



The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center  
at the Israeli Intelligence & Heritage Commemoration Center

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**The War of the Casualties: During Operation Cast Lead it was Hamas policy to hide the real number of its casualties. The factual data was released two years later, only after false information that Israel was responsible for the mass killing of Gaza Strip civilians had percolated into the world's consciousness and entered the Goldstone Report<sup>1</sup>.**



**Fathi Hamad, minister of the interior in the de-facto Hamas administration, who only revealed the true number of Hamas and other terrorist operatives killed about two years after Operation Cast Lead had ended (Felesteen.ps, November 1, 2010, archive picture)**

1. During Operation Cast Lead **Hamas adopted a policy of hiding the casualties caused by the IDF among its terrorist operatives. Its objective was to prevent harm to morale and the image of "victory," and to establish the (false) propaganda message that Israel had deliberately attacked civilians.** To implement the policy Hamas gave instructions to all surfers who entered its PALDF forum (its main website) during the fighting. They were told that the terrorist organizations operating in the Gaza Strip (the "jihadist resistance") **had forbidden the posting of pictures, names or information about "resistance" fighters killed or wounded until the end of Israel's "aggression" in the Gaza Strip** (similar instructions were also issued by the Hamas-controlled ministry of the interior during Operation Protective Edge, on the night of August 5, 2014). As a result,

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<sup>1</sup> Continuation of the August 6, 2014 bulletin, ["War of the Casualties: the Hamas-controlled ministry of the interior in the Gaza Strip issued a warning not to divulge information about terrorist operatives killed in Operation Protective Edge."](#)

there were reports of **unofficial** (and sometimes secret), **improvised burials of terrorist operatives held throughout Operation Cast Lead**.

2. **The policy of hiding the true number of terrorist operative casualties**, as opposed to **the exaggerated number of civilian deaths, continued after the end of Operation Cast Lead**. The biased representation of the number of civilian deaths served to bolster the false message that Israel had committed the mass killing of civilians in the Gaza Strip during Operation Cast Lead (the so-called "holocaust" of the Gaza Strip, as it was dubbed by pro-Hamas propaganda). The small number of terrorist operatives killed, as represented in the media, also helped to reduce and/or hide the force of the blow dealt to Hamas' military-terrorist wing and **was integrated into the "myth of victory" Hamas has striven to construct since the end of the operation**.

3. **Apparently, for Hamas the policy wore itself out about two years after the war (especially after the Goldstone Report was issued**, which Hamas regarded as an important achievement). In addition, the considerations on which the policy was based changed, and Hamas found itself needing to emphasize that its forces had played a major role in Operation Cast Lead and paid the price. It was in those circumstances that on November 1, 2010, for the first time Fathi Hamad revealed the true number of Hamas operatives killed in Operation Cast Lead (in an interview with the London-based newspaper Al-Hayat, reprinted in Hamas' daily Felesteen, printed in the Gaza Strip).

4. In the interview Fathi Hamad admitted that during Operation Cast Lead **700 Hamas operatives of its military-security apparatus had been killed**. The number was significantly higher than the false figure that served as the basis for the Goldstone Report and the reports provided by the human rights organizations in the Gaza Strip. On the other hand, **the numbers were consistent with the findings of Israel security sources**, which indicated that at least 60% of all those killed during Operation Cast Lead were terrorist operatives who belonged to Hamas or the other terrorist organizations.

5. **For further information see the November 3, 2010 ITIC bulletin, appended below**, entitled "Fathi Hamad, the Hamas administration's interior minister, revealed that as many as 700 Hamas military-security operatives were killed during Operation Cast Lead. The

number, consistent with Israel's examination, is significantly higher than the biased numbers given in the past by Hamas and used by the Goldstone Report to defame Israel."

## Appendix

**Fathi Hamad, the Hamas administration's interior minister, revealed that as many as 700 Hamas military-security operatives were killed during Operation Cast Lead. The number, consistent with Israel's examination, is significantly higher than the biased numbers given in the past by Hamas and used by the Goldstone Report to defame Israel.**



**Interior minister Fathi Hamad**  
(Archive picture published in Hamas' daily *Felesteen*, November 1, 2010).

### **The number of Hamas operatives killed in Operation Cast Lead according to Fathi Hamad, interior minister of the de facto Hamas administration**

1. On November 1, 2010, Fathi Hamad, interior minister of the de facto Hamas administration in the Gaza Strip, was interviewed by the London-based *Al-Hayat*. One of the issues dealt with was the number of Hamas operatives killed in Operation Cast Lead. The interview was also published (November 1) in Hamas' *Felesteen*, its organ in the Gaza Strip.
2. Fathi Hamad responded to the allegations [of rivals] that Hamas did not play a major role in fighting the Israelis during Operation Cast Lead, and that it was the Gazans themselves

who won the war and paid the price, while Israel had few losses.<sup>2</sup>

3. In response to those allegations Fathi Hamad answered, "It has been said that the [Palestinian] people were harmed by the war, but is Hamas not part of the people? It is a fact that **on the first day of the war Israel struck police headquarters and killed 250 members of Hamas and the various factions, in addition to the 200-300 operatives from the [Izz al-Din] al-Qassam Brigades.** In addition, 150 security personnel [i.e., members of the internal security forces] were killed, and the rest were from the people [i.e., civilians]..."

وعما يتردد من أن "حماس" في حرب غزة الأخيرة لم تواجه الإسرائيليين وإنما الشعب في غزة هو الذي انتصر ودفع ثمن هذه الحرب، وأن خسائر (إسرائيل) كانت محدودة جداً، أجب: "يقولون إن الشعب الذي تضرر من هذه الحرب، لكن ألسنا نحن حماس جزءاً من هذا الشعب؟ ثم انه في اليوم الأول للحرب، استهدفت إسرائيل مقر الشرطة وسقط 250 شهيداً وهؤلاء من حماس والفصائل المختلفة، بالإضافة إلى نحو 200 إلى 300 عنصر استشهدوا من كتائب القسام و150 عنصراً أمنياً والباقي من الشعب" ،

The original text of the interview in which Fathi Hamad relates to the number of Hamas operatives killed in Operation Cast Lead (Hamas' daily Felesteen, November 1, 2010).

### Comparing the new data revealed by Fathi Hamad and the data presented by Israel and Hamas spokesmen in the past

4. According to the data provided by Fathi Hamad, **during Operation Cast Lead as many as 700 operatives from the military-security forces of Hamas and the other terrorist organizations were killed. Most of them belonged to the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades and some to the security forces, considered by Hamas as an integral part of the movement's military apparatus. The overall number is consistent with the findings of the Israeli defense establishment, on which its response to the Goldstone Report, written by the Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, was based.**<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> In our assessment, it is an echo of the rivalry between Hamas and the rogues terrorist organizations for their participation in Operation Cast Lead. Interviewed by *Al-Hayat* in Cairo on October 30, Mahmoud al-Zahar said that those who fire rockets from the Gaza Strip "are rebelling against their own factions." He added that the factions did not fire even one bullet during Operation Cast Lead and that they are now trying to market themselves by firing rockets from the Gaza Strip in violation of agreed-on policy.

<sup>3</sup> For further information see the March 2010 bulletin, "Hamas and the Terrorist Threat from the Gaza Strip The Main Findings of the Goldstone Report Versus the Factual Findings" at [http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam\\_multimedia/English/eng\\_n/pdf/g\\_report\\_e1.pdf](http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/g_report_e1.pdf). Hereinafter "Response to the Goldstone Report." Specific information about the number of casualties can be found on pages 315-317.

5. **According to the findings of the Israeli defense establishment, during Operation Cast Lead 1,166 Palestinians were killed. Six hundred and nine were terrorist operatives who belonged to Hamas' military wing and its security forces. One hundred more were operatives from other terrorist organizations who were involved in the fighting, so that the overall number of terrorist operatives killed was 709** (about 60% of the total number of deaths). Of the 709 terrorist operatives killed, **232 belonged to Hamas' internal security forces**. According to the Israeli examination, most of the 457 casualties not defined as terrorist operatives were non-combatant civilians. Most of them were harmed by mistake. The identity of some of the casualties included in that number could not be confirmed.

6. The numbers of those killed in the fighting revealed by Fathi Hamad **are higher than those previously stated by Hamas spokesmen or Palestinian NGOs** operating in the Gaza Strip. For example:

A. **At the end of Operation Cast Lead, Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades spokesman Abu Obeida claimed that 48 Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades operatives had been killed in the fighting**, and that the (fabricated) number of IDF soldiers killed was 80, and 980 wounded. The false numbers were meant to glorify what Hamas represented as its "victory" (Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades website, January 20, 2010). **Six months later, Khaled Mashaal, head of the Hamas political bureau, was ready to "admit" that the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades and Hamas police lost "400 shaheeds"** (Al-Quds, June 20, 2010).

B. **Palestinian human rights organizations operating in the Gaza Strip (PCHR, Al-Mezan, Tawthiq)**, whose data was used by the Goldstone Report to defame Israel (See below) **claimed that only one of every five Palestinians killed was a "fighter."** The total number of Palestinians killed during Operation Cast Lead, claimed the human rights organizations, was between 1,417 and 1,444,<sup>4</sup> so **according to their arithmetic, the number of "fighters" killed was about 285**. That number is significantly lower than the number recently given by Fathi Hamad.

### **Why does Hamas now admit the real number of casualties?**

7. During Operation Cast Lead Hamas **employed a policy of hiding the real number of its operatives killed by the IDF. The policy was implemented to prevent the demoralization of both the terrorist operatives and the Gazan residents and to**

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<sup>4</sup> Response to the Goldstone Report, p. 329.

**reinforce the (false) message that Israel was deliberately directing its military actions against civilians.** Hamas also used PALDF, its main Internet forum, to instruct surfers that in accordance with the policy of the terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip ("the jihadist resistance"), **it was forbidden to post pictures, names or information about "resistance fighter" killed or wounded until the end of the Israeli "aggression" in the Gaza Strip.** As part of that policy, there was also evidence of the **unofficial, improvised (and sometimes secret) burials of operatives during in the fighting.**

**8. The policy of hiding the real number of terrorist casualties and issuing exaggerated numbers of civilian casualties continued after Operation Cast Lead.** The false representation of the numbers **served to reinforce the false claim that Israel carried out mass murders of civilians during Operation Cast Lead** (represented as the "holocaust of the Gaza Strip" in pro-Hamas propaganda). The low number of operatives given as killed also helped reduce or hide the enormity of the blow to Hamas' military wing and **meshed with the "victory myth" Hamas began inculcating when the fighting ended.**

**9. Apparently, as far as Hamas was concerned, the policy of hiding the actual number of Hamas operatives killed outlived its usefulness after the Goldstone Report was issued,** which Hamas regarded as a significant achievement. The considerations behind formulating the policy changed, because Hamas recently needed public diplomacy to prove that its forces had played a major role in the fighting in Operation Cast Lead and that it was Hamas which had borne the burden of casualties (thereby rebutting the claim of its opponents that the "people in Gaza" and not Hamas had borne the burden of the fighting). Under those circumstances, interior minister Fathi Hamad revealed, for the first time, the real number of Hamas operatives killed, which, as noted, was consistent with the findings of the Israeli defense establishment investigation.

### **Hamas' distorted numbers, provided by Palestinian NGOs to the Goldstone Commission, were used in the Goldstone Report to defame Israel**

**10. Reducing the number of terrorist operatives belonging to Hamas and the other terrorist organizations killed in Operation Cast Lead and greatly exaggerating the number of civilians killed served Hamas and its supporters in dealing with the Goldstone Commission.** Hamas' false data found their way into the Goldstone Report both directly and through the human rights organizations operating in the Gaza Strip, **leading the Commission to take an anti-Israel position on that issue as well.**

11. The Goldstone Report states that according to the Palestinian NGO statistics, **only one of every five casualties was a "combatant" [i.e., terrorist operative]**. That caused, according to the Report, **"very serious concerns" about the way Israel conducted military operations in Gaza** (Page 17 Paragraph 30, Pages 91-92, Paragraphs 361-362).<sup>5</sup> The conclusion (based on the distorted data) that there was a relatively large number of civilian casualties in Operation Cast Lead served the Goldstone Commission as an additional tool with which to defame Israel. The "serious concerns" noted by the Report were intended **to support the central thesis, which runs throughout, that Operation Cast Lead was not a legitimate operation because the civilians of the Gaza Strip and not the terrorist organizations were its primary targets.**

12. The findings of the examination conducted by the Israeli defense establishment were that **at least 60% of the casualties in Operation Cast Lead were operatives belonging to the military and security forces of Hamas and the other terrorist organizations.** The relation between terrorist operatives and civilians in the densely-populated Gazan arena greatly **reinforces the Israeli statement** (rejected by the Goldstone Report) **about the methodical effort made by the IDF to reduce the harm done to Palestinian civilians** among whom and within whose houses Hamas waged its fighting (more conspicuous when the Gazan arena data is compared to combat zones in other countries, where the percentage of civilian casualties has been far greater).

### **Fathi Hamad admits that operatives from Hamas and other terrorist organizations were in police headquarters on the first day of the war**

13. In the interview Fathi Hamad admitted that on the first day of the war, **when Israel struck Hamas police headquarters, 250 casualties belonged to Hamas and the other terrorist organizations.** That is consistent with Israeli information that **Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades operatives also served in the police force and the other internal security forces of the de facto Hamas administration, both before and during Operation Cast Lead.**

14. According to reliable intelligence information, included in the ITIC's Response to the Goldstone Report, Hamas makes no distinction between its military and internal security forces and merely counted those killed, regardless of whether they belonged to the Izz al-

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<sup>5</sup> See the Response to the Goldstone Report, p. 330.



Din al-Qassam Brigades, the police or internal security.<sup>6</sup> **The remarks made by Fathi Hamad prove that there were terrorist operatives in police headquarters belonging to Hamas and the other organizations, strengthening the Israeli position.**

15. The interview with Fathi Hamad **undermines the validity of the Goldstone Report's conclusion that the Hamas police force was an entirely civilian body whose task was to enforce law and order and protect the "home front."** As a function of that incorrect conclusion, **the Goldstone Report attacks Israel for striking police facilities** and claims that the 248 policemen who were killed in Operation Cast Lead were not combatants but rather civilians. **The Report also claims that the other internal security forces were also civilian, with the exception of the national security service whose operatives are referred to as "combatants" because they were given concrete military missions. Thus the Goldstone Report adopted the (biased and false) position of "the Gaza authorities" (i.e., Hamas) who claimed that the security forces were civilian.**

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<sup>6</sup> Response to the Goldstone Report, pp. 317-318.