

Haaretz | Opinion

# Opinion | Israel's Retaliation on Iran Was a Rare Moment of Reason and Restraint

Sunday 27 October 2024, by [LEVY Gideon](#) (Date first published: 27 October 2024).

**Here is some good news, for a change. Israel acted on Saturday with commendable rationality and restraint.**

*Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at a meeting in the command center of the defense ministry during the retaliatory attack on Iran, in Tel Aviv, on Saturday. Credit: GPO via AFP*

The decision to make do with a measured retaliation in Iran, with few casualties and little boasting, is the first judicious decision made by Israel this year. One must commend decision-makers in the government and army, and this too is something of a rarity.

When the Sabbath is over – and this column is being written before that happens – the radical right will come out foaming at the mouth against the decision. Former defense establishment officials and their like-minded panelists already did so in TV studios on Saturday. Their bloodlust was not fully satiated, which is further proof of the wisdom behind that decision.

And if anyone still needed proof that momentary reason had taken hold of Israel, one could, as usual, rely on opposition leader Yair Lapid. He foolishly rushed to condemn the decision; he wanted more blood. “The decision not to attack strategic and economic targets in Iran was wrong,” determined the strategist, overtaking Netanyahu, and not for the first time, on the right. When it comes to warmongering, Lapid proved once again that there is no difference between him and the extreme right and that there is no opposition to the war in Israel. That’s why we don’t need him, we have Itamar Ben-Gvir.

If Israel doesn’t wreck things and [if Iran displays similar restraint](#), we were saved from another disaster on Saturday, possibly harsher than all the preceding ones. No war broke out between Iran and Israel. The incompetent U.S. administration managed, for the first time since the war erupted, to affect its course. Following a year in which the U.S. fulfilled all Israel’s desires and needs, without any strings attached, a year in which Israel did not adhere to any advice, warnings or pleas by the Americans, Israel acceded to the superpower’s request.

Contrary to all expectations and precedents, Netanyahu listened to President Joe Biden, who would have preferred it if Israel had not attacked at all, certainly not on the eve of the U.S. elections, but the administration can live with a limited attack. Perhaps it is thanks to the administration that a calamity was avoided.

All this sounds too good to be true. It’s possible that by the time these words are published, the situation will be upended. I remember one instance in which Netanyahu deserved praise for wisely accepting a UN plan for solving the problem of [asylum seekers](#) who had come to Israel. By the time the sun rose, he had reversed his decision, due to pressure by racists and xenophobes in his camp.

One must hope that this time he will stand by his prudence, despite the criticism he'll be subjected to.

One may ask what Saturday's attack was intended for, other than the desire to placate, even partially, people seeking revenge for Iran's earlier attack. One could easily have lived without the retaliatory attack. But when the damage inflicted on Israel was so minimal, it's best not to ask this question. Israel showed Iran what it has long known - that [Israel has total military superiority in the region, and the ball is now in Iran's court](#). If there too reason wins, we've been saved from a disaster, at least for now.

Nothing was resolved on Saturday. The wars in Gaza and Lebanon are continuing full tilt, with no sign of abating. Iran is still a bitter enemy and so are its proxies. The solution for this will never be a military one. Blood continues to be shed on all sides, pointlessly, and with it the suffering and unimaginable terror of the hostages, their families, [the evacuees](#) in Israel as well as the three million evacuees in Gaza and Lebanon, moving back and forth with no present or future. The end to [Gaza's suffering](#) is not even on the horizon. There isn't a day there without dozens of fatalities, without war crimes committed by Israel, without dead or crippled children, terrified and orphaned.

But in the midst of all this despair, a faint glimmer of hope appeared on Saturday. Israel acted with reason and restraint. It's true, one can rely on it to return to its old ways, but in these black days, even a faint glimmer of hope is almost a formative event.

**Gideon Levy**

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**P.S.**

- Haaretz. Oct 27, 2024 2:29 am IST:  
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- *Gideon Levy's article in the Haaretz:*  
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