

# To maintain European support, Israel must recommit to the fight for democracy - opinion

Israel needs the United States to deter Iran and to refill its arsenals for a war that may take months. But Israel also needs the support of the free world – first and foremost of Europe.

By EMMANUEL NAVON  
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Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu shakes hands with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz during a news conference in Tel Aviv, earlier this month. (photo credit: MAYA ALLERUZZO/REUTERS)



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On October 7, Israelis were butchered and kidnapped by an Islamist te whose charter blames the world's ills on the Jews and calls for their el wherever they are.

[All Jews, therefore, are a target.](#) Not only of Hamas but also of its supp US campuses and on the streets of European capitals. After suffering t acts of barbarity since the Holocaust, Jews are now witnessing with ho cheering of Islamists and the accusing tone of leading universities and



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Yet Israel is neither powerless nor alone. The IDF was caught by surprise, but it fought back and is destroying the enemy's army. US President Joe Biden has provided Israel with ironclad military and diplomatic support. Israel also enjoys the wall-to-wall support of Western governments, which have condemned Hamas's atrocities and recognized Israel's right to defend itself.

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The leaders of Europe's main powers – the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Italy – as well as that of other European countries (most notably: Holland, Austria, Greece, the Czech Republic, and Romania) have visited Israel to show their support in words and in deeds. So have the president of the European Commission and the president of the European Parliament.

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## The world is divided between democracies and autocracies

[Russia's aggression against Ukraine](#) and Hamas's Iran-backed aggression against Israel have confirmed that the world is divided between a US-led order of democracies on the one hand, and a cartel of aggressive autocracies – China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea – on the other hand, that try to challenge America and to weaken its allies.

As President Biden said: "Hamas and Putin represent different threats, but they share this in common: They both want to completely annihilate a neighboring democracy."

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It is significant that, two days after October 7, the world's most powerful Western democracies – the US, the UK, France, Germany, and Italy – issued a joint statement condemning Hamas and recognizing Israel's right to defend itself. Needless to say, no such statement came from Beijing and Moscow.

During his visit to Israel on October 24, French President Emmanuel Macron suggested adding Hamas to NATO's anti-ISIS coalition. This extraordinary statement makes Israel a central partner in the West's struggle against Islamic terrorism. In his press conference with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, President Macron also said that the West's struggle against Islamic terrorism must be "without mercy but not without rules."

He echoed President Biden's words during his speech on October 10: "Democracies like Israel and the United States are stronger and more when we act according to the rule of law."



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The message is clear: Israel has the full support of the free world because of its common values, and therefore those values must be preserved. This means Israel must – as it does – fight Hamas while abiding by the laws of war

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But it also means that Israel will have to forgo its timidity toward Russia:

## Israel must be proactive to maintain European support

Maintaining Europe's support for Israel, however, also requires a proactive approach.

So far, Europe's key leaders – Macron, UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, Chancellor of Germany Olaf Sholtz, Italian Prime Minister Georgia Meloni, and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen – have supported Israel's right to fight Hamas. Most notably, none of them have pressured Israel (yet) into agreeing to a ceasefire.

Even the European Parliament rejected the inclusion of a call for a ceasefire in its resolution of 19 October. The strong resolution condemns "the despicable terrorist attack by Hamas" and recognizes "Israel's right to defend itself in line with humanitarian and international law."

Significantly, the resolution also condemns "Iran's destabilizing role in the region," calls for including "the entirety of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and Hezbollah on the EU list of terrorist organizations" and for "a thorough investigation into the role of Iran, as well as other countries such as Qatar and Russia, in financing and supporting terrorism in the region."

Yet those diplomatic achievements are likely to erode in the absence of intense diplomatic efforts. [Many voices in Europe are calling for a ceasefire](#), accusing Israel of war crimes, and questioning the veracity of Hamas' atrocities. To maintain the West's vital support in the war against Hamas, Israel must not only be diplomatically proactive but also make a clear policy choice in the new contest between the free world and its enemies.

*The writer is CEO of ELNET-Israel and an international relations lecturer at Tel Aviv University.*

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