

Is Killing Civilians Part of Israel's plan?

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Another day, another UN school hit by Israeli shelling in Gaza. Israel's attack this morning killed at least 16 civilians sheltering at the school and wounded dozens. The casualties figures are expected to rise.

Israel and even most of its critics tell us that the civilian casualties are accidental, caused by Israel's need to wage its war against Hamas in heavily built-up areas of Gaza. Israel is accused of "disproportionality", or of recklessness, or of inflicting unfortunate collateral damage.

But here's another possibility: that the people of Gaza, not just Hamas, are the target. That Israel's generals don't see much difference between the two.

Israel's army is "degrading" – or "mowing the lawn", in even worse military parlance – Gaza's ability's to resist. Not Hamas' abilities, but Gaza's. Because the problem lies not with Hamas. Hamas is simply a symptom, of the people of Gaza's determination to liberate themselves from Israel's siege.

That is why the power plant was destroyed yesterday. That is why Israel has been starving Gaza for years through its siege, limiting the entry of basic foods and counting the minimum calories people need for bare survival – putting them on a diet, as one senior adviser jokingly termed it. That is why Gaza's infrastructure is being trashed – the notorious Dahiya doctrine, devised by Israeli generals in 2006 as way to force hostile populations back into the Stone Age, keeping them preoccupied with the essentials of life rather than demanding, or fighting, for their rights.

Israel knows it cannot destroy Hamas' will to resist without destroying Gaza's will to resist too. And that is what it looks like we are seeing played out here day-in, day-out. Civilians, it seems, must die to teach Gaza a lesson: you *will* submit.

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