

# Israel Targeting Civilians in Gaza as “Collective Punishment”

The admission in Haaretz is the ultimate expression of the IDF’s impunity, as its war crimes against Palestinians have been ignored for so long that it now openly admits that it is targeting civilians in the world’s largest “open-air prison.”

By [Whitney Webb](#)

Global Research, August 14, 2018

[MintPress News](#) 10 August 2018

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [Crimes against Humanity](#), [Law and Justice](#), [Police State & Civil Rights](#)

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*A [newspaper article](#) published in the Hebrew-language version of Israeli newspaper Haaretz has stated that the Israeli military (IDF) is intentionally targeting civilians in Gaza as a form of collective punishment aimed at placing Hamas — which Israel continues to regard as a resistance group, though it has governed Gaza since winning elections there in 2007 — “in a problematic situation.”*

[The article](#) states that, after a rocket launched by Hamas’ armed wing landed in Beersheva,

“the IDF began to attack civilian targets, including population centers, with the goal of causing the residents to understand the price of escalation and placing Hamas in a problematic situation.”

In other words, the article acknowledges that the IDF is deliberately targeting civilians in Gaza to collectively punish all those living in Gaza for [the primitive rockets](#) allegedly launched by Hamas into Israeli territory.

The article goes on to claim that the IDF’s deliberate targeting of civilian sites is a “change in policy” for the IDF, as past Israeli airstrikes had “focused on Hamas’ clear military objectives, mostly in areas where civilian presence is sparse.” Yet, past airstrikes have targeted civilian infrastructure, which [were then labeled](#), after the fact, as Hamas military sites and assets.

The tactics mentioned in the article seem to refer exclusively to IDF airstrikes, as the article does not mention the fact that the IDF, since March 30, has [shot over](#) 17,000 unarmed Palestinian civilians, killing at least 164, for approaching the Gaza-Israel border fence during recent protests. Furthermore, the IDF’s “change in policy” also comes after it was recently reported that the IDF has already killed [a record number](#) of Palestinian children in Gaza this year, with still just under five months to go.

Yet, in terms of airstrikes, this “new” IDF policy of targeting civilians is unsurprising given

that Israeli Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman [infamously asserted](#) earlier this year that “there are no innocent people” in Gaza, despite the fact that around half of all Gazans are under the age of 18. Furthermore, the IDF had long targeted Gaza’s civilians in past military operations even before Hamas was voted into power in 2007, suggesting that the IDF’s justification of “punishing Hamas” is [merely the pretext](#) to justify the climbing civilian death toll in Gaza in the absence of a major military conflict.

Israeli newspaper Haaretz openly says Israel is targeting innocent civilians and densely populated areas to punish Hamas. An admission of open, collective, arbitrary massacre of civilians. <https://t.co/f64meXitwu>

— Tamara Nassar (@TamaraNassar) [August 9, 2018](#)

## A week of terror

The startling claim, which some analysts [have called](#) an open admission of war crimes, comes after a week of terror for Gazan civilians that resulted in several gruesome civilian deaths and the destruction of one of Gaza City’s [most important cultural centers](#). The most disturbing of these events took place Wednesday night when an Israeli airstrike [killed an 18-month-old girl](#), Bayan Khammash, and her mother, Inas, who was nine-months pregnant at the time of her death. Bayan’s father was injured but survived the attack.

Given the climbing civilian death toll in Gaza before and after this IDF “change in policy,” the *Haaretz* article seems to suggest that IDF attacks on Gazan civilians have become [so brazen](#) that it is no longer possible to claim that its targets are linked in any way to Hamas military assets. Thus, the new policy does not represent a change in actual military policy but instead represents a change in the justification for that military policy, as the IDF can no longer hide the fact that civilians are being intentionally targeted.

Above all else, the admission in *Haaretz* is the ultimate expression of [the IDF’s impunity](#), as its war crimes against Palestinians have been ignored for so long that it now openly admits that it is targeting civilians in the world’s largest “[open air prison](#).”

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*Whitney Webb is a staff writer for MintPress News and a contributor to Ben Swann’s Truth in Media. Her work has appeared on Global Research, the Ron Paul Institute and 21st Century Wire, among others. She has also made radio and TV appearances on RT and Sputnik. She currently lives with her family in southern Chile.*

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