

You deserve a factual look at...

"Excessive Force"

Are Israelis overreacting to the present upheaval?

Once again, the Palestinians have risen in bloody upheaval, in the second "intifada", allegedly provoked by (now) Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount. Many think that Israel is overreacting to the attacks against it. Our Secretary of State, General Colin Powell, a man who has always advocated maximum effort, made the surprising statement that Israel was using "excessive and disproportionate force" in quelling the uprising.

What are the facts?

How did it come about? First of all, the claim that this uprising came about as a result of Mr. Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount is a silly and flimsy pretext. This uprising, now several months old, was carefully planned and continues to be orchestrated by the Palestinian Authority, of which Yasser Arafat is chairman. He pulls all the strings; nothing happens without his approval.

So far, hundreds have died and thousands have been wounded in this uprising -- most of them Palestinians, including children and even babies. Unbelievable though it may seem to us, Palestinian children who have died or who have been injured were in many cases deliberately put into the crossfire by their parents.

Israeli children who were killed or who were injured were, in every case, victims of snipers, who deliberately targeted those innocents for their bloody purposes.

There are two kinds of Israeli victims: Those who are ambushed in random terror attacks against civilians, either on the highways or in the cities, by snipers, by suicide bombers or by Arabs deliberately driving their cars into unsuspecting crowds. And then there are the victims of the never-ending war in the streets. It is typically fought with rocks thrown by teenagers and even children in the front, and by soldiers with bombs, Molotov cocktails, and guns in the background. The weapons used are those that the Israelis foolishly gave to the Palestinians for their "police force" or which, in full violation of the Oslo Accord, the Palestinians smuggled into the territory of the Palestinian Authority.

It is true that the number of Palestinian casualties is substantially larger than those of the Israelis. This disparity is partly the result of the decision of the Palestinians to create martyrs and to evoke world sympathy for their plight and -- the ultimate hope -- to have an international force, a U.N. contingent, stationed in Israel or in the territories. The other reason that the number of Palestinian

casualties is greater is that the Palestinian mobs attack the Israeli military in large numbers; soldiers, having to defend themselves and avoid being overrun, inevitably cause casualties in protecting themselves.

Just imagine your son or daughter being one of the Israeli soldiers. Howling mobs throwing rocks (yes, they hurt and kill!) attack the soldiers. From the unseen depths of the attacking mob come gunfire, grenades, and flying bottles of flaming gasoline. What, if you were in charge, would you tell the Israeli soldiers to do? Respond, as they do now in most cases, with rubber bullets? Or would this be the time to use live ammunition? You know what the answer is. **Israel is a civilized and democratic country.**

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The reality, because Israel is a civilized and democratic country, is that, rather than use "excessive force", Israel is using almost unbelievable restraint, in order to keep casualties to a very mini-

imum. There can be no question that if any real force, let alone "excessive force", were used, the number of casualties would be many times greater. Remember what happened in Somalia? Under similar circumstances, the helicopters were called in and mercilessly gunned down the insurgents! Within minutes, hundreds were killed -- more casualties than in the many months that the Israeli military has allowed this uprising to continue.

Israel's restraint is based on its own valuation of human life, but also on a regard for world opinion, which, in this case, as so many times before, is ready to label Israelis the aggressors or, in the most execrable of tastes, to compare them to the Nazis.

Even though many have died so far in this intifada, the toll would have been much, much greater were it not for the restraint and the discipline of Israeli troops and the measured response policy of the Israeli government. In order to avoid provoking the Arabs, Israel has on occasion even refrained from bringing in helicopters to evacuate wounded soldiers.

Can you imagine what the response of government troops would be if such an uprising were to occur in any of the Arab countries -- say, Syria, Saudi Arabia, or Egypt? Many thousands would die. Ultimately, however, if this violence does not abate, Israel will indeed have to use adequate force (not "excessive force") to quell it, even at the risk of international condemnation. But it is clear that Israel cannot permit this situation to continue indefinitely. It must be stopped. And the way to stop it in an instant is for Mr. Arafat to give the word to do so. He has not done that so far. In fact, and because it serves his purposes, he is the key instigator.

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