

Israel Speaks: “We Purposefully Attack Civilians... Because They Deserve It”

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In-depth Report: [PALESTINE](#)

In a video recording dated in 2012, Netanyahu can be seen speaking to what presumably are family members, women and children, completely unawares to the fact that his remarks are being recorded the entire time.

Netanyahu explains that, “The main thing, first of all, is to hit them [the Arabs]. Not just one blow, but blows that are so painful that the price will be too heavy to be borne,” a policy doctrine we are now seeing play out in Israel’s current assault on Gaza in which the ‘price’ that is intended to be ‘too heavy to be borne,’ is measured in the indiscriminate murder of innocent civilian lives- their homes, their playgrounds, their beaches, their schools, their mosques, their hospitals; Israel has shown in Protective Edge that no one and no place in Gaza, not even children’s playgrounds and hospitals in which no militants whatsoever are present, is immune from the all-powerful roar of the highly-tuned, well-oiled and technologically sophisticated multi-billion dollar US-made killing machine that it has now descended upon the mostly defenseless, economically strangled, and poverty-induced population of Gaza (a [WikiLeaks cable](#) quoted an Israeli official in 2008 telling the US that they would “keep Gaza’s economy on the brink of collapse,” to ensure that the economy was “functioning at the lowest level possible consistent with avoiding a humanitarian crisis.”)

The UN reports as of 29 July that a total of [1,118 people have been killed](#) in the now 23 day assault on Gaza, 827 (or 74%) of which are innocent civilians. Updated figures for 30 July from the [Palestinian Centre for Human Rights](#) put the current death toll at 1324, of which 1130 (or 85%) are innocent civilians, along with 5,924 wounded; Gaza’s Health Ministry has [confirmed the death of at least 1,359](#); a number of [7,677 wounded](#) has been confirmed by emergency service spokesman Ashraf al-Qudra.

These figures clearly tell us that only a *very small* amount of the targets are actually military targets, Hamas militants or resistance fighters, given that they account for only 20-25% of the deaths. The vast majority of those killed have been innocent civilians, this despite the IDF’s sophisticated US-made and financed military technology capable of precision striking and advanced intelligence capabilities, including joint cooperation between Mossad and the NSA.

These figures make more sense however when you put them in the context of advice given to the IDF from Israeli lawyers and statements by top military and political officials.

Don't Make Me Shoot You

[Nafeez Ahmed](#) reports that,

“[White](#) highlights a [Ha'aretz report](#) from 2009 which revealed that “IDF officers were receiving legal advice that allowed for large numbers of civilian casualties and the targeting of government buildings.”

“The people who go into a house despite a warning do not have to be taken into account in terms of injury to civilians, because they are voluntary human shields,”

said one senior official of the international law division (ILD) of the Israeli Military Advocate General's Office.

“From the legal point of view, I do not have to show consideration for them. In the case of people who return to their home in order to protect it, they are taking part in the fighting.” (emphasis added)

This statement presupposes that Israel has the right to order people out of their homes, without having to give a justification, without having to prove that it is a military outpost, just an arbitrary pronouncement by the military and either the civilians must flee or be murdered in cold blood by the IDF, in which case they will be referred to as ‘human shields’ and their extrajudicial slaughter justified in the eyes of the military machine and its legal aides; even if the civilian does flee, Israel presupposes the right to destroy their homes, property, and belongings- in other words, their property (and as well their lives) belong to us, because we say so.

According to U.S. Army Manuals terrorism is defined as, the

“calculated use of unlawful violence or threat of unlawful violence to inculcate fear. It is intended to coerce or intimidate governments or societies ... [to attain] political, religious, or ideological goals.” [U.S. Army Field Manual No. FM 3-0, Chapter 9, 37 (14 June 2001).]

Israel's actions are therefore the exact definition of terrorism according to the U.S. army, where even just *the threat* of violence to obtain political goals is terrorism; Israel is saying to the civilian population “leave your homes, or else,” while then presupposing that if their orders are not heeded they are thus absolved from the responsibility of the murder which they will then go about committing. Even if they were just to threaten the use of violence to get people out of their homes it would be an extreme terroristic crime, let alone when they actually go through with the bombing, indiscriminate of who is inside.

What this amounts to is basically the military/war-time equivalent of holding a gun to someone's head and saying “don't make me shoot you,” and then demanding that they give you their wallet... or else. When the person doesn't comply with your terror demands and use of intimidation, you then shoot them dead and claim that it was their fault for not giving you the money, I wonder how well that defense would hold up in a US court of law? Yet this is exactly what Israel is doing in Gaza, this is exactly what their lawyers and military generals are attempting to justify and codify into law.

Take Away Half the Land; Say the Dead Killed Themselves

Israel has used this terror tactic in order to [take away 44% of Gaza's land](#), drawing up a 3km buffer zone around the borders and then proceeding to hold the gun to the head of every innocent civilian living within that area and saying "don't make us shoot you," instructing them to leave their homes "immediately" or thus end up as 'human shields,' in which case, according to the IDF and their lawyers, their deaths will be their own fault.



[Pepe Escobar](#) thus points out,

“Translation: Israel, in one stroke, is creating OVER 400,000 REFUGEES. But refugees INSIDE the same cage/concentration camp/gulag - a major CRIME under international law. This huge area is now off-limits. All civilians staying behind will be deemed as “combatants”.”

Just as a 75-80% civilian death rate figure falsifies the claim that only military infrastructure and personnel are being targeted, so too does this 3km buffer zone falsify that claim as well; there is no justifiable military reason to annex almost half of Gaza's land to military invasion and wholesale destruction, the whole 'tunnel' argument the least of which as it is pure nonsense coming from a military perspective, and one that has also been used previously,

“The pretext for the [November 4, 2008] raid was that Israel had detected a tunnel in Gaza that might have been intended for use to capture another Israeli soldier. The pretext is transparently absurd, as a number of commentators have noted. If such a tunnel existed, and reached the border, Israel could easily have barred it right there. But as usual, the ludicrous Israeli pretext was deemed credible.” ([Noam Chomsky](#), Peace News, February 2009)

Murder Civilians; Put Pressure on Hamas

In an exchange between former Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and former Israeli UN Ambassador and Israeli Labor Party Foreign Minister Abba Eban, published in the Israeli press in August of 1981, Mr. Eban wrote,

“The picture that emerges is of an Israel wantonly inflicting every possible measure of death and anguish on civilian populations in a mood reminiscent of regimes which neither Mr. Begin nor I would dare to mention by name.”⁽¹⁾ (emphases added)

Prominent and noted scholar Edward Herman analyzes further the exchange,

“Eban is harshly critical of Begin’s letter because of the support it gives to Arab propaganda; he does not contest the facts. He even defends the earlier Israeli attacks on civilians with the exact logic which orthodox analysts of terrorism attribute to-and use to condemn-retail terrorists: namely, that deliberate attacks may properly be made on innocent parties in order to achieve higher ends. Eban writes that, “there was a rational prospect, ultimately fulfilled, that afflicted populations [i.e., innocent civilians deliberately bombed] would exert pressure for the cessation of hostilities.”

“Begin’s list is indeed “partial.” It is supplemented by former Chief of Staff Mordechai Gur, whom stated that “For 30 years, from the War of Independence until today, we have been fighting against a population that lives in villages and cities,” offering as examples the bombardments that cleared the Jordan valley of all inhabitants and that drove a million and a half civilians from the Suez canal area, in 1970, among others. The Israeli military analyst Zeev Schiff summarized General Gur’s comments as follows:

“In South Lebanon we struck the civilian population consciously, because they deserved it ... the importance of Gur’s remarks is the admission that the Israeli Army has always struck civilian populations, purposely and consciously ... the Army, he said, has never distinguished civilian [from military] targets ... [but] purposely attacked civilian targets when Israeli settlements had not been struck.”⁽²⁾ (emphases added)

This history is particularly important, it gives a clear context to the recent historical findings which echo the exact same sentiments, and thus prove that the strategic military doctrine has not much changed throughout the years, and that these genocidal policies are instead longstanding and rooted in tradition.

An independent investigation into the IDF by the Jerusalem-based [Public Committee Against Torture in Israel](#) (PCATI) in the wake of Operation Cast Lead states that, “The policy of

protecting soldiers' lives, even at the cost of harming uninvolved civilians, cannot by itself explain the large number of casualties," and so too can this statement be ascribed to the current death toll figures. The report explains this discrepancy however, "in the beginning of October 2008, the Commanding Officer of the IDF's Northern Command, Maj. General Gadi Eisenkott, gave an interview to Yedioth Ahronoth newspaper, in which he unveiled what he called the "Dahiye Doctrine":

"What happened in the Dahiye Quarter of Beirut in 2006, will happen in every village from which shots are fired on Israel. We will use disproportionate force against it and we will cause immense damage and destruction. From our point of view these are not civilian villages but military bases.

"This is not a recommendation, this is the plan, and it has already been authorized." (Yedioth Ahronoth (Hebrew), I have incredible power, I'll have no excuse,, Saturday Supplement, October 3, 2008, by Alex Fishman and Ariela Ringel-Hoffman.)

According to the approach expressed in the Dahiye Doctrine,

"Israel has to employ tremendous force disproportionate to the magnitude of the enemy's actions. The intent of this... is to harm the civilian population to such an extent that it will bring pressure to bear on the enemy combatants. Furthermore, this policy is intended to create deterrence regarding future attacks against Israel, through the damage and destruction of civilian and military infrastructures which necessitate long and expensive reconstruction actions which would crush the will of those who wish to act against Israel." (emphasis added)

"...two months before Operation Cast Lead, the Institute for National Security Studies, a think-tank at the Tel Aviv University which reflects the mainstream of Israeli military thinking, published an article by Dr. Gabriel Siboni, a colonel in IDF reserves. In the article Siboni expresses an identical approach to that of Eisenkott, which he relates in greater detail:

"With an outbreak of hostilities, the IDF will need to act immediately, decisively, and with force that is disproportionate to the enemy's actions and the threat it poses. Such a response aims at inflicting damage and meting out punishment to an extent that will demand long and expensive reconstruction processes. The strike must be carried out as quickly as possible, and must prioritize damaging assets over seeking out each and every launcher. Punishment must be aimed at decision makers and the power elite... attacks should both aim at Hezbollah's military capabilities and should target economic interests and the centers of civilian power that support the organization."

After "What happened in the Dahiye Quarter of Beirut in 2006," Israel's then Army Chief of Staff Lt-Gen Dan Halutz threatened that his military would "[turn back the clock on Lebanon by 20 years.](#)" A troubling statement given the next paragraph of the PCATI's report, "Siboni makes it clear that: "This approach is applicable to the Gaza Strip as well."

Dan Halutz also made a previous appearance in a [2002 Hareetz article](#) when he was asked to describe the emotions that are felt by a pilot that drops a bomb that kills civilians, one which perhaps gives more insight into this psychology, Dan replied,

“No. That is not a legitimate question and it is not asked. But if you nevertheless want to know what I feel when I release a bomb, I will tell you: I feel a light bump to the plane as a result of the bomb’s release. A second later it’s gone, and that’s all. That is what I feel.” (emphases added)

In the opening days of Operation Cast Lead of December '08 – January '09 the head of the Israeli army command in Gaza, Yoav Galant, echoed Lt-Gen Halutz’s statements when he confirmed that the attack was designed to “[send Gaza decades into the past.](#)”

With the [recent headlines](#) depicting the carnage and the slaughter currently plaguing Gaza today, one would be hard pressed to doubt the seriousness of these statements.

They Will Say We Are Defending

Understanding the civilian death toll in this context makes much more sense than listening to the Israeli governments pronouncements of using all necessary means to protect civilian life (a claim which is usually followed by some form of ‘under law’ or ‘all necessary lawful means,’ which given the above is equally as troubling.) However all of this is predicated upon the fact that “Israel has a right to defend itself,” since “ Hamas struck first,” but as respected scholar [Nafeez Ahmed](#) points out, “Then three Israeli boys were kidnapped in early June of this year. As an investigation by the [Jewish Daily Forward](#) found, Netanyahu’s government knew almost immediately that the boys had been killed, and who had killed them – but pretended to know neither to justify a brutal crackdown.

“It was clear from the beginning that the kidnapers weren’t acting on orders from Hamas leadership in Gaza or Damascus.”

Thus ensued an 18-day ‘search-and-rescue operation,’ involving soldiers entering “thousands of homes, arresting and interrogating hundreds of individuals.” To justify the operation, Netanyahu “maintained the fiction” that they hoped to find the boys alive “as a pretext to dismantle Hamas’ West Bank operations.”

In the process, the IDF killed [more than half a dozen Palestinians](#) – while a Palestinian teenager was burned to death by settlers.”

And these crimes were then followed by Israel’s unprovoked attacks on Gaza, as the [UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs](#) recounts,

“On 11 June, the Israeli Air Force targeted an alleged member of an armed group riding on a motorcycle together with a ten-year old child, in the Beit Lahiya area. The man died instantly and the child, who sustained serious injuries, died three days later; two civilian bystanders were also injured.

“Following this incident and through the rest of the week, Palestinian armed groups launched a number of rockets at southern Israel.” (emphasis added)

As I noted [here](#), despite all of these provocations and attacks, Hamas still did not fire any rockets and therefore had abided by the 2012 November ceasefire... until Israel struck them first. After the month long military attack and raid of the West Bank, and the subsequent military aerial bombing raids in Gaza that provoked other Palestinian armed groups to retaliate, on June 29th an Israeli air strike killed 3 Hamas militants, after which [Hamas](#)

[launched its first rocket attack on Israel since 2012](#), in retaliation to Israel's attack. Hamas then immediately called for the institution of a ceasefire, their conditions: that the stipulations of the 2012 ceasefire be re-instated, the same one that Israel repeatedly broke. Israel considered the proposal, but later refused, instead deciding to launch another air strike against Hamas on July 6th, Hamas responded the next day, and the day after Operation Protective Edge was launched.

It is within this context that the first round of Hamas rockets were unleashed, and it is through this that we must analyze the claims that Israel is acting defensively.

In the [leaked recording](#) of Netanyahu mentioned at the beginning of this report, the Prime Minister further clarifies the 'pain' he wished to inflict upon the Arabs, "A broad attack on the Palestinian Authority, to bring them to the point of being afraid that everything is collapsing." A woman can then be heard asking the question, "Wait a moment, but then the world will say 'how come you're conquering again?'"

Netanyahu's reply?

"The world won't say a thing. The world will say we're defending."

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Notes:

1.) Abba Eban, "Morality and warfare," *The Jerusalem Post*, August 16, 1981 in cited in Edward Herman, *The Real Terror Network*, (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1982), p. 77.

2.) Edward Herman, *The Real Terror Network*, (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1982), p. 77-78. For further discussion of what Edward Herman describes as "Israel's Sacred Terrorism," see p. 76-79.

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