

Letter from a bereaved Israeli parent

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"Too used to death"

By Yona Bargur, The author is the father of Ziv, of blessed memory, and a member of the Bereaved Families Forum for Peace, Reconciliation and Tolerance.

Raad al-Batash, 8, Mahmoud al-Batash, 15, and a third boy, Ahmed a-Susi, were killed in an air force strike in the Gaza Strip on March 6 that had targeted two wanted Islamic Jihad members. The mother of one of the boys and another seven passers-by were injured in the attack.

My outcry is not directed at the commander of the air force, or the chief of staff, or even the defense minister, and certainly not the acting prime minister — all of them proponents of the targeting killings, which frequently go somewhat astray and hit innocent Palestinian passers-by. And thereafter, they softly utter an apology in the name of the surprise that the residents dared to walk around their neighborhoods and go shopping there.

My outcry is directed at my people, parents, sons and daughters, to the leaders of the parties — and also to the leaders of the Zionist left-wing — who are not pained by the pointless killing (as if there were purposeful killing) of boys and girls, in whose eyes fear is visible and for whom the alternative to the hell and killing and roadblocks is "Paradise Now."

Our political agenda should have changed, but talented journalists are investing their time and energy in uncovering new-old nests of corruption, and politicians and MKs are busy investigating the bandage on MK Effi Eitam's head and the cast on the arm of MK Aryeh Eldad. Dead children do not even make them blink before the television cameras. The demand to raise the minimum wage is a just and fitting demand, but inferior in

comparison to the lives of children in Gaza that have been cut short. And even the announcement of so worthy and just an organization as Peace Now, to mark one year since the release of Attorney Talia Sassoon's report on illegal outposts, should have made way for an obituary for the children killed during IDF operations over the last few months.

Even the man who maintains we should be "strong against Hamas" should be able to find a little compassion in his heart for the children whose lives hang by a thread, or more accurately, by a shell fragment or by the gun sights of IDF snipers — for example, Udai Tantawi, 13, who was killed in the Askar refugee camp in Nablus, and Mundal Abu Alia, 13, who was killed near his village adjacent to Ramallah, on the way to Kokhav Hashahar.

And do not say it is a necessary thing that can be denounced, for the sake of the state's security and for the sake of preserving the lives of our own children. There is no necessity to kill the enemy's children in order to save our own children. There is no atonement and forgiveness granted because it is claimed that there was no intent — this, in contrast to their despicable terrorism. Our right to defend ourselves does not give us the right to take actions that do not meet the test of human and Jewish morality.

My outcry is that of a father trying to survive the last 10 years, since the fall of our son, and who does not find respite and does not find tranquillity in revenge operations, and cannot live in an environment that sanctifies killing and more killing, ours and theirs.

My outcry is not even a form of protest: it comes to tell the Jewish people how saddened I am to be part of the national killing machine; how much it hurts me to live with absence of my son and the presence of continued mutual bloodshed; how much I am not afraid to shed tears over the loss of children whose only sin is that they were from the second or third generation of a people that lives under continued occupation, without any hope of change; how disappointed I am with all of us, who are not climbing over the barricades in order to act as human shields for the children of Gaza, Nablus and Al-Bureij.

Cry beloved country for your fallen sons and for your people who have become used to death, and accept with equanimity the death of Raad al-Batash and Mahmoud al-Batash and other boys and girls under the age of 19, over 700 of their and our children, who were killed in the past five years.