

'WAR CRIMES': THE MISSING TRUTH

Israel bombarded with war crime allegations. Is there any basis to them?

Charge: The invasion. The invasion of Gaza was alleged to be a war crime in itself, because of the impossibility of distinguishing between military targets and surrounding civilians.

Answer. Every country has the right and duty to protect and defend its citizens. When Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005, it was 'rewarded' with an unremitting barrage of 7000 rockets. When a partial blockade (the UN's recommended action to stop aggression) didn't work, and when nobody, including the UN, stepped in to help, Israel had to do something. What other country would endure four years of rocket attacks without striking back?

Charge: Civilian casualties. An excessive number of civilian deaths has been alleged, with one cartoonist depicting a 10-to-1 ratio.

Answer. A name-by-name analysis by Israel (Google 'cast lead casualty') found that only 25% of the fatalities (1 in 4) were civilians. A Palestinian study (pchrgaza.org) reported a figure of 65%, but 92% of the victims between 16 and 59 were listed as male. Apart from the unreliability of Palestinian reports in the past (Google 'Pallywood'), it is hard to believe that this predominantly male, fighting-age group was mostly innocent civilians. This is not to say that 25% civilian deaths is good, but it must be remembered that the Hamas terrorists operated from civilian areas and did not wear uniforms. As a British colonel said, 'I don't think there has ever been a time in the history of warfare when any army has made more efforts to reduce civilian casualties and deaths of innocent people than the IDF is doing today in Gaza' (Google 'Kemp discusses IDF').

Charge: 'Lop-sided' ratio. The 100-to-1 ratio of Palestinian deaths to Israeli deaths has also been claimed to be evidence of a war crime.

Answer. If casualty ratios were an indicator of morality, then the Allies in World War 2 would have been guilty of war crimes. In fact, 'body count' has nothing to do with who is right and who is wrong.

Charge: UN school 'massacre'. Israeli troops were alleged to have killed dozens at a UN school used to house civilian refugees.

Answer. Later investigation found that an adjacent street, not the building, was hit and that 12 people outside were killed, of which nine were armed terrorists. (Google 'hamas claims proven false'.)

Charge: Phosphorus bombs. Israeli troops allegedly used illegal phosphorus bombs.

Answer. The use of phosphorus in flares and smoke-screen bombs is not unusual and is legal, but Israel is investigating further. In the meantime, Palestinians sent an axe-wielding murderer into a play area to kill children (Google 'axe-wielding Palestinian').

Israeli charges. Rumours of possible 'war crimes' were passed by an officer to the Israeli Chief of Staff for investigation. They were leaked to the press, which reported them as fact, including a charge that a soldier deliberately shot a woman and her two children.

Answer. Investigation found the charges to be false (Google 'case closed on gaza'). The

fact that the Israeli army (and press) took these allegations seriously is an indication of Israel's high standards of morality.

Charge: Obscene T-shirts. Some Israeli soldiers had purchased hateful T-shirts.

Answer. The T-shirts are indefensible, and shocked and outraged Israelis. But what do they show? That Israel, like every country in the world, including New Zealand, has 'undesirables'. Fortunately, their number is small and they do not reflect or influence official Israeli policy.

Bottom line. No country is perfect, nor is every soldier a saint. Nevertheless, Israel's war record is better than that of most countries, while Hamas flagrantly commits war crimes every day. The following facts are beyond dispute:

Hamas' goal is to destroy Israel
Hamas targets Israeli civilians
If there are civilian casualties,
Hamas celebrates

Israel's goal is self-defence
Israel targets Hamas militants
If there are civilian casualties,
Israel investigate

The question is, why does the media give so much space to false accusations against Israel and so little to correcting them, or to the war crimes of its enemy? Why is it necessary for KBRM to pay for advertising in order for you to know 'the missing truth'?

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