August 17, 2014

Examination of the names of Palestinians killed in Operation Protective Edge - Part Three

The findings to date

1. This document is the third in a series of publications of the Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center (ITIC), as part of a project examining the names of the Palestinians killed in Operation Protective Edge. The project’s goal is to ascertain the identity of terrorist operatives and non-involved citizens, and to examine the ratio between them. The number of names of those killed, examined by the Information Center to date, is 450. The examinations carried out by the Information Center are based on the lists issued by the Hamas-controlled Palestinian Health Ministry, despite the reliability problems and deficiencies found in them. To these basic lists we have added terrorist operatives who do not appear on them, both for technical reasons and as a result of Hamas’s policy of concealment and deception.

2. Weighting the findings of the current examination and the findings of the two previous examinations (detailed in the two previous documents) yields the following results:

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1 Further to the ITIC Information Bulletin from August 5, 2014: “Examination of the names of Palestinians killed in Operation Protective Edge - Part Two”. This is the first part of a study with three appendices, which will be completed within the next few days. The full study in Hebrew is available on the ITIC website.
A. 208 of those killed were terrorist operatives (66 + 71 + 71).

B. 240 of those killed were non-involved civilians (93 + 66 + 81).

C. The identity of 44 people who were killed is unknown at this stage (26 + 15 + 3). Therefore, it is not possible to determine whether they were terrorist operatives or non-involved civilians.

D. Of the 448 dead who could be identified based on the three lists that were examined, terrorist operatives constitute approximately 46% of the names. Non-involved civilians constitute approximately 54% of the names. This ratio may vary as the ITIC continues to examine the names of those killed.

The findings of the current examination

3. The current document examined an additional basic list of names of 150 Palestinians, most of whom were killed from July 18 to July 20, 2014. The current list is problematic, primarily because of incompatibility between various lists issued by the Palestinian Health Ministry and its spokesman, Dr. Ashraf al-Qudra, on various dates. Moreover, they included only a very small number of names of terrorist operatives killed in the fierce fighting in Shejaiya (east of Gaza City). This is because their bodies are still under the rubble and because of Hamas’s deliberate policy of concealment.

4. To overcome the deficiencies, we had to make the following changes, additions and adjustments in the current list:

   A. We formulated a unified list of 150 dead, based on the two similar, but not identical, lists issued by the Palestinian Health Ministry and by its spokesman Dr. Ashraf al-Qudra on two different dates (see Appendix C).

   B. To the 150 names, we added 12 more names that appear on Dr. Ashraf al-Qudra’s list but not on the Palestinian Health Ministry’s first list. We added one terrorist operative whose name does not appear on the lists. Conversely, we deleted three duplicate names that appeared on the lists.

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2 This document examined two lists released by the Palestinian Health Ministry in Gaza: the Palestinian Health Ministry’s first list was published on July 13, 2014, and included 347 dead; the second list was taken from a list of 1,032 dead posted by Palestinian Health Ministry spokesman Dr. Ashraf al-Qudra on his Facebook page on July 27. The two lists are similar but not identical. Therefore, we had to formulate a unified list that combines the two.
C. To the number of dead we added 25 terrorist operatives killed in battle in Shejaiya, in order to balance the bias that was created because the Palestinian Health Ministry rarely included their names in its lists (for an explanation of our methodology, see below).

5. After these changes and additions, the overall number of fatalities addressed by this document is 185. The examination of the names of those killed yielded the following findings:

A. We identified 41 of those killed as terror operatives. To this figure we added 25 unidentified terrorist operatives (killed in battle in Shejaiya, whose bodies are still under the rubble). Thus, the total number of terrorist operatives is 66 (photos of 27 of them were found, see Appendix B).

B. We identified 93 names as non-involved civilians.

C. We were unable to identify 26 names that appeared on the list, and have designated them as unidentified.

6. Below is a breakdown of the 66 terrorist operatives:

A. 19 Hamas / Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades terrorist operatives

B. 10 PIJ / Al-Quds Battalions terrorist operatives

C. 7 operatives of Fatah terrorist networks

D. 28 terrorist operatives whose organizational affiliation is unknown (in our assessment, most of them are members of the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades)

7. Of the 159 identified names (about 86% of the names examined), 66 are terrorist operatives, representing 42% of the names examined. In addition, 93 non-involved civilians were identified, comprising about 58% of the names.
Dealing with the “concealment” of the names of operatives killed in the fighting in Shejaiya

8. During the ground incursion in Operation Protective Edge, heavy fighting took place between the IDF and terrorist cells operating in the Shejaiya neighborhood (July 19 to August 1, 2014). The terrorist organizations established a vast military infrastructure in Shejaiya (see aerial photo below). The IDF and Palestinian terrorist organizations, especially Hamas, sustained heavy losses in these battles. The problem is that the Palestinian Health Ministry’s lists include the names of many civilians killed in Shejaiya, and only a small number of names of terrorist operatives. In our assessment, there are two explanations for this bias:

A. The bodies of many operatives are still buried under the rubble. Therefore, Hamas (and other terrorist organizations) do not yet have accurate information about their identity, and their names have not yet been included on the Palestinian Health Ministry’s lists or in reports issued by various organizations. This explanation is supported by Samir Zaqout, a Gaza Strip human rights activist at the Al-Mezan Center for Human Rights. The New York Times wrote that “Mr. Zaqout of Al Mezan expects that scores more bodies will be pulled from the rubble, many of them militants, in places like Shejaiya, Rafah and Beit Hanoun that saw the hottest combat.”

B. For political-propaganda reasons, Hamas’s policy strives to conceal the identity of terrorist operatives (see below). As a result, Hamas refrains from issuing true reports on the extent of its casualties in Shejaiya (and elsewhere). Based on past experience (Operation Cast Lead), it is doubtful whether it will do so in the short term, even when the dead are removed from the battlefield and it possesses all the data (see below).

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3 Following our previous bulletins.
4 Samir Zaqout is an activist at the Al-Mezan Center for Human Rights, an anti-Israel human rights organization operating in the Gaza Strip. During Operation Cast Lead, the organization joined forces with Hamas's propaganda machine and assisted the Goldsto ne Commission, albeit to a limited degree. Samir Zaqout, who heads a team documenting the Palestinians killed in Operation Protective Edge, spoke to The New York Times: “Mr. Zaqout of Al Mezan expects that scores more bodies will be pulled from the rubble, many of them militants, in places like Shejaiya, Rafah and Beit Hanoun that saw the hottest combat.” (Boldface type added by the ITIC. When Samir Zaqout uses the term “militants,” he means terrorist operatives.) (New York Times, August 5, 2014, article by Jodi Rudoren).
9. According to reports from IDF forces that operated in Shejaiya, and based on the information that we have, we believe that 100-150 terrorist operatives were killed in the fighting in Shejaiya. In order to balance the bias in the Palestinian Health Ministry’s incomplete lists, we have added to the list of the dead an initial minimum estimate of one hundred Hamas operatives killed in the fighting in Shejaiya. We have designated these operatives as terrorist operatives whose organizational affiliation is unknown; however, in our assessment, most of them belong to Hamas’s Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades.

10. Since we cannot determine the dates of death of these 100 terrorist operatives, we have chosen to add them to the Palestinian Health Ministry’s lists that we examine, in four groups of 25 operatives each. The first group was added to the number of dead terrorist operatives in the current document. The other three groups will be added in the three subsequent documents. These operatives have been included under the category of terrorist operatives whose organizational affiliation is unknown. Should we obtain information in the future enabling us to indicate the names of the terrorist operatives killed in Shejaiya and their organizational affiliation, we will change the initial estimate and weight the current data with the findings at our disposal.
The Hamas-controlled Interior Ministry’s guideline not to publish information about terrorist operatives

11. On the night of August 5, 2014, at 22:54, the Interior Ministry in Gaza posted a message on its Facebook page warning the Palestinians not to disclose details about terrorist operatives (those killed in the “Resistance”) killed during Operation Protective Edge. This is because "the occupation [i.e., Israel] collects all this information and the reports [about the fallen] and uses them as evidence to justify its crimes against [the Palestinian] civilians." This message was posted about five hours after the ITIC website uploaded its second publication (Part Two)
examining the identity of terrorist operatives killed in Operation Protective Edge.\(^5\)

12. The Hamas-controlled Interior Ministry in the Gaza Strip is the body in charge of enforcing Hamas’s policy of concealment and deception, which strives to reduce the volume of information about the number and identity of terrorists killed in Operation Protective Edge. The concealment policy is aimed at supporting the image of victory that Hamas is trying to establish and using the number of fatalities as a propaganda weapon against Israel. We believe that the Interior Ministry’s announcement was designed to tighten its supervision of the publication of information about terrorist operatives who were killed, in order to make it more difficult to examine the names of those killed.

13. This policy is not new. During Operation Cast Lead (December 2008 – January 2009), Hamas adopted a policy of concealing information about its operatives killed by the IDF. This policy is designed to prevent damage to the morale and the image of victory and to reinforce the (false) message that Israel premeditatedly harms civilians. As part of this policy, during the fighting all users of Hamas’s PALDF forum (the movement's main forum) were informed that according to the policy of the terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip (“the jihadi resistance”), it is

\(^5\) For further details, see the ITIC Information Bulletin from August 7, 2014: “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.”
forbidden to post pictures, names or details of operatives killed and injured until the end of the Israeli "aggression" in the Gaza Strip.

14. From the perspective of Hamas, it seems that this policy exhausted itself some two years after the war (especially after the publication of the Goldstone Report, which was perceived by Hamas as a major achievement). Moreover, the considerations underlying this policy have changed since, for internal reasons, Hamas feels the need to stress that its forces played a major role in Operation Cast Lead and sustained the highest number of casualties. Under these circumstances, on November 1, 2010, Interior Minister Fathi Hamad revealed the number of actual deaths of Hamas operatives for the first time (interview with Fathi Hamad in the newspaper Al-Hayat, published in London, and also in the Filastin daily, Hamas’s newspaper in the Gaza Strip).

15. Fathi Hamad admitted in the interview that 700 operatives of Hamas's military-security forces were killed during the operation. The figures that he cited were significantly higher than the biased data that served as the basis of the Goldstone Report and reports of human rights organizations in the Gaza Strip. Conversely, these figures were consistent with the findings of the study carried out by Israel's defense establishment, indicating that at least 60% of all those killed in Operation Cast Lead were operatives in the military and security forces of Hamas and other terrorist organizations.6

Changing the age of an adult terrorist and the involvement of a young boy in terrorism

16. The Palestinian Health Ministry’s list included the names of two young boys aged 13 and 15, who were operatives in a Fatah terrorist network by the name of the Ahmed Abu al-Rish Battalions. The two were killed in the same incident. Our investigation revealed that the first 13-year-old "boy" was a 26-year-old operative. On the other hand, the other boy was indeed a 15-year-old terrorist operative. This shows that when boys appear in the Palestinian Health Ministry’s list, the immediate tendency is to classify them as non-involved civilians, but they may actually be operatives involved in terror.

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6 For further information, see the ITIC Information Bulletin from August 10, 2014: "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."
17. Here are the two examples:

A. The Palestinian Health Ministry’s list included the name of Ibrahim Jamal Kamal Nasr from Khan Yunis, who was killed in an attack on July 18, 2014. The list states that he was “13 years old” (No. 303, Appendix C). In fact, he was a 26-year-old Fatah / Abu al-Rish Battalions operative. In our assessment, this is not an innocent technical error, but rather the deliberate inclusion on the list of a 13-year-old boy with a name similar to the name of an adult terrorist operative who was killed.

B. The Palestinian Health Ministry’s list included the name of Wasim Rida Salehiya from Khan Yunis, who was killed in an attack in Khan Yunis on July 18, 2014. The list states that he was "15 years old" (No. 304, Appendix C). Our examination revealed that he was indeed a 15-year-old boy and a Fatah / Abu al-Rish Battalions operative.
The high percentage of Palestinian fatalities among the 20-29 age group supports the ITIC’s interim findings

18. The American and British media recently published findings of examinations of the ages of Palestinians killed in the Gaza Strip, based on figures published by the UN and the Palestinian Health Ministry. The findings of these examinations revealed that the percentage of 20-29 year-olds (the age group to which the majority of terrorist operatives belong) in the lists of fatalities is much higher than their percentage in the general population in the Gaza Strip. However, the percentage of women and children is much lower than their percentage in the general population. These findings support the interim findings of the examinations conducted by the ITIC, indicating that terrorist operatives constitute a dominant component in the list of fatalities (nearly half).

19. The following are excerpts from two articles recently published in the American media:

A. An article by Jodi Rudoren, The New York Times, August 5, 2014: “The Times analysis, looking at 1,431 names, shows that the population most likely to be militants, men ages 20 to 29, is also the most overrepresented in the death toll: They are 9 percent of Gaza's 1.7 million residents, but 34 percent of those killed whose ages were provided. At the same time, women and children under 15, the least likely to be legitimate targets, were the most
underrepresented, making up 71 percent of the population and 33 percent of the known-age casualties…”. (Boldface type added by the ITIC).

B. An article by Steven Stotsky, in Time Magazine (July 29, 2014), and on the Camera website (July 31, 2014). The headline of the article in Time: “How Hamas Wields Gaza's Casualties as Propaganda”:

“Analyses of the casualties listed in the daily reports published by the Palestinian Center for Human Rights, a Gaza-based organization operating under Hamas rule, indicate that young males ages 17 to 30 make up a large portion of the fatalities, and a particularly noticeable spike occurs between males ages 21 to 27, a pattern consistent with the age distribution typically found among combatants and military conscripts. Palestinian sources attempt to conceal this discrepancy with their public message by labeling most of these young men as civilians. Only a minority is identified as members of armed groups. As a result, the PCHR calculates civilian fatalities at 82% as of July 26. PCHR provides the most detailed casualty reports of the various Palestinian agencies from Gaza that provide figures to the media and to international organizations like the UN. Its figures closely match those of the Hamas-run Gazan Health Ministry and other groups.”

“The demographic analysis of the fatalities in the Gaza conflict has limitations. It can’t identify who is or isn’t a combatant. But the spike in fatalities among males starting in their late teens and peaking in their early to mid-twenties, and the divergence of the pattern of fatalities from the demographic pattern of the population, raises considerable doubt about claims that as many as 75% or more of the fatalities are non-combatants. In light of evidence - provided by groups that monitor Arabic language media (like the Middle East Media Research Institute) - that Hamas has instructed Gazans to describe anyone killed as a civilian, journalists have a responsibility to convey this uncertainty to their audiences and not present figures provided by Hamas and

7 PCHR is an anti-Israel Palestinian NGO based in the Gaza Strip. This NGO enjoys a special status in the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). It is the most prominent organization engaged in lawfare against Israel by defaming it as an “apartheid state” that carries out “ethnic cleansing” and “war crimes.” The reports of the organization, which has an ostensibly legal nature, are nothing but political-propaganda documents, written on the basis of biased and one-sided information. PCHR served as one of the sources of information of the Goldstone Report and is continuing its efforts to provide biased and unreliable information after Operation Protective Edge.
Hamas-affiliated sources as unqualified fact.” (Boldface type added by the ITIC).

Appendices

20. This document includes three appendices:

A. **Appendix A**: Findings of the examination of 150 additional names of those killed in Operation Protective Edge, based on the Palestinian Health Ministry’s lists.

B. **Appendix B**: Photos of 27 terrorist operatives out of the operatives who appear on the Health Ministry’s and Dr. al-Qudra’s lists.

C. **Appendix C**: Lists of other names (in Arabic), based on lists released by the Palestinian Health Ministry and by the Health Ministry’s spokesman, Dr. Ashraf al-Qudra.