

Benchmarking Civilian Home Front Resilience: Less than Meets the Eye

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The Threat and Consequences of Deterrence

Almost four years after the Second Lebanon War (July-August 2006) and more than a year and a half after Operation Cast Lead against Hamas in Gaza (December 2008-January 2009), it has been demonstrated again that deterrence as a major instrument for defense of the civilian home front works, at least for now. Hizbollah, though building up its military capacities, has religiously observed the ceasefire in the north for what is the longest period of quiet on the Lebanese border in years. Likewise Hamas has refrained from launching rockets in the south and limited the attempts of splinter groups to provoke Israel, while concentrating on consolidating its authority in Gaza and upgrading its offensive arsenal.

However, not many expect this tranquil period to last for long. The basic assumption in Israel is that the country has mostly bought time, and that the threats to the home front are steadily growing.¹ The defense establishment² and pundits alike suggest that Israel has to prepare itself for the scenario of open conflict in the foreseeable future that will involve Hizbollah, Hamas, and possibly Syria, and face a developed capacity on the opposing side to hit any target in Israel with growing accuracy,³ including with non-conventional warheads.⁴ To this threat might be added the Palestinian terror model of extensive suicide bombing experienced during the second intifada, and possibly a direct or indirect Iranian contribution, taking into account the ramifications of a future nuclear option. The latter would necessarily represent a dramatic game changer and demands careful

study to produce a thorough defensive posture. The critical question is to what extent Israel knows how to make the best use of the time until the effect of its deterrence wears out, so that the next round finds the civilian population readily prepared for these acknowledged threats.

To date, the answer to this question is mixed. On the one hand the Israeli government, through its diverse – and sometimes conflicting – agencies, has accomplished a great deal in the complex preparedness process. On the other hand, several basic issues are still unsolved, to the extent that they hamper the progress achieved so far. This article attempts to analyze the equation and evaluate the present degree of preparedness in the home front for another round of conflict.

Assessing the Elements of Progress

In the framework of a multi-layered comprehensive approach, the past year witnessed a remarkable assembly of steps designed to enhance the preparedness of the civilian home front in Israel. Some represent the beginning of a long process; none of them are complete. Perhaps the most encouraging component has been the numerous preparedness exercises at all levels in the system, representing a holistic concept and a long range vision.⁵ The drills engage in different threat scenarios, involve the entire scope of agencies and stakeholders that take part in emergency management, and contribute directly to enhance the professional capacity of the first responder. They also help to educate the public at large – with particular focus on the school system⁶ – on how to handle the consequences of the different hazards.⁷

Another major element that attracts wide public attention is physical protection and sheltering. The official doctrine⁸ entails four parameters. The first is personal protection, which is supposed to be covered by the protection kits, designed to serve as an answer to chemical agents. After much debate and hesitation, the government decided in early 2010 to start a three year distribution project for the entire population. This is the positive side. However, the project has not been budgeted in full, and at present covers not more than two thirds of the population. In addition, the kits do not include the atropine injection, as was the case in the past. The second element, household protection, is based on the government's decision of

1991 to mandate a shelter in each new apartment. Consequently, one third of the apartments in the country are sheltered and provide adequate protection from an explosion of 500 kilos in the range of 15 meters, as well as from chemical agents. However, the program to facilitate the reinforcement of older apartments⁹ has for the most part failed,¹⁰ and awaits a renewed version that will make it more attractive to the public. A specific home sheltering project for the Gaza envelope area is in progress; the first limited stage was completed in March 2010.¹¹ The third element is institutional sheltering, which covers mostly schools and hospitals. Here the picture is even more complicated, and the government's allocation is inadequate. It is usually preceded by much controversy, political arm twisting, and often the intervention of the Supreme Court. Finally, public sheltering is still severely lagging behind the needs, despite some local improvements, particularly due to philanthropic donations to municipalities.¹² Israel thus appears to be vacillating on the issue, pondering how much and where to invest in civilian sheltering. The expenses are high, and the tangible added value is questionable. Still, ongoing political pressure, coupled with the understanding that sheltering also contributes to the sense of security of the civilians, keeps the debate alive and the cost growing, albeit painfully.¹³

The picture is less ambiguous when it comes to the issue of sheltering the civilian and particularly the military infrastructure in Israel. It seems that the defense establishment has internalized the implications of high trajectory weapon systems targeting its installations, particularly the air force, and to a lesser extent the intelligence bases. The understanding now is that if those bases and deployment areas are hit by the more advanced accurate missiles, it will affect IDF capacity to exercise its offensive options freely and continuously. The result is a significant allocation of resources to physical sheltering, as well as mental preparation of the soldiers and families at the air force bases, assuming that they will serve as a "magnet" for the rockets.¹⁴ The threat to civilian infrastructure, including communications and cyber infrastructures, must also be addressed properly, particularly with the acquisition of more precise missiles and possibly cyber terrorist measures by the enemy.

Concurrently, significant progress has been made in developing Israel's military active defense¹⁵ capabilities against the various rocket and missile

threats. While there is a steady advance in the development and deployment of the improved long range ABM Arrow 2¹⁶ and the medium range air defense system Magic Wand, to be deployed in 2014,¹⁷ the most recent addition to the active anti-rocket defense arsenal is the controversial short range Iron Dome system, developed by Rafael and declared operational in the first quarter of 2010.¹⁸ Since its inception following the Second Lebanon War, this system has invited heated debate.¹⁹ Now that the system is available for deployment by the IAF, it is not clear if the next batteries – following the first that is planned to be deployed in one of the air bases – will indeed be procured for the purpose of defending the civilian centers as promised publically by the political leadership, when, and in what quantities.²⁰ The US special decision to finance the procurement of more batteries with the sum of \$205 million will definitely improve the situation, but will not change the dilemma. There is still an ongoing debate in Israel, as the price for covering many of the civilian targets is extremely high, and many argue for giving preference to strategic assets rather than to the civilian population at large.

Implications for Societal Resilience

These and other practical measures aimed to enhance the preparedness and the defensive posture of the home front contribute to augment the social resilience of the civilian population. The principal idea is that in times of crisis the public will be mentally prepared for the severe consequences, and following traumatic events it will be able to rebound quickly to normal – and even improved – function. It is now understood in the field of consequence management that if this rate of resiliency is not achieved and sustained, decision makers may be exposed to severe political pressure from the fragmented public, and its freedom of action in the next conflict would be critically impeded.

Politicians and senior functionaries who are involved with the civilian front often express their understanding that societal resilience is indeed one of the most crucial issues in preparing the civilian front for the next conflict. In many ways the term resilience has become an oft-used buzz word. The commander of the Home Front Command, Maj. Gen. Yair Golan, recently defined resilience as “the capacity of the civilians, organizations,

and institutions of the civil society to successfully cross crisis situations by preserving the functional sustainability, the social cohesiveness, and the legitimacy of the government, in order to mitigate the damage and to bring about the speediest recovery.”²¹

Concrete resilience projects have been conducted in recent years in several towns all over the country. In most cases these projects focus on the community level, and include orientation and restructuring of the local social and political systems to prepare the civilian population for a crisis. The main components of these projects, which vary more in outline and sponsorship than in essence, usually comprise enhancement of local leadership, private-public cooperation, and dissemination of information; and promotion of preparedness, with a strong emphasis on school, social welfare, and public health systems.²² One innovative experiment has been initiated by the Reut Institute to construct a conceptual framework for a statewide civil resilience network.²³

This is a positive, worthwhile trend and indeed, in recent years the field of crisis management has gained a momentous surge of interest in the academic community. Several leading institutions of higher education have opened special programs for the study of consequence management.²⁴ However, the critical question is to what extent these diversified resilience oriented activities indeed promote the resilience of the Israeli public. In fact, the connection and coordination between the different programs is sporadic and unsystematic;²⁵ there are no accepted guidelines²⁶ as to what to do and how to promote resilience; and there are no systematic benchmarks to gauge the outcome of what is being done. There is a need for an accepted methodology to measure and assess the rate of resilience among communities and the public as a whole.²⁷

It is commonly accepted that resilience needs to be planned and promoted in advance – before systems are damaged and undesired consequences occur.²⁸ In terms of concrete actions, there are several leading components to enhance and sustain social resilience. The first, almost elementary precondition is promoting the effectiveness and the professional skills of first responders, to improve initial mitigation. One can assume that the different agencies are indeed doing their best, within their budget limitations, to reach the highest standards. Israel is recognized

as an international leader in emergency response, which does not mean, however, that more cannot be done to maximize the capacities, especially with regard to coordination and cooperation between the different response organs. The critical point of weakness is still that of command and control, or the question of responsibility in a given theater of operations. The last conflict in Gaza manifested the strength of the Home Front Command and its approach that the local governments are the ones to assume operational leadership in emergency situations. This delicate question has not yet been resolved in theory, by regulation, or in practice. It also raises serious doubts as to the present qualifications of most of the municipalities to exercise their authority over the other first responders.

The second goal is to enhance social cohesiveness and community responsiveness. This is a more complex challenge. It is generally assumed that socially stronger communities are likely to be more resilient in times of crisis, which suggests that it is imperative to strengthen the social and economic fabric of the weaker communities. Yet even if true, this is a long process and should not come to the exclusion of work in the stronger communities. Much can be practically achieved under the heading “an active community is a resilient community”: enhancement of the connectivity of the members; their active involvement in preparedness projects; encouragement of public-private partnership; extended engagement of NGOs and volunteers in related issues; and public education towards awareness of its needs and responsibilities. Some initial steps have recently been taken in this direction. One promising example is the initiative to engage high school students in response and mitigation tasks.²⁹ In this context, as in many others, there are more ideas, promises, and hopes than actual progress, and much more remains to be achieved. The question is who will take the lead.

Third, “meta-leadership” on the national and local levels must be brought into play. The most crucial gap as far as the preparedness of the Israeli home front is the issue of leadership and responsibility. This is true mostly on the national level, but in many instances also on the local level. In both cases there is ongoing ambiguity regarding who is in charge of preparing the civilian systems and the population for emergency, and of managing them in times of crisis. Another even more difficult challenge

is the quality of leadership and the degree of commitment of the leaders needed to maximize the public capacities effectively and to bring them to the optimal standard. Leonard Marcus, Isaac Ashkenazi, Barry Dorn, and Joseph Henderson of the National Preparedness Leadership Initiative of Harvard University³⁰ have developed a model to suggest that “meta-leaders” recognize that “achieving genuine national preparedness demands a spirit of cooperation combined with tangible inter-agency mechanisms” to enable connectivity.³¹ The experience of Operation Cast Lead showed that in several localities this model of meta-leadership was evident. The result was a reasonable response to the (moderate) challenge posed by Hamas. This is a positive example to be emulated by others.

Priorities for the Near Future

Over the last decade the Israeli civilian front was severely challenged three times. Even though 2009 (following the operation in Gaza) was the most peaceful in decades, many expect security deterioration in the future to confront civilians with yet another serious threat and trauma. Simultaneously with the long range, ongoing process of preparedness and the consequent promotion of social resilience, there are several urgent issues that should serve as leverage for meaningful progress. They all circulate around leadership, responsibility, and operational capacities.

Three years after the establishment of the National Emergency Management Authority (NEMA),³² the structure of the Israeli home front establishment has not changed in any measurable way to amend its deficiencies. There is still a serious lack of a mechanism that will manifest responsibility and authority to move the system forward in an orchestrated manner. NEMA was designed from the beginning to serve as a “coordinating organ – by the minister of defense – to assist him to materialize his overall responsibility in dealing with the home front in all emergency situations” and in times of crisis to “coordinate between the government ministries and other agencies.”³³ As such, this small outfit, chaired and managed by the deputy minister of defense, is rather limited in its capacities to serve even as first among equals. This is also the case with the potent Home Front Command, which has strengthened its position in the field, the National Police, and the professional ministries such as the

Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Welfare. In fact on the national level, there seems to be presently more bureaucratic and political friction than genuine coordination. This calls for a major revision.³⁴

The consensus is that the local governments should be the cornerstone of disaster management. In principle, it is a valid idea. However, many of the local governments are still far from able to take upon themselves this huge responsibility. Many are struggling to handle their routine missions. If they are to assume their responsibility for emergency management, they must be granted the basic means to do so. The only one that can supply them with these means is the central government, but this has yet to happen. Those municipalities that have reached a reasonable degree of preparedness and have assumed a leading position over the other agencies involved in the field have done so mostly with their own resources. Naturally, most of those are the economically and politically stronger ones. While they would do well to assist their counterparts, the responsibility for the change lies with the central government.

Which brings to the fore the last argument: The deputy minister of defense has steadily advocated for the urgent need to pass a new law³⁵ to settle the political and bureaucratic structure of responsibility and authority over the home front. There are some encouraging signs of progress in this direction. A major concern should be the nature and substance of the new law, and the examination if it adequately meets the serious needs of meta-leadership, orchestration, coordination, budgeting, and effectiveness. It also has to address clearly the question of an earmarked budget for the home front, and include unequivocal provisions regarding the leading role of the local governments. Fresh thinking will be a solid basis that would serve as leverage for improving the defensive posture of the civilian home front and its social resilience.

Notes

- 1 Maj. Gen. Amos Yadlin, Head of IDF Military Intelligence, at the INSS conference "Security Challenges of the 21st Century," December 15, 2009.
- 2 Matan Vilnai, "The Vision for Home Front Preparedness: The Long Term Action Items," in Meir Elran, ed., *The Civil Front* (Tel Aviv: Institute for National

- Security Studies, Memorandum No. 99, June 2009). Maj. Gen. (ret.) Vilnai is the deputy minister of defense, responsible for the home front.
- 3 Amos Harel, *Haaretz*, “Missiles Here, Missiles There,” *Haaretz*, April 17, 2009, <http://www.haaretz.co.il/hasite/objects/pages/PrintArticle.jhtml?itemNo=1163365>.
 - 4 “Turning Point 4,” the annual national exercise held in May 2010, also simulated defensive measures against chemical and biological attacks. In early January 2010 the Home Front Command conducted the largest drill of its kind ever, called “Orange Torch 4,” which dealt with a terrorist’s biological challenge.
 - 5 Since 2007 all exercises culminate in the annual national “Turning Point” drill. For further information on the 2009 exercise see <http://www.gov.il/FirstGov/Special/Mifne3.htm>; <http://www.rahel.mod.gov.il/FrontTrainings/TargilMifne3/Pages/TargilMifne3.aspx>.
 - 6 <http://cms.education.gov.il/EducationCMS/Units/Shefi/HerumLachatzMashber/herum/HayomSheaharei2009.htm>.
 - 7 Homeland Security Institute, “Public Role and Engagement in Counterterrorism Efforts: Implications of Israeli Practices for the US,” Final Report, April 2009.
 - 8 Yair Golan, “The Home Front Command’s Operational Doctrine and Future Challenges,” in *The Civil Front*. Maj. Gen. Golan is the commander of the Home Front Command.
 - 9 Tama 38, the national program for the reinforcement of old buildings, is designed to improve the capacity of houses that were constructed before the new standards for earthquakes were regulated. The public response was so far negligible. See <http://www.tma38.com/tma38-info.html>.
 - 10 Housing Minister Ariel Attias was quoted as saying that “Tama 38 in its present formula... failed,” *Globes*, March 8, 2010.
 - 11 The first stage entails 2,334 units in Sderot and the surrounding settlements. The second phase will include 4000 homes, at the cost of 2 billion NIS, *Haaretz*, March 8, 2010. The project limits the protected settlements to those within 4.5 km from the Gaza border, the range of the basic Qassam rocket.
 - 12 “The Shelters in the North: Dramatic Improvement, at Least for the Jews,” *Ynet*, July 12, 2009.
 - 13 David Klein, “Sheltering the Population: A Limit to Investment,” in *The Civil Front*.
 - 14 “The Air Force Assesses: Hundreds of Missiles toward its Bases in the Next War,” *Haaretz*, March 8, 2010.
 - 15 Active defense is the term used to define military weapon systems designed to thwart high trajectory weaponry, as distinct from passive defense, which refers mostly to sheltering.

- 16 <http://www.army-technology.com/projects/arrow2/>; the improved Arrow 3 is already in an R&D process. See Anshel Pfeffer and Yoav Stern, "Israel Hopes the Test will Allow Continued Funds for Arrow 3," *Haaretz*, April 8, 2009, www.haaretz.com/hasite/spages/1077322.html.
- 17 See http://imda.org.il/hebrew/Defenses/defense_System.asp?missileId=32; *The Marker*, March 21, 2010; Yiftah Shapir, "Anti Rocket Defense: A Waste of Taxpayers' Money?" *INSS Insight* No. 18, May 30, 2007.
- 18 See http://www.rafael.co.il/marketing/SIP_STORAGE/FILES/6/946.pdf.
- 19 Meir Elran, "A Qualitative Leap in the Defense Posture of the Civilian Front?" *INSS Insight* No. 157, January 20, 2010; Uzi Rubin and Meir Elran, "The Case for Short-Range Missile Defense Grows," *Jane's Weekly*, March 10, 2009; Uzi Rubin, "An Active Defense Against Rockets and Missiles: The Lessons of Operation Cast Lead and the 2006 Lebanon War," *BESA Perspective Papers on Current Affairs* No. 69, Feb. 2009; Reuvan Pedatzur, "The Dome of Illusions," *Haaretz*, March 27, 2009.
- 20 Based on an article in *French Intelligence Online* issue No. 614 of March 25, 2010, "Singapore's Arms Test in Gaza," Yossi Melman (*Haaretz*, March 25, 2010) suggests that Singapore financed the development of the system and that perhaps it was not designed to defend the Israeli civilians in the south. He submits that currently there is no budget allocation for the procurement of additional batteries. There is a discussion between the Ministry of Defense and the representatives of the regional councils in the areas facing Gaza on the issue of deployment of Iron Dome to protect civilian centers. The government says it lacks the funds and the locals argue that they were promised to be defended by the system. See *Haaretz*, April 27, 2010. See also the public letter of the chairman of Eshkol local council, Haim Yellin, "Budget and Life Saving," April 29, 2010.
- 21 Speaking at a conference held by Ben-Gurion University, March 15, 2010.
- 22 See for example "Town Resiliency," a project in Beer Sheva carried out by a partnership of the National Emergency Management Authority (NEMA), B. Harris Hossen (Resilience) Center, The Jewish Agency, and others, <http://www.childrenatrisk.co.il/src/file/beer%20sheva.pdf>.
- 23 See <http://reut-institute.org/en/Publication.aspx?PublicationId=3729>.
- 24 For example, at Tel Aviv, Ben-Gurion, and Haifa Universities.
- 25 Zeev Zuk-Ram at Ben-Gurion University, March 15, 2010. Brig. Gen. (ret.) Zuk-Ram is the director of NEMA.
- 26 In May 2007 the Home Front Command issued a publication titled "The Doctrine of Civil Defense in the Local Authority." It mainly defines the legal obligations and responsibilities of the local government in terms of preparations for war and emergency situations. It barely deals with the issue of promoting civil resilience.

- 27 Robert McCreight, "Resilience as a Goal and Standard in Emergency Management," *Journal of Homeland Security and Emergency Management* 7, no. 1 (2010): article 15.
- 28 Homeland Security Studies and Analysis Institute, "Resilience – Concept Developments: An Operational Framework for Resilience," August 2009.
- 29 Yair Golan in an interview in *Haaretz*, January 1, 2009, envisages 50,000 students nationwide volunteering in their communities in emergency situations.
- 30 A joint project of Harvard School of Public Health and the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, <http://ksgexecprogram.harvard.edu/Programs/npli/overview.aspx>.
- 31 "National Preparedness and Five Dimensions of Meta-Leadership," <http://www.hks.harvard.edu/sites/npli/PDFs/5DimensionsofMetaLeadership.pdf>. See also <http://www.meta-leadershipsummit.org/documents/FiveDimensionsofMeta-LeadershipComprehensiveBrief.pdf>.
- 32 <http://www.rahel.mod.gov.il/ABOUTUS/Pages/AboutPage.aspx>.
- 33 Resolution of the Israeli Government B-43, December 19, 2007.
- 34 The present governing model of NEMA is scheduled to be reexamined in 2012.
- 35 The present Law of Civil defense dates back to 1951 – http://www.oref.org.il/sip_storage/FILES/0/690.doc#_Toc150834608.