



Yaalon: What'll We Do If They Lob Mortars from Samaria?

Defense Minister says the lesson from Gaza is – don't let the same thing happen in Judea and Samaria.

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First Publish: 9/30/2014, 10:59 AM

Defense Minister Moshe Yaalon said Tuesday that Israel needs to “sober up” and learn a lesson from the recent war with Gaza – namely, that a similar situation must not be allowed to arise in Judea and Samaria.

“Once the area turns into Hamastan, it won't just be Hamas,” he warned, at the **Institute for National Security Studies (INSS)**. “We are talking about an Iranian proxy and global jihadi elements. Who can afford such a security situation in Judea and Samaria? What reply will there be if they fire mortar shells from the western hills of Samaria?”

Yaalon revealed that Israel was considering some unspecified positive steps vis-a-vis the Palestinian Arabs in Judea and Samaria, “but then the abduction in which the three teens were murdered in Gush Etzion” and Operation Brother's Keeper began.

Yaalon said he does not know for sure if Hamas planned in advance to start a large scale war against Israel in the summer. On this matter, he said, “there are many speculations, but what happened here is definitely an attempt [to start a conflagration], either by a terror abduction or a tunnel terror strike, which were foiled in the end.”

Yaalon added that the security establishment believes that at least 50% of the 2,000 people killed in Gaza in the war were terrorists.

He insisted that Israel was in control of the conflict from the outset. “When we entered the campaign, we thought in advance what goal to set, and how the campaign should end. This is a discussion that, unfortunately, did not take place in the Second Lebanon War.”

He indirectly criticized minister Naftali Bennett and Avigdor Liberman for their own criticism of the government's handling of the war. “An operation is guided by a compass, not by a weather vane,” he said, and blamed “a campaign of inflammatory rhetoric for creating unrealistic expectations. “This gap in expectations,” he added, “creates the feeling of disappointment. But leadership is not measured by populism.”

Israel, he said, must be ready “at any moment” for escalation in the south, north, and everywhere else. “The Middle East is falling apart,” Yaalon concluded.

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