

THE REAL WAR CRIMINALS

The Gaza war of 2009 was followed by a deluge of accusations against Israel for "war crimes", based on a UN report known as the Goldstone report. Unfortunately, this report relied solely on Palestinian testimony because Israel, believing that the investigators were biased, refused to cooperate in its own vilification. Instead, Israel undertook its own investigation and released what is known as the Malam report, containing 335 pages filled with photos and other supporting evidence. Surprisingly (or perhaps not surprisingly), there has been no mention of this report in the NZ press. Once again KBRM is paying for an advert so Kiwis can see Israel's response – another "missing truth".

Cause of war. Israel was fighting an enemy that was openly dedicated to its destruction, that had fired 8000 rockets over a period of years, that was (and still is) holding a kidnapped soldier hostage without access to the International Red Cross. All these acts of war were ignored or minimised by the Goldstone report, which claimed that support for the war was because Israel "created a political climate in which dissent is not tolerated." The notion that the majority of Israelis genuinely supported action to bring years of continuous rocket and missile attacks against Israeli civilians to an end does not appear to have occurred to the members of the Mission. [Would not New Zealanders feel the same way?]

Nature of the war. The Goldstone Report ignored the asymmetric nature of the warfare in a densely-populated environment where terrorist operatives employed civilians as human shields. Aerial photographs show that Hamas' extensive military infrastructure was deployed in residential neighborhoods, including military camps, rocket launching sites, and shooting ranges. Air Force videos show terrorists using groups of children as cover to escape from combat areas. Hamas also used children to transfer rockets to launching sites, employed women carrying children to prevent the IDF from attacking, used ambulances to transfer weapons, and used mosques to store weapons and position snipers. Weapons were also stored in or near hospitals and rockets were fired from locations close to hospitals.

"War crimes". The Goldstone report contained 36 specific allegations of "war crimes". Israel's investigation found that most either had no basis in fact or were legitimate military actions. In cases of actual violations, appropriate punishments have been meted out. Examples of false accusations are: (a) A flour mill was hit by a tank shell because Israeli forces came under intense fire from the mill. (b) A family home was destroyed because it was used to store rockets. (c) The charge that IDF forces killed dozens of civilians at a UN school was contradicted by eyewitnesses who said the school building was not hit, while 9 of the 12 people killed were armed terrorists.

Casualty count. The Goldstone report, relying on Palestinian claims that 80% of the casualties were civilians, said "this raises very serious concerns about the conduct of Israel's military activities". Israel's report that the civilian casualty rate was less than 40% (a lower rate than for Allied forces in WWII, when the enemy did not hide among civilians) was ignored. [A simple analysis of the Palestinian Human Rights Centre report shows how unreliable the figures are. According to PHRC, in the age range 15-59, 1079 males and 92 females were killed, while among the elderly and young, male and female casualties were about equal. It defies belief that these additional 987 fighting-age males were mostly innocent "civilians" who happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time.)

Despite this, the Goldstone report, and the world, chose to blame Israel, which acted to defend its citizens while trying to minimise civilian casualties, instead of Hamas, which declared war on Israel, fired 8000 rockets at civilian areas, and used civilians as human shields. Col Richard Kemp, a British expert on terrorism warfare, testified to the UN that "The IDF did more to safeguard the rights of civilians in a combat zone than any other army in the history of warfare." Now you tell us, who is the real war criminal?

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