



## Opinion

# Did the UN panel not know about the Hamas victim doctrine?



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Members of the UN Human Rights Council panel, which presented its findings Monday regarding Israel's war with Gaza last summer, should have been made aware of the doctrine that guided Hamas actions in Operation Protective Edge.

In an interview with Hamas chief Khaled Mashal on the *Yahoo* web site toward the end of the operation, in late August 2014, he said the following: "We do not target civilians, and we try most of the time to aim at military targets and Israeli bases." He went on to argue that his organization has a problem because it does not "have sophisticated weapons. ... so (precise) aiming is difficult." The fact that these things are being said and published on a major web site indicates the extent to which this organization is pulling the wool over the eyes of international media organizations.

Things have gone so wrong, that Hamas assumes, and rightly so, that the international community willingly soaks up such arguments and accepts them. Human rights groups and investigating committees pay lip service and demand that Hamas investigate and prosecute war criminals. Such was the case with the Goldstone commission after Operation Pillar of Defense, and with Human Rights Watch that demanded of Hamas to punish those who committed war crimes. As if they were blind to the fact that operations against civilians from within residential centers, schools and hospitals are the declared tactics of Hamas.

Hamas easily identified Israel's weakness in international public opinion, and worked to refine and develop this approach through the development of a deadly and cynical "victim doctrine." One of the "achievements" of Hamas during Operation Protective Edge was the significant implementation of "the victim doctrine", the main concept of

which is exposing civilians to Israel Defense Forces fire. Hamas perfected the system when storing equipment in compounds of international aid organizations. They launched rockets toward Israel near a Red Cross center for dialysis and polio treatment and near an UNRWA school, knowing well that Israel would retaliate and, what's more mind boggling, clearly intending for civilians who took shelter in those facilities to be hurt. The resulting photos could then play well on international media and the world stage - an integral element of the "victim doctrine."

There is nothing new in the fact that organizations operating in the Gaza Strip fire at Israeli civilians from within Palestinian population centers. However, it seems that during Operation Protective Edge they honed this method to monstrous proportions. One should also not ignore the fact that the installation of rocket launchers in the facilities of international organizations requires advance preparation, including excavations and transport. It's hard to imagine that such preparations were made without the people in these complexes taking note. It would be interesting to know what workers of the international organizations or visitors to those sites knew and thought. Why did no one issue a warning? Or did Hamas know how to deal with these international bodies from the lessons of previous operations?

The IDF put out a wealth evidence about the extent of the phenomenon, but associating this phenomenon with a systematically organized doctrine has not yet permeated Israeli and international public opinion - and was certainly not clear to members of the UN investigative panel.

The truth cannot be concealed and only those who avert their eyes do not see it. The moral bankruptcy of many good people in the international community does not bode well and Israel will face many more difficult days in dealing with the cynical "victim doctrine". The UN committee was as blind as many international institutions and good people in their attitude towards Israel. This, however, should not weaken Israel's belief in its just ways and not let itself get confused by the cynical choir whose voices are echoed by the committee.

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