Quite simply, this means that first responders to a terror attack (such as ZAKA volunteers or MDA paramedics) are required to treat a critically wounded terrorist before treating less-severely injured victims.

Let me give you two examples: When ZAKA Chief of Operations Haim Weingarten arrived at the site of a car-ramming attack at the entrance to Jerusalem, he was faced with the following scenario: The terrorist, who had been shot in his car, still showed signs of life even though he had gun wounds to his head. It was clear beyond any doubt that the carnage at the site was caused by the terrorist. The meat cleaver on the front seat left little to the imagination - this could have been a much more serious and deadly attack.

On the road, lay a toddler in a stroller who had been run over by the terrorist, with a very serious wound to the leg. As Haim Weingarten said in a radio interview on the matter: “And you are asking me who I treated? The toddler, of course.”

About a week later, ZAKA volunteer Haim Foxman arrived at the scene of a stabbing attack at the Jaffa Gate. Once again, he was faced with a similar scenario. He also treated the severely injured victim at the expense of the critically wounded terrorist. His post on Facebook read: “For those of you who are wondering, when I arrived at the scene of the terror attack at Jaffa Gate, I offered assistance to the stabbing victims first. No! I did not treat the terrorist, even though his condition was critical”.

Foxman’s posting on social media was shared and liked by thousands of people, who all expressed support for his stance. However, neither Foxman nor Weingarten were acting on their own initiative. They are both volunteers with ZAKA, Jewish, veterans of countless terror attacks and paramedics who work according to halacha and the directives of the ZAKA Rabbinic Council.

ZAKA follows the moral compass of halacha, dealing with complex issues related to honoring the dead (kavod hamnat) in keeping with Jewish law and guided by rabbinical advice. Even though ZAKA is an integral part of Israel’s emergency response service, with 3,000 volunteers working 24/7 throughout Israel, we have taken an unequivocal decision on the matter.

We direct ZAKA volunteers to first treat the victims of a terror attack - without blinking an eye. Only after they have given medical assistance, should they begin treating the murderous terrorist who carried out the attack. In spite of the ethical code that says one should treat the most severely injured first, one should know that even morality has its boundaries. If we do not make this distinction, we lose our direction. Even in Jewish law it says “He who is merciful to the cruel, will end up being cruel to the merciful”.

It was that same moral compass that enabled ZAKA to reassign its policy regarding the disposal of a terrorist’s body. Following numerous requests from citizens who saw it as sacrilegious to wrap the remains in body bags that carried the ZAKA logo, we made the decision in October, 2015 to wrap the remains of terrorists in black bags.

ZAKA is an organization entrusted with the care of the dead. Man is made in the divine image - all men, and therefore ZAKA carries out its mission in Israel and around the world with dignity and sensitivity, irrespective of religion, race or creed. But when it comes to murderous and brutal terrorists, we too must know how to make a separation between victim and murderer.

If you would like more information please go to: info@zakafoundation.org or www.zakafoundation.org

CALL’EM

LINDA SHAPIRO

The Israeli National News recently reported that the desecrated Jewish cemetery in the coastal city of Oran had been demolished. The last fragment of Algeria’s once vibrant Jewish community, established during the 14th century and expanded after the Spanish expulsion, had been annihilated.

In the 18th century, Jews began to experience anti-Semitism that peaked during World War II under the pro-Nazi Vichy government. Throughout the 1950s, rioters attacked Jews and looted their property. In the 1960s, stripped of citizenship and protection, Jews fled en masse. In 1975, Oran’s magnificent Great Synagogue was converted into a mosque and by the mid-2000s, Algeria was a Jew-free-zone. Mission accomplished.

Along with countless responsibilities, my focus throughout my first three festivals was mastering the politics of the place and navigating the French psyche. By my fourth festival, my antennae were honed. I was more aware of what to say and how to say it. My subject was the French Jews and the French-Jewish community.

Reading the report, tears trickled down my cheeks. After so many years, my connection with Oran remained vivid and inspiring.

During the 1970s and 1980s, I worked at the Cannes Film Festival with the Canadian government contingent to promote our cinema to the world. It was an extraordinary experience, a unique opportunity to meet people from around the globe and be part of the glitz ‘n’ glam of the French Riviera.

The apartment was small, with a large elegantly appointed dining table laden with stunning flowers and colourful foods. The walls were covered with Jewish artifacts, exquisite fabrics and rugs, paintings and photographs of elderly rabbis. The air was filled with exotic smells, comforting warmth and an amazing radiance. This was my first Orthdox Shabbos meal.

The Rabbi’s wife and daughters greeted me so affectionately, as if I were a newfound family. The Rabbi, wife and children were puzzled, unable to grasp the sudden change from a non-Jewish woman to an Orthodox one. I was welcomed with open arms, without malice, so affectionately.

One Friday night, I decided to skip the star-studded gala’n’feast to attend Shabbos services at an Orthodox synagogue in Cannes. My colleagues were shocked – not only from Persia. She invited me for Shabbos from many more years. Eventually, the Canadian contingent was cancelled and real life took over. I never saw Rabbi Zini again.

When I explained my intense 24/7 workload and devotion to my career, his children were puzzled, unable to grasp the sudden change from a non-Jewish woman to an Orthodox one. I was welcomed with open arms.

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