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## GAZA: One year on Truths still missing

*The following article was submitted to this newspaper but was not accepted. It contains facts essential to a true understanding of the Middle East conflict. KBRM is paying for publication so readers can see the whole story.*

The Gaza war that ended on January 18, 2009, was Israel's response to a five-year rocket barrage that had killed 19 citizens and wounded hundreds more. Sderot (population 22,000) alone endured over 7000 rocket attacks and many families had left in terror. With the Hamas government repeatedly declaring its aim to destroy Israel, and the international community refusing to act, Israel felt it had no recourse but to take military action. After the war ended, the PR battle began.

**UN report.** On September 15, 2009, the UN released what is known as the Goldstone report. This report contained uncorroborated allegations of war crimes against both Israel and Hamas, with the allegations against Israel receiving the most exposure. The question is, are these allegations valid?

**Israel's answer.** In November 2009, the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) began an investigation of the 36 allegations that, according to Judge Goldstone, were "the most serious, the highest death toll, the highest injury toll". The investigation found that 30 of the 36 cases had no basis in fact. Repeat – *no basis in fact*. The remaining six cases were found to be "genuine instances, where operational errors and mistakes were involved." (Even in the best of armies, things go wrong. Every soldier is not a saint and every bomb does not hit its target.) At this point many readers are probably thinking "Ha-ha. *Israel* investigated. What did you think they would find?" This brings up the issue of...

**Credibility.** Believe it or not, there *is* a difference in credibility. Most Israeli reports in the past have proven accurate, while there is much evidence of Palestinian manipulation of information. (Google "Pallywood", a term for staged video scenes.) A touch of Pallywood was brought into NZ homes recently by TVNZ: In a Palestinian video of a family being evicted for non-payment of rent, a girl called out in English "Don't touch my Mom, don't touch my Mom!" Apart from the fact that it is impossible to evict people who are actively resisting without touching them, it defies belief that an Arab girl would call out in English - unless it was for show.

**Civilian casualties.** According to a Palestinian report, 65% of those killed in Gaza were civilians, while an Israeli report said the number was about 30%. In this case an inconsistency in the Palestinian report – a smoking gun, so to speak – tells us which report is accurate. In the Palestinian report, among ages under 12 and over 60 the number of males and females killed were about equal, as would be expected for innocent people who happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. However among the "fighting age" group (15-59), 1079 males were killed and only 92 females! No reasonable person could believe that these additional 987 men just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. If we make the reasonable assumption that they were either fighters or supporting the fighters, the civilian casualty rate becomes 30% - the same as Israel's report! This is a lower rate than was achieved by Allied forces in WWII – and in WWII the enemy didn't hide among civilians. As an international expert on anti-terrorist operations said, "The IDF did more to safeguard the rights of civilians in a combat zone than any other army in the history of warfare."

**Casualty ratio.** Israel has also been criticised because of the 100-to-1 ratio in total casualties. In any war, especially one where you're fighting for your life, the goal is to kill or capture as many enemy as possible and minimise your own casualties. The notion that Israel should kill just one Hamas fighter for every Israeli killed is ludicrous.

**The blockade.** OK, you say, maybe the Gaza war was justified and moral, but what about the ongoing blockade? Surely that is a sign of oppression. Not true. The UN charter states that a blockade is one of the first actions that should be taken to deter an aggressor. Blockades have been used many times, a notable example being the US blockade of Cuba to stop Russian missiles from being installed. Further, the blockade imposed by Israel (and Egypt) is only partial. About 20,000 truckloads of medical and humanitarian supplies, including diesel fuel, were sent to Gaza in 2009 alone. Most Gazans are neither destitute nor desperate. (See Dec. 14 post at kbrm.org.nz.)

**Bottom line.** Israel has no desire to oppress Gazans. After withdrawing in 2005, Israel hoped to live in peace with its neighbour. Military action was taken for one reason and one reason only: to defend its citizens against attacks by an enemy that wants to destroy it.

**Unanswered question.** Around the world, the West is fighting a battle against militant Islam and terrorism. Israel is fighting that same battle – indeed, is on the front lines, fighting for its life. Yet the world blames Israel for its actions and ignores far greater transgressions by Israel's enemies. Why does the world insist on blaming the only Jewish nation in the world, turning the victim into the villain? For this question I don't have an answer.

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