

Print 

## Faulty Figures



A Gazan outside Shifa Hospital Photo: AP

 [click here to enlarge text](#)

## Gazan doctor says death toll inflated

**Physician at Gaza's Shifa Hospital tells Italian newspaper number of dead in Israeli offensive 'stands at no more than 500 or 600, most of them youths recruited to Hamas' ranks'. Senior Palestinian Health Ministry official denies claims, IDF estimate on 1,200 casualties in Strip remains unchanged**

Ynet reporters

What really is behind the numbers reported on the number of civilian casualties in the Gaza Strip? Italian newspaper Corriere Della Sera reported Thursday that a doctor working in Gaza's Shifa Hospital claimed that [Hamas](#) has intentionally inflated the number of casualties resulting from Israel's [Operation Cast Lead](#).

"The number of deceased stands at no more than 500 to 600. Most of them are youths between the ages of 17 to 23 who were recruited to the ranks of Hamas, who sent them to the slaughter," according to the newspaper article.

The doctor wished to remain unidentified, out of fear for his life.

A senior Palestinian Health Ministry official later denied the claims, and the Israel Defense Forces' estimate on the number of casualties in Gaza has also remained unchanged.

Despite the claims, the IDF stood behind its estimate that between 1,100 to 1,200 people were killed in the Strip during the fighting, more than two-thirds of them Hamas members.

The army initially believed that the number of civilian casualties was higher, as many Hamas men walked outside their houses dressed in civilian clothes, leaving their weapons at home.

Dr. Moaiya Hassanain, who is in charge of the emergency department at the Palestinian Health Ministry in Gaza, denied the figures presented by the Italian paper.

Hassanain told Ynet that the Palestinian figures were issued cautiously, without any political considerations, and that several casualties may not have been reported as their bodies are still under the rubble or have not been handed over to the rescue forces and authorized medical officials.

### 'Mostly armed teenagers'

A Tal al-Hawa resident told the newspaper's reporter, "Armed Hamas men sought out a good position for provoking the Israelis. There were mostly teenagers, aged 16 or 17, and armed. They couldn't do a thing against a tank or a jet. They knew they are much weaker, but they fired at our houses so that they could blame Israel for war crimes."

The reporter for the Italian newspaper also quoted reporters in the Strip who told of Hamas' exaggerated figures, "We have already said to Hamas commanders – why do you insist on inflating the number of victims?"

These same reporters mentioned that the truth that will come out is likely to be similar to what occurred in Operation Defensive Shield in Jenin. "Then, there was first talk of 1,500 deaths. But then it turned out that there were only 54, 45 of which were armed men," the Palestinian reporters told the Italian newspaper.

These new figures must be treated with caution especially in light of the fact that various official sources in the Gaza Strip, including United Nations and Red Cross officials, have reported that more than 1,300 people were killed and some 5,000 wounded during the three weeks of fighting in the coastal strip. Palestinian sources claim that three-quarters of the dead were unarmed civilians.

Hamas, while boasting on having Israeli soldiers by the dozens, a number that has proven to be exaggerated, [claimed](#) that no more than 48 of its members were killed during the Israeli

## Solidarity

### Israeli school erects mourning tent for Gaza / Meirav Shlomo

Students of Jaffa high school hold ceremony displaying images of death from Gaza fighting

[Full story](#)

offensive. According to IDF figures, Hamas lost hundreds of fighters from its ranks.

The UN's humanitarian chief began a tour of the Gaza Strip on Thursday to examine the extent of the devastation left behind by the Israeli offensive.

John Holmes said the number of casualties is "extremely shocking." He also urged [Israel](#) to conduct a thorough investigation into shelling attacks that damaged UN buildings in Gaza.

Holmes said he was thinking about immediate humanitarian needs and longer-term reconstruction. He said the biggest concerns are providing clean water, sanitation, electricity and shelter.

Holmes added that Gaza's border crossings would have to be opened to allow reconstruction materials into the area.

**Nir Magal, Ali Waked, Hanan Greenberg and The Associated Press contributed to this report**

[Back](#)