for precision attacks. These methods demonstrate that Israel places a great deal of value on sparing innocent lives, even at the price of taking a chance at being harmed and sustaining casualties on the Israeli side.
- Divide the students into groups of 4-8 students. Explain that they will face dilemmas based on real-life cases. They should discuss and make their decisions regarding each dilemma; they should spend about 10-15 minutes for each dilemma. After they have completed the activity, they should discuss their decisions and considerations with the entire class.

Dilemma 1: You and your colleagues are members of the Israeli cabinet. You have received reliable intelligence that a highly wanted terrorist, responsible for six terrorist attacks against Israeli civilians, has just left his underground bunker. He is presently in his living room with his wife and two young children. Based on prior experience, you are certain that he will soon go back into hiding, where he will be unreachable. Furthermore, it is assumed that he will continue to plan terrorist attacks from his hideout via the members of his terrorist ring.

Should his house be attacked by an air strike? If not, what should be done? This strike would kill the terrorist, but also his wife and two children. These are the questions you need to consider. You will have to make a decision quickly.

Should nothing be done so the terrorist's wife and children will be spared?

If so, the terrorist will have the freedom to continue planning terrorist acts. Should an Israeli special operations land-based raid be carried out? A trained group of 4-5 Israeli soldiers could be called in to carry out an attack at the terrorist's home. While this option has a greater chance of sparing the terrorist's wife and children, the lives of the Israeli soldiers will be in danger. The house is surrounded by members of the terrorist's gang, who will certainly put up resistance if the house is attacked. In addition, the pathway to the house could be booby-trapped, which could harm and possibly kill Israeli soldiers. Another consideration: by the time this elite group arrives, the terrorist may have left and it may be too late to reach him.

What should be done? You have 15 minutes to decide.

Dilemma 2: Israel carefully targets only those people who pose a serious threat to Israeli civilians. But, to prevent future attacks and protect civilian lives, whom should you target?

- The person carrying a bomb?
- The person who drives the bomber to his destination?
- The engineer who builds the bomb?
- The mastermind of the operations?
- The person who provides money for the bomber or the explosives?
- The Muslim cleric who calls on his followers to kill Jews?
- The person who watches the preacher on TV?
- How do you decide?

Wrap-Up: In wars and conflict, innocent civilians are often hurt or killed. When engaged in the West Bank and Gaza, the Israeli army has a strict policy of doing its best to spare the lives of innocent Palestinians. The terrorists are aware of this policy and ethical standard. As a result, they often try to take advantage of this policy by using "human shields" during combat so they won't be attacked. Students should be aware of the ethical dilemmas Israel faces in combat situations.



Activities

Activity 2

Putting Yourself in the Shoes of IDF Soldiers. What Do You Do?

(From www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Society_&_Culture/whatwouldyoudo.html and www.standwithus.com)

Preparation:

Estimated Time: 1 class period • **Materials:** Paper and pencils

Background: Young soldiers in the field must make instant decisions about what to do in difficult situations. How do they balance humanitarian concerns for innocent civilians with the dangers that could be posed by what seem to be innocent civilians but are actually dangerous people who threaten Israeli lives? What is the outcome of the decisions they make? The situations presented below are taken from real life, with the outcomes described.

Activity:

Divide the class into groups of five each. Have them read one of the six real-life scenarios below and have each group decide among themselves what they would do in such a situation. Have each group report to the class its decision and how it made that decision. Then tell the class what actually happened and go on to the next scenario.

Scenario 1:

You're at a checkpoint in the West Bank. Your job is to check people and vehicles that are requesting entrance into Israel. On a typical day, many Palestinian Arabs cross over from the West Bank into Israel proper, mainly for work and often for medical reasons (many Palestinians use hospitals in Israel). They line up at checkpoints so the Israeli army can search each person and vehicle to make sure they are not carrying weapons.

According to intelligence information you've received, an ambulance is expected to arrive with a wanted terrorist in it carrying an explosive belt for a suicide attack against innocent Israeli civilians.

Suddenly an ambulance arrives, and inside is a woman who is seemingly pregnant. At checkpoints in the past, not everybody who appeared to be pregnant was truly pregnant. The woman appears to be in pain, and her husband is also highly anxious. The ambulance driver says the woman is about to give birth and without the proper medical attention at the hospital, the newborn baby will struggle to survive.

It is a hot day and there is a long line of cars. Your commander is yelling at you on the two-way radio, "Do not let ambulances go through because there is a terrorist in an ambulance!" To complicate the picture, a news video crew is present. To further complicate the situation, the pregnant woman is a religious Muslim, and it is considered disrespectful to touch a religious woman.

You are not a doctor, but you have to make a decision. If you let the ambulance go through and it contains a terrorist, then innocent people will die. If there is no terrorist in this particular ambulance, you may cause the woman to lose her child.

What do you do?

- a) Stop the vehicle. Search it thoroughly. This procedure, especially for ambulances and trucks, can take many hours.
- b) Stop the vehicle. Do a quick search and look-through. You don't pay attention to too much detail, as you want to speed up the process to help the pregnant woman get to the hospital.
- c) Let the vehicle through with little inspection. You trust that the ambulance will be heading directly to the nearest hospital to deliver the woman's baby.

- d) Stop the vehicle but call for an ambulance to come to the checkpoint to transport the woman to the nearest hospital. Check the ambulance she arrived in thoroughly.

What Actually Happened

- d) The vehicle was stopped while another ambulance was immediately called.

Scenario 2:

You are serving in a commando unit in the southern West Bank, south of Hebron. Your current mission is to infiltrate a small village of about 30 people. There is a suspected terrorist living within this small village who is known to have created explosives for suicide bombings. There is a lot of information and research on this particular terrorist, and his arrest is important for the safety and security of Israeli citizens. Your unit is heading by foot to this hilltop village starting at 5:00 a.m. On your trek up to the top of the hill, your leader notices an older shepherd from the village on a nearby hill. The shepherd, with his flock of sheep, sees you and your unit approaching the village.

What do you do?

- a) Chase after the shepherd and arrest him so he does not compromise your mission by warning the village. You release him a couple days after the mission is completed.
- b) Chase after the shepherd and bring him with you on the mission. You have him approach the home(s) of the suspected terrorist (making your lives a bit easier) since he is a local villager. This prevents loud confrontations outside the home but puts the shepherd in harms way.
- c) Ignore the shepherd entirely. You are convinced that he won't warn the village and compromise the mission. Furthermore, you do not want to inconvenience the older man by taking him away from his sheep.

What Actually Happened

- c) The Shepherd ends up inflicting some harm though. He warns the village and the operation is compromised.

Scenario 3:

Your unit is called in to respond to a sniper who is shooting from inside a hospital.

What do you do?

- a) Retaliate by air power or artillery and take the risk of wounding many innocent people.
- b) Enter the highly populated hostile neighborhood, increasing the risk to yourself and fellow soldiers and the risk of making the population even more hostile.
- c) Warn the hospital of your intention to enter and then move in carefully to take out the sniper.

What Actually Happened

- c) The Israeli army warned the hospital and then moved in carefully to take out the sniper.

Scenario 4:

You are part of a patrol unit near the Palestinian city of Jenin. Over the past few weeks, thorough investigative research has found a terrorist aide to be living in a small house on the outskirts of Jenin. He is thought to have assisted a few suicide bombers in the making and preparing of their suicide-bomb belts. Your mission is to go to his house, arrest him, and search his home for additional weapons and bomb-making materials. Your unit's truck approaches his house, enters his home through a side window, and arrests him, avoiding gunfire and confrontation. You order his family to take a few belongings with them for a few hours as the unit has to search the house. The man's wife and kids reluctantly agree, grab a few items and slowly exit their home. The wife and kids all leave the home carrying a bag or backpack with a few home items inside. The man's older son, who is about four years old, is crying and requests repeatedly to go over and say goodbye to his father.

What do you do?

- a) Let the son go to his father and say goodbye. You feel bad that you are separating a father from his son and allow them to exchange a somber farewell.
- b) Put the suspect directly into the truck. You do not allow the son to approach his father to say goodbye.
- c) Take the wife and child with you.

What Actually Happened

- b) The boy ran away. He was chased and caught. He was carrying dynamite sticks in his backpack.

Scenario 5:

Palestinians terrorists shoot at an Israeli civilian car, and you are engaged in a chase. The terrorists flee into a mosque where a prayer service is being held.

What do you do?

- a) Retreat and allow the suspects to escape.
- b) Follow them into the mosque and engage them in a gunfight if they resist arrest.
- c) Request that the religious service be stopped and that everyone come out with their hands up.
- d) Wait for high-level instructions at the risk of not being able anymore to track the terrorists.

What Actually Happened

- a) A group of terrorists in Gaza were holed up in a mosque, and a group of women came and put themselves between the soldiers and the terrorists. The Israelis retreated, and the terrorists were allowed to escape.

Scenario 6:

You are driving in a jeep in the West Bank with another soldier and see a Palestinian placing a pile of rocks in the road that you suspect may be booby-trapped.

What do you do?

- a) Call for instructions.
- b) Disarm the booby trap.
- c) Order the Palestinian you saw to remove the pile.

What Actually Happened

- c) If the soldiers see the Palestinian place the rocks in the road, it is permissible to order the person to remove them. However, if no one is seen placing the rocks, it is forbidden to force a local resident to help move them because civilians cannot be used as human shields.

Wrap-Up: Because Israel is fighting an unconventional war with terrorists who hide among civilians, IDF soldiers have to make difficult on-the-spot decisions. They have strict ethical rules that help them protect innocent Palestinian civilians while at the same time protect Israeli civilians from terrorists.

Activities

Activity 3

Debating the Security Fence

Preparation:

Estimate Time: 1.5 class periods • **Materials:** Paper, pencils, access to the Internet, *Israel 101*, informational flyers from www.standwithus.com/flyers.asp?wc=11

Background: There are no natural barriers between pre-1967 Israel and the West Bank, and between 1967 and 2002, there were no manmade barriers. During the Intifada, terrorists could simply walk the few kilometers from the West Bank into Israeli communities and carry out attacks. In June 2002, Israel decided to build a security fence to prevent this easy access to its civilians. The security fence has become controversial. While Israel points out that deaths from terrorist attacks have dropped over 90 percent since the first parts of the fence were built, Palestinians object to the route of the fence and claim that it causes them grave inconveniences.

Activity:

Students debate the pros and cons of Israel's security fence along its eastern border, built to protect its citizens from Palestinian terrorist attacks.

Briefly discuss the background information with students, and have them carefully read the section about the fence on p. 33 of *Israel 101*.

Divide the students into two groups: pro and con. Help each group research its position. Use reliable sources (some are included in the Resources section on the following page). After each side has researched and mapped out its positions, hold a debate between representatives of the two groups.

Tell students to address the following questions:

- What other countries have security fences or barriers? How are they different from or similar to Israel's security fence?
- Why did Israel decide to build the security fence?
- What harm does the security fence cause? How many people does it kill or wound? How are people inconvenienced? What is meant by a "passive form of self-defense"?
- How has Israel tried to minimize the inconveniences caused by the fence?
- What is the actual route of the fence, and why was it chosen?
- Has the fence achieved its purpose? How effective is it?

Wrap-up: As more and more Israelis were killed by terrorists who simply walked from the West Bank into Israeli communities, Israel sought a passive, non-lethal form of self-defense and built the security fence, which resembles the security barriers of many other countries. The fence can be moved when borders are finally determined in peace negotiations.

Resources

Internet

Israel's Security Fence (2007)

www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/talking/24_fence.html

www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Peace/fence.html

“Judgments of the Israeli Supreme Court: Fighting Terrorism with the Law” (See especially C: “The Balance between National Security and Freedom of the Individual.”)

www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Politics/scterror.html

Countries with Border Fences—www.standwithus.com/pdfs/flyers/Fences_OtherCountries.pdf

Palestinians Use of Human Shields

Myths and Facts Online (see “Israeli complaints about Palestinian terrorists hiding”); Uncovering Weapons-Smuggling Tunnels (see “Israel demolishes homes in the Rafah refugee camp”); Israeli Checkpoints (see “Israeli checkpoints are unnecessarily preventing Palestinians”)

www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/myths/mf18.html#m

Also see photographic and video evidence of the use of human shields at www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Terrorism+Obstacle+to+Peace/Hamas+war+against+Israel/Hamas+exploitation+of+civilians+as+human+shields+-+Photographic+evidence.htm

Palestinian terrorists admit the security fence impedes their operations at www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/html/ct_250308e.htm

Myths and Facts Online:

Rebuttal to myth that: “Israel uses checkpoints to deny Palestinians their rights”

www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/myths/mf24.html#c

Teaching Morality in Armed Conflict: The Israeli Defense Forces Model (2006)

www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Society_&_Culture/IDFmorals.html

Video

The following videos are available at no charge (except shipping) from: www.israelupclose.org/stories.html

Volume 5: For Love of Country—Stories of people with disabilities who have served in the IDF

Volume 2: Mike's Place Before and After—The impact of terrorism. This is the story of a French girl who worked in Mike's Place and who was murdered in the terrorist attack at Mike's Place.