

# Bill Kaplan: Stand with Israel against Hamas terrorists

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President Biden spoke for most Americans when he denounced the Hamas terrorist attack against Israel: “This was an act of sheer evil. More than 1,000 civilians slaughtered – not just killed, slaughtered — in Israel. Among them, at least (29) American citizens killed. Parents butchered using their bodies to try to protect their children. Stomach-turning reports of babies being killed. Entire families slain. Young people massacred while attending a musical festival to celebrate peace – to celebrate peace. Women raped ... thousands wounded ... . This is terrorism.”

Biden appealed to Americans to stand together: “This is not about party or politics. This is about the security of our world, the security of the United States of America.” However, partisan recriminations soon followed. Wisconsin GOP Representatives Scott Fitzgerald, Derrick Van Orden and Senator Ron Johnson unfairly blamed Biden for a deal allowing \$6 billion in Iranian funds, frozen in South Korea, to be used for the purchase of food and medicine for Iran. In return, Iran freed 5 American hostages.

Iran supports Hamas. And, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi called the Hamas slaughter of Israelis an “innovative and victorious operation.” However, there is “no firm evidence so far that Iran authorized or directly coordinated the (Hamas) attack ...” (Washington Post). Wisconsin Democratic Senator Tammy Baldwin said: “Until I have full confidence that Iran did not play a role in these barbaric terrorist attacks on the Israeli people, the United States should freeze the \$6 billion ... in Iranian assets.” The Biden administration has apparently agreed to pause or refreeze use of these funds. Representative Van Orden took a different tack. At a White House briefing on the Hamas attack Van Orden exploded and denounced the briefers, then used profanity against Minnesota Democratic Representative Dean Phillips who had tried to get Van Orden to behave.

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Meanwhile, amid international crises in Israel, the Middle East and Ukraine, as well as a looming federal government shutdown, House Republicans are in disarray, unable to agree on a new speaker. Texas GOP Representative Michael McCaul, chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, said: “We need to get a speaker ... . The world is watching. They’re seeing a dysfunctional democracy.” And, Nebraska GOP Representative Don Bacon said: “We’re not a governing body and we should be.”

Time’s running out. Can Israel rescue Israeli, American and other hostages without Hamas murdering them or their inadvertently being killed by Israeli airstrikes? How will Israel, unlike Hamas, uphold laws of war? Will Palestinian civilians be treated humanely? Will urban warfare in Gaza City lead to heavy Israeli military and Palestinian civilian casualties? What is the Israeli exit strategy? Israel has formed a government of national unity, but Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu now faces a backlash over the Hamas attack. Why was there an Israeli intelligence failure to detect Hamas preparations for their terror attack?

Americans must stand with Israel against Hamas terrorism and supply Israel with what it needs for its defense. America and Israel are allies, requiring honest dialogue throughout.

*-Kaplan wrote a guest column from Washington, D.C., for the Wisconsin State Journal from 1995 - 2009.*