

SHINING A LIGHT ON ISRAELI AGGRESSION IN GAZA

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Haroon Siddiqui, [The Toronto Star](#), 20 September 2009

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Releasing his report Tuesday, he said: "As a Jew with a long-standing affiliation with Israel, it's obviously a great disappointment to me, to put it mildly, that Israel behaved as described in the report."

His four-member United Nations panel found that both Israeli and Palestinian groups committed war crimes, the latter by rocketing Israeli civilian areas. But the panel reserved its harshest judgments for Israel: Its Dec. 27-Jan. 18 attack was "directed at the people of Gaza as a whole," not just at Hamas militants (as Israel claimed).

In fact, Israeli operations were "carefully planned in all their phases as a deliberately disproportionate attack designed to punish, humiliate and terrorize a civilian population, radically diminish its local economic capacity to work and to provide for itself, and to force upon it an ever increasing sense of dependency and vulnerability."

Israel was following its Dahiya Doctrine – "the application of disproportionate force and the causing of great damage and destruction to civilian property and infrastructure, and suffering to civilian populations."

Goldstone has pronounced Israel guilty of:

- Attacking residential areas, water wells, rooftop water tanks, agricultural land, citrus groves, chicken farms, greenhouses, business factories and police stations.
- Using phosphorous incendiary shells on a UN compound sheltering more than 600 civilians.

- Using phosphorous and high explosive artillery shells on Al-Quds hospital. (He rejected the contention that Hamas or other militants were using the hospital.)
- Attacking a crowded mosque during evening prayers. (He rejected the contention that arms and militants were inside.)
- Using flechettes, 4-cm metal darts fired from missiles, planes or tanks "that penetrate straight through human bone and can cause serious, often fatal, injuries."
- Using Palestinians as human shields in house searches.

Goldstone urged the UN Security Council to ask both the Israeli and Palestinian authorities to hold transparent investigations and report back in six months.

Failing that, the council should turn the matter over to the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court.

Israel had boycotted the panel and refused it entry into Israel. Panellists entered Gaza via Egypt for inspections and interviews. They went to Jordan to meet Palestinian Authority officials from the West Bank. They heard testimony from Israelis, including some victims of Hamas attacks, by flying them to Geneva.

The 575-page report (Adobe Reader required) – based on 188 interviews, 10,000 pages of documentation, 1,200 photographs and satellite imagery – is not easily dismissed. But Israel and its defenders are trying, with a smear campaign:

What else would you expect from a report done for the anti-Israeli UN Human Rights Council? Where was the need for a UN inquiry when Israel has conducted more than 100 of its own?

The former South African Supreme Court and Constitutional Court judge is not easily cowed into silence. "It is grossly wrong to label a mission or to label a report critical of Israel as being anti-Israel." He urges "fair-minded people" to read the report for themselves. (Go to the UN website, UN.org, and search for the United Nations Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza conflict.)

Goldstone's report is a condemnation not only of Israel but also its apologists in Canada, including the media. The latter are now busy burying the report under an orchestrated avalanche of negative reaction without ever properly reporting its contents.

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