

Three Pleas in the Aftermath of the October 7 Massacre

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I would like to voice three urgent pleas. One to a pair of individuals, one to the Israeli government and one to the world at large and the USA in particular.

In the aftermath of Hamas' viciously brutal attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, troubling developments have been emerging overseas. There are efforts to implement an academic boycott on Israel by international institutions, which could hinder the advancement of Israeli research, and might ultimately undermine Israel's high scientific standing

However, far more concerning is the fast growing hostility towards Israel, seen on university and college campuses, especially in the USA. This poses a serious threat to the safety, and possibly the lives, of Jewish and Israeli students and faculty.

A disturbing and shameful manifestation of this occurred during the congressional hearing of the Presidents of Harvard University, the University of Pennsylvania (UPenn), and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). The president of UPenn has already resigned as a result, and one can only hope that the other two presidents will follow suit. I would like to **call upon them to actually do so** without further ado!

Nobel laureate and Israel Academy member Aharon Ciechanover was correct when he wrote in an op-ed article: "It was incumbent upon the [three] presidents to concentrate on their most crucial task: educating for truth", explaining that what he had in mind were "social, historical and geopolitical truth and equal morality to all".

On a personal note, having earned my doctorate from MIT in 1978, I was most disappointed by MIT president Sally Kornbluth, whose performance in the hearing actually received a full show of support from the institution's Board of Directors. My immense 45-year-old pride in that doctorate has now been replaced by a profound sense of shame.

We all need to take decisive and persistent actions against such occurrences abroad, which range from violence-inciting inflammatory incidents at higher education institutions to the meekness of the leadership thereof. The international scientific community should not only condemn the devastating onslaught of October 7, but also address the deeply troubling hatred that has ensued.

Turning now to our own neck of the woods, the October 7 massacre took an unprecedented toll on Israelis, and the subsequent ongoing war in Gaza is wreaking additional devastating havoc. Besides many fully justified actions against the perpetrators of October 7, it is also inflicting immense irreparable harm on innumerable innocent people.

However, our gravest concern is the Hamas' continuous holding of the remaining 137 hostages in Gaza. These are not prisoners of war, but people of all ages who were kidnapped by force and terror. I plead with our government to **give the hostage issue absolute top priority**. Among its various plans and goals, nothing holds more significance these days than focusing all efforts on bringing those hostages back home, to the very last one. And I find it deeply disturbing that Israel's actions at present do not seem to reflect this urgency.

Finally, even if all campuses calm down, all problematic academic leaders step down and all the hostages are safely back home, we must come to terms with the fact that the Gaza issue is not merely a conflict between Israel and some murderous Palestinian faction. It represents, albeit in a particularly horrible manifestation, a far broader and darker problem, which is strongly relevant to the entire region and has the frightening potential of affecting the world at large.

It is not for me to try to delve into the history of the problem, or to analyze its nature. However, what appears to be obvious even to a layman like me is that its resolution will not result from local efforts, but must involve a broad, multinational effort. The USA, I claim, has a major role to play in this, and I plead with the current USA administration **to initiate and lead this effort**, firmly, fairly and with utmost care and sensitivity.

It is difficult to imagine any other option that has the potential of bringing about peace and prosperity for the ever-so-troubled people of the region, and in so doing dismantling the explosive situation that could very well escalate rapidly and bring about the truly unthinkable, worldwide.

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Parts of this article are based on a speech delivered at the inauguration ceremony for new members elected to the Israel Academy.