

The Lancet against Israel – Again

Response to the authors of the open letter to the people in Gaza

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On June 12, the day three Israeli teens were abducted and murdered in the West Bank, Hamas began launching rockets aimed at Israeli civilians. For three weeks Israel showed restraint, but Hamas’ incessant missile attacks continued, culminating in a barrage of 70 missiles fired on July 7 alone. Israel was left with no choice but to embark on a military operation to defend its civilian population.

There was no word from the authors of the “open letter” [1].

For several years Hamas, designated a terrorist organization in many countries including the USA, the EU and Canada, has invested heavily in a formidable terror infrastructure that includes some 12,000 missiles covering most of Israel’s territory. It has also built dozens of attack tunnels with the sole purpose of infiltrating Israel to conduct terror attacks killing and kidnapping Israeli civilians. Again, total ignorance on the part of the authors or any others in the European medical community.

The main objective of Operation Protective Edge is to restore calm to Israel’s citizens. Israel’s right to defend itself was widely recognized by the international community, including most recently EU foreign ministers on July 22. Israel’s actions are aimed at curtailing Hamas terror capabilities in Gaza; they do not target the people of Gaza.

In this context, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) has done its utmost to minimize harm to uninvolved civilians. It strictly abides by the principles of international law and the Law of Armed Conflict, which calls for a distinction between civilians and military forces, and for careful consideration of the expected military gain of any action weighed against the potential collateral damage.

Among the measures taken by the IDF to minimize the risk to Palestinian civilians are prior announcements about impending attacks by means of phone calls, pamphlets and warning shots. In many cases missions were aborted because civilians dangerously close to the target were identified. What other army does that?

Whereas Israel is conducting itself with extreme care so as not to harm civilians, Hamas acts in flagrant violation of international law and with utter disregard for human life,

whether Israeli or Palestinian. It has systematically committed a double war crime: the deliberate targeting of Israeli civilians while using its own civilian population for cover.

Indeed, Hamas has perfected the “human shield” tactic, hiding weapons and terrorists in hospitals, schools and mosques. In at least two instances UNRWA found missiles hidden in its schools, and journalists reported having seen Hamas leaders hiding in the Shifa Hospital. In addition, Hamas has urged and even forced civilians to remain where the fighting is taking place, to deter Israel from attacking.

Israel agreed to the Egyptian brokered ceasefire of July 15, but Hamas rejected it. Israel approved two humanitarian windows to ease the burden on the civilian population in Gaza, but Hamas broke the ceasefire on both occasions.

Our learned colleagues, the authors of the letter to *The Lancet*, have sinned by omission:

- They omitted to mention the brutal kidnapping of three Israeli youths by Hamas in the West Bank (by order from the headquarters in Gaza) and their brutal murder
- They omitted to mention that hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians around Gaza and as far as 40 km from Gaza were targeted for 14 years by missiles from Gaza. For the last three weeks five million people were threatened by missiles
- They omitted to mention that Hamas spent hundreds of millions of dollars on smuggling and manufacturing missiles to be launched at civilians, using the civilians of Gaza

Humanitarian supplies transferred into Gaza through the Kerem Shalom Crossing, July 23

	Food	Gas	Fuel & Diesel	Total trucks
Quantity	1*	2*	3*	
Tons/liters	2,120 tons	109 tons	610,000 liters	2,230 tons 610,000 liters
Trucks/tankers	106	5	17	128

*1 = Food products, mainly Jordanian aid

*2 = Gas for home use (cooking)

*3 = Fuel for the electricity power plant, and diesel for public transportation, including for use by UNRWA



- They preferred to ignore the reason for a blockade on Gaza – the smuggling of weapons and missiles aimed to kill Israeli civilians
- The Authors omitted the fact that Israel’s ground offensive was launched in order to save the lives of the uninvolved by targeting terrorists only. The terrorists chose to hide behind civilians, to use hospitals, schools, mosques and UNRWA institutions as their headquarters, as centers of arms and launching pads for their missiles. UNRWA launched its own investigation after the discovery of a missiles arsenal in two of their schools
- No army in the world has warned people before an attack, urging them to leave their homes. Hamas threatened its own people that if they leave their houses Hamas will destroy them. The bombing of Wafaa Hospital in Shujaiya occurred after four days of calls to the Director of the hospital and the assurance that the hospital had been vacated. There is a large amount of footage showing terrorists shooting from the hospital at the Israeli soldiers and using the building as their headquarters
- The only lifeline to Gaza before the start of this war was Israel. Water, gas, electricity, medical supplies and food. Israel continues to send supplies while the fire is still raging [on left] [2].

P.S. One of the authors of the *Lancet* letter (M.G.), days after the atrocity of September 11, 2001, in an interview for the Norwegian newspaper *Dagbladet*, when asked “Do you support a terror attack against the USA?” Gilbert replied, “Terror is a bad weapon but the answer is yes within the context which I have mentioned.”

This is not the first time *The Lancet* has taken an unjustified stand against Israel [3,4]. A more truthful account is needed.

References

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2. http://www.cogat.idf.il/Sip_Storage/FILES/2/4512.pdf
3. Ciechanover A, Shoenfeld Y, Shemer Y, Eidelman L, Borow M. Response to health in the Occupied Palestinian Territory [Letter]. *Lancet* 2011; 378: e1.
4. Israeli E, Shoenfeld Y. *The Lancet* against Israel. *IMAJ* 2013; 15: 2.

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- as protection for their weapons. Instead of building houses, hospitals, clinics, schools and other civil institutions, they buried (literally) all this money in the ground
- They also omitted to mention the tunnels dug underground, from neighborhoods in Gaza to Israel’s kibbutzim on the Gaza border for the express purpose of massacring and kidnapping as many innocent people as possible
 - They omitted to mention that three humanitarian ceasefires accepted by Israel were broken by the terrorists of Hamas
 - They did not mention the fact that the field hospital built on the Israeli side of the Gaza border (near Erez crossing) to help and treat wounded civilian Palestinians is standing empty and is a target of mortar bombs fired by those who claim to care for their civilians