

Israel Welcomes Complicit Amnesty International Report: Palestinian “Armed Groups” Allegedly “Guilty of War Crimes”

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Amnesty International (AI) is at it again. The Western-based human rights organization says the armed wing of the Palestinian resistance against Israeli aggression has committed war crimes against Israeli and Palestinian citizens alike. The timing could not be more perfect for an Israeli propaganda campaign against its Palestinian neighbors. Will Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu use the AI report as a justification to launch yet another war in the Gaza Strip or in the West Bank? I could just visualize Netanyahu's fourth speech to the U.S. Congress if speaker of the U.S. House of Representative John Boehner were to invite him again:

My friends, I'm deeply honored by the opportunity to speak here for a fourth time before the most important legislative body in the world, right here in Washington D.C., the U.S. Congress. My friends, Amnesty International just released a report confirming that the Israeli population was a victim of war crimes committed by Hamas terrorists. We as a "Jewish State" are under a serious threat to our existence. It is time for you to support our military efforts in order to defend ourselves. This is crucial. We are on the same side. So my friends join us in our long term goal of eliminating all terrorists' threats from the face of the earth beginning in the holy land. It is our duty to spread democracy and freedom in the face of terrorism and it is the reason why we have an unbreakable bond. My friends we are on the right side of history, so let us fight this common enemy once and for all.

The AI report accuses "Palestinian armed groups of carrying out "war crimes" during the 50-day conflict in the Gaza Strip which resulted in over 2,300 Palestinians deaths with more than 19,000 injured according to an August 2014 report by the State of Palestine Ministry of Health. Israel had recorded over 70 Israeli deaths and over 700 injured according to a report published by the Jerusalem Post. According to a Sky News report, a multi media news organization based in the U.K., Amnesty International says that "Palestinian armed groups" broke international human rights laws:

The report entitled 'Unlawful and Deadly' condemned militants, including the armed wing of Hamas, for using "inherently indiscriminate" rockets and mortars to "kill or injure civilians". "In launching these attacks, they displayed a flagrant disregard for international humanitarian law and for the consequences of their violations on civilians in both Israel and the Gaza Strip," said Amnesty International's Middle East Director Philip Luther.

The Middle East Director Philip Luther plays *“Good cop, Bad cop”* when he says that *“the devastating impact of Israeli attacks on Palestinian civilians during the conflict is undeniable, but violations by one side in a conflict can never justify violations by their opponents”* according to the report. The Sky News report also used statistics from the United Nations (UN) own report which *“claims 4,881 rockets and 1,753 mortars were fired towards Israel during the last conflict, with 243 intercepted by the Iron Dome defence system, and 31 landing inside Gaza. A total of 224 rockets and mortars hit residential areas in Israel. Six Israeli civilians, including a four-year-old child, and 67 soldiers were killed.”*

However, the U.N.’s official report on Palestinian deaths and injuries during *‘Operation Protective Edge’* states that *“more than 2,250 Palestinians were killed, of which 1,585 were civilians, including 538 children.”* Amnesty International also said that the Palestinian armed groups are responsible for jeopardizing the lives of their own people *“due to their decisions to operate in or near civilian areas.”* Here are the report’s findings:

Nevertheless, there is substantial evidence that some of the military operations and conduct of Palestinian armed groups endangered civilians in Gaza and violated their obligation to take all feasible precautions to avoid and minimise harm to civilians

Jon Queally, Staff writer at www.commondreams.org wrote *‘World Stands Disgraced’ as Israel Bombs another UN-Designated Shelter in Gaza’* during the Gaza conflict and said:

A United Nations school in the northern Gaza Strip, where hundreds of Palestinians were seeking refuge from Israeli bombing, was itself hit by missile strikes on Wednesday night, killing at least 16 people and wounding close to one hundred others.

“Last night, children were killed as they slept next to their parents on the floor of a classroom in a UN designated shelter in Gaza,” said Pierre Krähenbühl, the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), in a statement. *“Children killed in their sleep; this is an affront to all of us, a source of universal shame. Today the world stands disgraced.”* Krähenbühl voiced outrage over the behavior of the Israeli military, who he says was repeatedly given the coordinates of the school:

The precise location of the Jabalia Elementary Girls School and the fact that it was housing thousands of internally displaced people was communicated to the Israeli army seventeen times, to ensure its protection; the last being at ten to nine last night, just hours before the fatal shelling

More than 485,000 Palestinians from Gaza were displaced, although many did return. More than 100,000 were permanently displaced while more than 10,000 still live in U.N. shelters. In the meantime, Israel continues to expand more illegal settlements which will most likely accelerate under Netanyahu’s fourth term in office. Although the report calls for UN inspectors to have *“unrestricted access”* to Gaza and for the Israeli authorities to release tax revenues and to lift its blockade, the report is less critical of Israel’s war crimes although it did issue a *“watered-down”* report back in November 2014 titled *‘Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories: Families under the rubble: Israeli attacks on inhabited homes’* criticizing Israel. Sky News noted *“a Hamas spokesman dismissed the report as being inaccurate and containing “false allegations”.*

In September 2014, Dr Mustafa Barghouti, a political activist and a medical doctor spoke at a Palestine Solidarity Campaign in London and said:

18,000 homes and buildings were destroyed completely, 41,000 houses partially damaged, 145 schools, eight hospitals, 13 health centres damaged. 180 mosques damaged, 71 destroyed completely. Even cemeteries were bombed, 10 bombed, nine Muslim cemeteries, one Christian cemetery. They bombed the graves. The bones of the people came out of the graves. The amount of explosives they used was beyond description.

Amnesty International declares that the Palestinian armed groups (who resist any form of Israeli aggression) in Gaza were guilty of war crimes since 2001:

According to the Israeli authorities, Palestinian armed groups fired more than 15,200 rockets and mortars towards Israel between 2001 and the start of the latest round of hostilities on the evening of 7 July 2014, when the Israeli military launched Operation Protective Edge. In all, 25 civilians, including four children and one adult foreign national, were killed in Israel by rockets and mortars launched from Gaza between June 2004, when the first fatality from such attacks occurred, and the beginning of Operation Protective Edge. This included the three civilians killed during Operation Cast Lead in 2008/2009 and the four civilians killed during Operation Pillar of Defense in November 2012. Many other civilians have been injured, some of them very seriously, and civilian property in Israel – including homes, businesses, schools, other public buildings and vehicles – has been damaged or destroyed. Over the years, rockets and mortars launched by Palestinian armed groups have also killed Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip, including children. According to media reports, a three-year-old Palestinian girl was killed, and several of her family members injured, by a Palestinian rocket that landed in Beit Lahiya on 24 June 2014, two weeks before the hostilities erupted into full-scale war.

Sky News noted an official statement from the Israeli government which was delighted by Amnesty International's report on Hamas actions during the Gaza conflict:

An Israeli government statement welcomed the report's highlighting of "deliberate targeting of Israel's civilian population", and claimed that, while Israel was "vigorously investigating its conduct, aiming to draw lessons", Hamas was preparing for further violence.

The Israeli government welcomes any report critical of its enemies. They will use it to their advantage especially when the World is highly critical of Israeli policies towards its neighbors. The report made a clear statement that *"two wrongs don't make right"*:

Palestinian officials who attempt to justify rocket attacks and other violations regularly point to violations by Israeli forces, whose attacks as part of Operation Protective Edge had a devastating effect on Gaza. However, violations by one party cannot justify violations by its opponents. It is this perverse logic, fostered by decades of impunity that has helped perpetuate the cycle of violations for which civilians on all sides have been paying such a heavy price.

In either case, a Palestinian or an Israeli life that is lost in any conflict is a lost for humanity as a whole. But what should an occupied country with no basic human rights do against one of the most powerful militaries in the world which is supported by the most dangerous empire in human history? Is there hope for a new peace plan with a two-state solution with

the newly re-elected Prime Minister of Israel? I seriously doubt it. Unfortunately, Amnesty International just gave Israel everything it needs to justify its next war.

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