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Talk is not cheap

By NIR BOMS AND IDO MIZRAHI
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In the face of Palestinian incitement, Israel must return fire through spokesmen fluent in Arabic, and take initiatives to present alternatives.

Many in Israel were appalled when an animated video clip was posted last week depicting Noam Schalit, old and bitter, walking around with a photograph of his captive son Gilad, 20 years after his abduction. This cruel cynicism, the brainchild of the Izzadin Kassam Brigades, the Hamas military wing, succeeded in drawing attention. The movement's Web sites professed that the clip was aimed at the Israeli public, which is expected to pressure the government to carry out a prisoner exchange. But a more thorough reading reveals that in actuality the target audience is mostly the Palestinians themselves, and the timing of the clip's publication is not coincidental at all.

A week before the clip was posted, within the framework of "Prisoner Week," Khaled Mashaal, chairman of the Hamas political bureau, stated that "just as Gilad Schalit is not the first prisoner, he will not be the last of them, God willing."

Mashaal continued amid raging applause: "This is a promise, and a promise of the free believer is tantamount to a commitment... I call on Noam Schalit and with the help of Allah on the fathers of the new prisoners: Do not castigate any but your leaders... as they have thwarted the last deal."

The futuristic scene in the clip which shows the inscription "Ministry of Captives and Missing [in Action]" on a sign alongside the symbols of the State of Israel, is in line with Mashaal's promise. In his messages to the future generation – that is, Arabic-speaking children – Mashaal calls for a continuation of the violent struggle. These types of messages and others, such as nonrecognition of Israel, repeat themselves on Hamas's biweekly Web magazine *Al-Fateh* ("The Conqueror"), which has been on-line for seven and a half years.

Hamas is not ashamed of its actions. Accordingly, in the magazine's permanent column "A Shahid's Tale," it is written that one of the acts of the jihad warrior from the Izzadin Kassam Brigades, Ahmed al-Sha'ar, "was the heroic operation in which the Zionist soldier Schalit was abducted."

In issue 169 of April 1, 2010, a new tier has been added in the column "songs."

For the first time, one can watch an animated video clip. The clip, entitled "Gaza," which was produced in Amman, is accompanied by a song which tells of a girl named Gaza (a metaphor for Gaza City) who lived in perfect harmony with nature.

Suddenly, the sky grows dark and bombs rain down (dropped by the Israeli enemy), destroying Gaza's home and killing her parents. Gaza takes a stone from the ruins of her home and hurls it at an enemy soldier. The soldier does not hesitate and shoots her, and the bullet pierces her heart. Gaza falls but then rises with the bullet in hand. She lobbs it at the "eye of the ugly soldier, which is ripped out by it."

The wounded soldier retreats immediately while Gaza smiles and leaves this world. But now thousands of children like her arise, and thus she is reborn every day.

Hamas broadcast the clip "Gaza" on one of its two TV channels, Al Aksa TV, on March 3, nearly three weeks before the link to the clip on YouTube was posted on *Al-Fateh*.

THE STATE of Israel has no good answers for this type of incitement, and it goes without saying that as long as future generations are exposed to this type of theme, the chances of a political solution will decrease and the chances of another violent confrontation will grow.

At a time when the Voice of Israel in Arabic radio transmitter barely covers the West Bank and Gaza, Israel must do more to take part in this important battle for the souls of future generations. To do that, it must return fire through spokesmen fluent in Arabic, and take other initiatives that will present a conceptual and moral alternative to the system of unbridled incitement.

Furthermore, it is important to bring these voices to global public opinion shapers so they are exposed to the intensity of the incitement, and for them do their part to fight it. Perhaps the time has come for senior Israeli politicians to learn Arabic and occasionally address the Palestinians directly. That would surely send ripples through the media.

There is much to say.

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