

Civilian Deaths

FICTION vs. FACT in Israel's War with Hamas

FICTION: Israel has killed tens of thousands of Gazan civilians in its war against Hamas.

However, the facts demonstrate the reported number of civilian casualties is grossly inflated.

FACT: The definition of civilian: "Civilians are persons who are not members of the armed forces party to the conflict. Civilians enjoy protection under international humanitarian law. Individual civilians lose this protection for such time as they take a direct part in hostilities." (The United Nations)¹

FACT: The definition of combatant is: "One engaged in or ready to engage in combat." (Merriam-Webster)²

FACT: According to Hamas, all Israelis are combatants; no Israeli is a civilian.³ Therefore, Hamas can justify all the atrocities committed on October 7th, including the torture and murder of babies, children, women, the disabled, and the elderly as legitimate acts against so-called combatants.

In contrast, Hamas identifies all Gazans—including Hamas fighters—as civilians. Therefore, eliminated terrorists who don't wear uniforms and teenagers who function as combatants are all counted by Hamas as civilian deaths.⁴

Gazan civilians with murdered Israeli on October 7, 2023. (Photo: *The New York Post*)



Gazan civilians capture Israeli tank. October 7, 2023. (Photo: The BBC)

FACT: Gazan civilians took part or were complicit in the Oct. 7, 2023, war crimes committed against Israeli non-combatants.

- Video documentation of large numbers of civilians who followed Hamas terrorists into Israel and committed all the same atrocities on October 7th, including the taking of Israeli hostages, is well established.⁵
- Videos showing how civilians celebrated in the streets over what Hamas had done—and how they took part in the abuse of hostages both dead and alive—are well established.⁶
- Polls taken since October 7th reveal that at least 80% of Gazans support what Hamas did on that day.⁷

If people dressed as civilians commit the same crimes as those committed by identifiable terrorists in uniform and they are killed as they commit those crimes, they are combatant casualties, not civilian.

FACT: Some hostages released in November 2023 reported being held in the homes of multiple civilians.⁸ In June 2024, four rescued hostages also testified they were held in civilian homes.⁹

Based on the accepted definitions of civilian vs. combatant:

- People who engage in holding hostages are not innocent civilians but are combatants, guilty of the same war crimes as Hamas.
- When Gazans are killed because they are attempting to prevent the IDF from rescuing hostages, thus actively fighting against the IDF, they are combatants, not innocent civilians.

FICTION: The Ministry of Health in Gaza—run by Hamas—reported over 40,000 Gazans killed between October 7, 2023, and Fall 2024. They claim almost all those deaths as civilian deaths.¹⁰

In spite of Hamas' status as a terrorist organization, mainstream media and certain governments recklessly report figures reported by Hamas as fact.

FACT: As of October 2024, the IDF reported it has eliminated over 17,000 Hamas terrorists since the war began.¹¹ Since Hamas includes all terrorists in its civilian death count, these 17,000 dead terrorists count as civilians according to Hamas.

FACT: The media fails to verify numbers reported by Gaza's Ministry of Health.¹²

Because the Hamas-run Ministry of Health does not provide adequate or accurate documentation of who is a civilian versus a combatant, media and other institutions who are supposed to verify the information before repeating it, report unsubstantiated claims as fact.

FACT: Hamas itself had to admit the number of civilian deaths during the 2023-24 Gaza war was inflated by at least double the actual number. In reality, Hamas has no supporting evidence for the deaths they allege happened because of Israel's actions in Gaza.¹³

Furthermore, Hamas has admitted that 80% of the deaths are Hamas members and family members.¹⁴

FACT: Civilian deaths in Gaza are real and unavoidable in war, especially in population-dense, urban Gaza. Determining the actual number of civilian deaths is difficult. Most of Hamas' "civilian" death claims were armed terrorists dressed as civilians, and some were combatants under the age of 18 (categorized as "children" by Gaza's Health Ministry).



Terrorist armory in child's room, Gaza.¹⁸

FACT: The Israel Defense Forces do everything feasible to prevent civilian casualties through targeted attacks on terrorist sites and by warning civilians to leave areas about to be destroyed. These efforts give the enemy notice of IDF plans, resulting in unnecessary deaths of IDF soldiers.

In contrast, Hamas uses its civilians as human shields¹⁵ to make it more difficult for the IDF to target their sites. Hamas needs civilian deaths for their propaganda war against Israel.

According to Major John Spencer, the Chair of Urban Warfare Studies at the Modern War Institute, a veteran of the Iraq war, and an eyewitness observer of the operations in Gaza, the IDF has "gone above and beyond what is traditionally required of armies" to prevent civilian casualties.¹⁶

He noted that Israel had provided plenty of warning to civilians to evacuate cities before intense fighting against the terror group began, including calling and messaging residents, as well as dropping flyers and leaflets telling them to leave. Spencer concluded:

The IDF should be commended for its efforts to reduce civilian harm, not charged in an international court alongside Hamas leaders—particularly when compared to measures Hamas has taken to increase civilian suffering in Gaza.⁷



(AllIsrael.com)

Sources used for this FACT Sheet:

- 1.Examples of definitions of humanitarian law violations.pdf The United Nations.
- 2.Combatant Definition & Meaning - Merriam-Webster
- 3.<https://x.com/IshayFridman/status/1786063998619640047> Hamas spox Osama Hamdan every Israeli is a soldier or "settler" and therefore a legitimate target
- 4.Exclusive: Hamas, Islamic Jihad Accused of Using Child Soldiers in War Against Israel - Middle East Forum
- 5.<https://x.com/OliLondonTV/status/1777714663985221765>Image:
- 6.<https://x.com/leslibless/status/1719894608241369516>
- 7.Poll shows Palestinians back Oct. 7 attack on Israel, support for Hamas rises | Reuters
- 8.Freed Israeli hostage recounts ordeal in Gaza, where she says she was held in a hospital and civilian homes - CBS News
- 9.Rescued hostages were held by families with known ties to Hamas, says report | The Times of Israel
10. Israel-Gaza war: More than 40,000 killed in Gaza, Hamas-run health ministry says The BBC
11. Israel and Hamas Conflict In Brief: Overview, U.S. Policy, and Options for Congress Oct. 2024.
- 12 Hamas-Run Gaza Health Ministry Admits to Flaws in Casualty Data
13. Ibid.
14. Some 80% of Gaza fatalities are Hamas or family members - JNS.org
15. Hamas shields terrorists in hospitals, ambulances, says Gaza paramedic | World Israel News
26. Israel Implemented More Measures to Prevent Civilian Casualties Than Any Other Nation in History | Opinion - Newsweek
17. Ibid.
18. Evidence of the terrorist organizations' use of civilian facilities in the Gaza Strip - The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center