

Killing People

I usually begin writing my editorials about 3 hours before they are due. That way, I won't spend too much time on them.

On July 16, 2002, as I started to think about what to write, seven people were killed and 16 injured on a bus in Israel. A 9-month-old baby, her father and grandmother were killed. Her mother and twin sister were gravely injured. Three other women aged 16–35 were killed. Some of the people on the bus called their husbands on cell phones. When they arrived to try to help, the killers opened fire on them with machine guns.

Four Palestinian groups claimed responsibility for this killing. They think they have good reasons to kill babies and innocent civilians. The Palestinian groups receive charitable donations from lots of people and lots of countries. Most of it is called humanitarian aid.

The next day, in Northern Ireland, the IRA apologized publicly for killing lots of civilians over the past 30 years. They thought they had good reasons for those killings at the time, but now they are sorry. Irish Protestants and Catholics have been fighting each other for a very long time.

Pol Pot thought he had lots of good reasons to kill people in Cambodia too. Many wore eyeglasses and read books. He thought these were signs of too much Western influence. To save man-hours, he made them kill each other. Idi Amin in Uganda did pretty much the same thing.

In Rwanda, Tutsi and Hutu neighbors killed each other for what they thought were very good reasons. Serb and Bosnian neighbors killed each other too.

When the Ayatollah Khomeini deposed the Shah of Iran, he thought he had to kill a lot of people. They used to show pictures of the executed people lined up next to one another in the newspaper.

Hitler killed Jews. The Klu Klux Klan killed black people. Stalin. The crusades. The Spanish Inquisition. Genghis Khan. Alexander the Great.

I'm sure I left lots of other killers out, but I think you get the point. There are a lot of killers.

I'm sorry for burdening you all with this in a medical journal, but most of us are doctors and we (and other humans) who value human life should be especially outraged by all this killing.

I think it would be a good idea for the United Nations to condemn killing people as a means of settling disputes. In fact, I think it is such a good idea that I suggested it to an acquaintance of mine who happens to be an ambassador to the United Nations. He said that this is a ridiculous idea; that I am naive. The United Nations would never agree that killing people is wrong. I pointed out that the United Nations already condemns lots of things, and perhaps they would condemn killing people.

He told me that I just don't understand.

I guess I don't.

Jerry G. Blaivas
Editor-in-Chief