

# Debunking Israeli Arguments

By Diana Buttu

In the aftermath of Israel's month-long assault on Gaza, one is left astonished by the lack of international response to Israel's killing of more than 1,900 Palestinians, including 448 children, the destruction of thousands of homes, the bombing of mosques, schools, hospitals, and ambulances, and the displacement of thousands within the tiny Gaza Strip. There are a number of reasons for this silence – including the presence of powerful lobby groups, the disdain for Palestinian military resistance, and the decline of global leadership. But one of the reasons that Israel has successfully managed to carry out this massive assault is that Israel's assaults are accompanied by formidable propaganda campaigns that target international public opinion and politicians. These campaigns aim both to obscure facts and dehumanise Palestinians so as to allow Israel to maintain its military assault with

little criticism. Below are some of the myths that Israel continues to perpetuate.

**Myth:** Israel's military assault is self-defensive in nature. No other country in the world would tolerate "rockets."

**Reality:** No other country has to tolerate rockets because no other country has maintained a long military occupation coupled with siege. Israel's military assault was not and is not self-defensive. Israel launched air strikes against the Gaza Strip before and after the kidnap of three Israelis in mid-June. It must be noted that Israel initially, and without evidence, blamed Hamas for this kidnap incident, thereby attempting to justify its ransacking and invasion of more than 2,000 homes, its kidnap and arrest of more than 500 Palestinians, including members of Parliament, its killing of 11 Palestinians in the West Bank, and its military assault on the Gaza Strip, killing 2. All this happened before a single rocket was fired from Gaza.

Moreover, given that Israel maintains its military occupation over the Gaza Strip, it cannot claim self-defence. Israel has a choice: either maintain its military occupation and accept the consequences or end its military occupation, declare its borders, and claim it is acting in "self-defence."

Mohamed Hussein Ziyada, 72, female-Bayan Abdellatif Ismaeel Ziyada, 39, female-Ahmed Fayeze Jumaa Yaseen, 23, male-Manwa Abdalbaset Ahmed Alsaabei, 37, female-Mahmoud Musa Abdallah Abuounza, 25, male-Ahmed Abdelrahman Ahmed Abuteem, 26, male-Mohamed Hani Mohamed Alhalaq, 2, male-Ahmed Sulaiman Mahmoud Sahnoud, 34, male-Bilal Jaber Mohamed Alashab, 22, male-Razan Tawfiq Ahmed Abujaamei, 14, male-Raaed Ismaeel Mohamed Albardaweil, 26, male-Sulaiman Ahmed Sulaiman Abujaamei, 20, male-Fatima Riyab Abdelrahman Abujaamei, 25, female-Anjoud Tayseer Mohamed Abujaamei, 1, female-Sabah Tawfeeq Mohamed Abujaamei, 39, female-Jawdat Tawfeeq Ahmed Abujaamei, 13, male-Tawfeeq Tawfeeq Ahmed Abujaamei, 5, male-Hayfaa Tawfeeq Ahmed Abujaamei, 9, female-Yasmeen Ahmed Salameh Abujaamei, 25, female-Shahnaaz Waleed Mohamed Abujaamei, 28, female-Saheelah Bassam Ahmed Abujaamei, 2, female-Yasser Ahmed Mohamed Abujaamei, 27, male-Fatima Tayseer Ahmed Abujaamei, 8, female-Sumoud Nasser Mustafa Siyam, 26, female-Mohamed Mahrous Salam Siyam, 26, male-Bader Aldin Nabil Mahrous Siyam, 4, male-Ahmed Ayman Mahrous Siyam, 17, male-Mustafa Nabil Mahrous Siyam, 8, male-Ghaidaa Nabil Mahrous Siyam, 8, female-Shereen Mohamed Salam Siyam, 32, female-Shouhour Dalal Nabil Mahrous Siyam, 8, female-Kamal Mahrous Salam Siyam, 27, male-Renad Tayseer Ahmed Abujaamei, 2, female-Abdallah Tarad Abdallah Abuhageer, 16, male-Yousef Ahmed Musa Sheikh Aleid, 23, male-Hussam Hussam Abuqeenas, 5, male-Unidentified from Abujaamei house, male-Seraj Yasser Ahmed Abujaamei, 4, male-Zakariya Masoud Mohamed Alashqar, 24, male-Aliaa Khadar Yousef Siyam, 33, female-Fayeze Saber Ahmed Siyam, 67, female-Rayan Bassam Ahmed Abujaamei, 9, male-Fatima Mahmoud Ahmed Abujaamei, 64, female-Bilal Abudaqqa, male-Abdelrahman Alqarra, male-Mahmoud Hussein Rushdi Alnikhala, 19, male-Raaed Aasem Saleem Dawoud, 36, male-Kamal Talal Hassan Almasri-Ahmed Mohamed Hassan Ezam, 19, male-Omar Shaaban Hassan Ziyada, 32, male-Manwa Abdalbaset Ahmed Albei, 30, male-Abdelrahman Diab Mustafa Alfaqiya, 26, male-Mustafa Khamis Mustafa Alwan, 22, male-Abdallah Mohamed Quwaraei, 17, male-Fatima Mahmoud Loutfi Alhaji, 14, female-Abdelrahman Farajallah Abdelrahman Altoum, 22, male-Sulaiman Ali Ahmed Abuvesevus, 30, male-Saleh Mohamed Saleh Badwey, 29, male-Wassam Mohamed Kamal Masoud, 25, male-Yousef Ghazi Atia Hamdia, 24, male-Moataz Jamal Atia Hamdia, 18, male-Aaed Jamal Atia Hamdia, 22, male-Saaeda Thabit Saeed Alnikhala, 54, female-Mujahed Waleed Hassan Alaqaad-Mohamed Hafid Ragheb Alzaini, 25, male-Ibrahim Shaaban Mustafa Bakroun, 39, male-Tamer Nayef Saad Joundeya, 32, male-Rahma Ahmed Shaaban Joundeya, 61, female-Mahran Kamel Ibrahim Joundeya, 32, male-Yasmeen Nayef Hatim Alyazji, 4,



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**Myth:** Israel targets only “combatants” and avoids civilian casualties.

**Reality:** Israel has adopted a loose definition of “combatant” to include any person who is affiliated in any way with Hamas. This runs contrary to international law, which requires

that military operations be confined to those who are actually fighting. For example, Israel deliberately targeted Gaza police chief Taysir al-Batsh, killing 18 members of his family. Police are civilians according to international law. Israel has also attacked hospitals, mosques, water treatment facilities, sewer lines, the Gaza Strip’s sole power plant, and other civilian infrastructure that has nothing to do with Hamas.

According to UN estimates, 80 percent of those killed are civilians, including 448 children and even medical personnel. Using Israel’s logic, this also means that any home of any past or present Israeli soldier or police officer is a legitimate target as is any civilian area where military is present (such as the Ministry of Defence in Tel Aviv).

The “knock on the roof” procedure – dropping a missile on a house in advance of its bombing – has resulted in deaths. According to Philip Luther of Amnesty International, “There is no way that firing a missile at a civilian home can constitute an effective “warning.” Amnesty International has documented cases of civilians killed or injured by such missiles in previous Israeli military operations in the Gaza Strip,” he said.

In addition, while Israel claims that it distributes leaflets, these leaflets do not tell people where they are to go to be safe. As noted by Israeli human rights organisations, “Dispersal of leaflets does not grant the military permission to consider the area “sterile”, assume that no civilians were left in the area and then proceed to attack civilian sites. The military must not assume that all residents have indeed left their homes.” (<http://adalah.org/eng/Articles/2307/Joint-letter:-Grave-concern-regarding-Israeli-to>) Moreover, weaponry currently being used – such as fléchettes – is designed to increase casualties in densely populated areas.

**Myth:** Hamas uses Palestinians as human shields.

**Reality:** This is an effective mechanism to deprive Palestinians of their humanity by blaming Palestinian deaths on Palestinians. While the resistance movements fight from within the small area of the Gaza Strip, they do not use Palestinian civilians as cover. To date, international investigations have concluded that there is no evidence to substantiate these long-standing Israeli claims and yet the claims continue to be accepted by many, unchallenged. Ironically, the converse has been well established: Israel has



Photo by Shareef Sarhan.

How is it that Israel, a nuclear power with the strongest army in the Middle East, successfully manages to carry out three massacres in Gaza and still claims that it is acting in self-defence against a defenceless, civilian refugee population? How can Israel blame Palestinians for their own deaths?



Photo by Shareef Sarhan.

used Palestinian civilians as human shields when carrying out its military operations.

**Myth:** This is about Hamas/Gaza. Hamas seeks the destruction of Israel.

**Reality:** This is not about Hamas; this is about Palestine. Israel conveniently ignores the Likud party platform, the Yisreal Beitenu platform, and the Jewish Home platform (all members of the current Israeli governing coalition) that call for either no Palestinian state or the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians. This attack on Gaza has little to do with Hamas but more to do with breaking up Palestinian unity and dividing Palestinians. Israel routinely kills and imprisons non-Hamas members. We recall, all too well, the bombing campaigns in the West Bank as well as the isolation of President Arafat. Israel seeks the destruction of Palestine – as evidenced by the *Nakba*, the *Naksa*, its on-going colonisation, its policy of demolishing homes, and its policy of expelling Palestinians (or revoking their residency). In Israel's eyes we are an inconvenient “demographic threat” – irrespective of who we vote for.

These talking points were not new to this latest attack. One can only hope that the Palestinian Authority and the Palestine Liberation Organization will learn the value of media, as the Israelis have, and will put into place an effective media strategy to counter these myths before the next attack takes place.

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