

Bar Heffetz, The 2014 Gaza-War was Netanyahu's Soft Underbelly

It's been two years since the end of *Operation Protective Edge* (2014 Israel–Gaza War) and we must admit that we failed.

Israel's government didn't fail. It was actually quite successful. It's easy to be successful if your only goal is to survive, live through another month, and make it to the next election without a war. In the period between elections, the government can ramble on about the construction of dangerous tunnels, checkpoints, the Turks, and occasionally play "who has the bigger cock" with Hamas.

The media also met its goals: everyone knows that Gaza isn't sexy, the Gaza envelope is far away, and people don't want to know or understand. At least until there's a war. And wars are good for ratings. Next time we'll also all unite around our screens, declare "Quiet, we're at war," and fake collectivism.

The IDF might have failed a little. But there's a new Chief of Staff, and there's new tech to deal with the tunnels . . . So what if a few residents on the Gaza border no longer believe a word the army says?

So who really failed?

We, the residents of the Western Negev, failed, or at least those of us who don't believe this is our destiny. We who don't believe we should be evacuated every two years and understand there is a direct connection between what's happening in Gaza and what's happening here. We failed. We who just want to live in peace with our neighbors, and think that maybe it'll be difficult, perhaps even impossible, but it's simply unethical not give it our best try. And we didn't. So we failed.

We failed in pushing the agenda in Israel. We didn't shout loud enough. We were afraid, embarrassed, or mostly because we just wanted to return to normalcy. Even if that normalcy was temporary, even if we could watch the next bout of war from our balcony. We failed to convince people that policies can change. We failed to explain how important it is. We could've built solidarity around this issue and could have won. But we couldn't get people out into the streets. We got sympathy—a lot of sympathy—but sympathy doesn't change the world.

The large political camp that I belong to also failed. It failed to produce an alternative, a moral statement about what has been happening in Gaza for the last eleven years. It made no attempt to communicate to the Israeli public that government after government consistently failed them. They were terrified to state the obvious—there is no solution for Gaza without a solution for the West Bank. That indiscriminately killing Palestinians in Gaza only hurts our position in the world and reinforces BDS. There are

alternatives to the blockade of Gaza. But instead of honestly discussing them, my camp ran for election without mentioning the summer war and instead talked about the old lady laying in the hospital corridor. My camp was afraid of winning, and preferred to retreat into a familiar and cozy space instead of pulling the Gaza thorns. The Gaza war of summer 2014 was Netanyahu's soft underbelly and we did nothing to it.

So now we sit waiting for the next round of war, which is clearly going to be even more unpleasant and more deadly than *Operation Protective Edge*. I only know that next time, I will not wait two months, let alone two weeks. Since my kids will be evacuated anyway, I will sit in front of the Prime Minister's home on Balfour Street in Jerusalem. Will you all join me?

Bar Heffetz lives in Kibbutz Nirim on the Gaza border.

The Original text was published in [The Hottest Place in Hell](#)

Translation: Maya Haber