

What does Goldstone know now? -

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Retired justice Richard Goldstone started his opinion piece published Friday on the Washington Post by saying, “We know a lot more today about what happened in the Gaza war of 2008-09 than we did when I chaired the fact-finding mission appointed by the U.N. Human Rights Council that produced what has come to be known as the Goldstone Report.”

However, he strangely did not refer at all in his article to the new information he has gained.

“If I had known then what I know now, the Goldstone Report would have been a different document,” the article continued, and again failed to elaborate on even a single instance that would call into question his own findings.

Could the South African justice be hinting that the 400 allegations of operational misconduct in a 22-day military offensive were all baseless thanks to the “significant resources Israel dedicated to investigate those allegations?”

Is it possible that the suggested new version of the Goldstone report could end up blaming the 29 victims of the Samouni family for sending the wrong signals to the Israeli drones?

The family had been hoarded into a single home over the course of three days, as fighting raged in northern Gaza. On the fourth day the home holding the extended family was struck by an Israeli air strike, wiping them out.

Speaking of the Samouni family, Goldstone boasts in his article that the Israeli officer who ordered the attack on the family is being investigated. “While the length of this investigation is frustrating, it appears that an appropriate process is underway, and I am confident that if the officer is found to have been negligent, Israel will respond accordingly.”

Excuse my comparison, but this is like investigating a truck driver who runs over pedestrians, and his lawyer tries to convince juries that he did not see them cross the road because he was busy talking to his girlfriend. Investigations in Israel will never find the officer guilty of intentionally shelling civilians. At best, this officer might be found guilty of negligence, and, “accordingly,” Israel’s response will be a verbal apology.

Only in the seventh paragraph does Goldstone bother to blame Israel for one small thing — “lack of cooperation with the fact-finding mission” — and it would have been better if he hadn’t. That lack of cooperation rendered the fact-finding mission unable to corroborate how many civilians and how many combatants were killed in Gaza. How about how many homes were leveled?

Seeking more ways to express regret and to sympathize with Israel after the alleged damage which stemmed from the report, the retired jurist strikes the note Israel likes by reminding the UN Human Rights Council to condemn the cold-blooded murder of an Israeli family in Itamar settlement.

I personally strongly condemn this murder and reject any attempts to justify it, and I have heard many Palestinians condemning it. Even though investigations have so far failed to prove the murderer was a Palestinian, West Bank villages and people have already suffered enough punishment both by Ultra-orthodox settlers, who illegally occupy territories acknowledged internationally as Palestinian properties, and by the Israeli government which did not spare a moment to announce new illegal constructions.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu — who found in Goldstone’s recent remarks a good opportunity to drive attention from corruption charges — hurried to call on the UN to “throw the report into the dustbin of history.”

Save your efforts Mr Prime Minister because many more important UN resolutions on Palestine have ended up in that dustbin.

“Simply put,” as Goldstone ended his article, I believe that whether Israel investigates the alleged war crimes, and whether Hamas abstains, that can never be the international standard to judge whether war crimes were committed or not.

As wise ancestors of humanity once said, “a picture is worth a thousand words,” and there are still thousands of pictures telling what happened during the war on Gaza. I am looking forward to seeing a new version of Goldstone report, which according to its main author could be re-compiled “given what he knows now.”

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