

Fra: HonestReporting
Sendt: 22. januar 2009 16:35
Emne: Gaza Doctor Says Death Toll Inflated

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Dear HonestReporting Subscriber,

[YNet News](#) asks:

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....

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.

More info at [The Jerusalem Post](#).

FOREIGN MEDIA REPORTING REALITY?

As more foreign journalists gain access to Gaza, different viewpoints from the default attacks on Israel are starting to emerge. [Newsweek](#) talked to gunmen who admitted using a hospital for firing at Israel:

One of the most notorious incidents during the war was the Jan. 15 shelling of the Palestinian Red Crescent Society buildings in the downtown Tal-al Hawa part of Gaza City, followed by a shell hitting their Al Quds Hospital next door; the subsequent fire forced all 500 patients to be evacuated . . . In the Tal-al Hawa neighborhood nearby, however, Talal Safadi, an official in the leftist Palestinian People's Party, said that resistance fighters were firing from positions all around the hospital. He shrugged that off, having a bigger beef with Hamas. "They failed to win the battle."

[Daily Telegraph](#) correspondent Tim Butcher returned to Gaza for the first time since the war:

I knew Gaza well before the attacks, so when Israel ended its ban on foreign journalists reaching Gaza on the day the ceasefire was announced, I was able to see for myself.

One thing was clear. Gaza City 2009 is not Stalingrad 1944. There had been no carpet bombing of large areas, no firebombing of complete suburbs. Targets had been selected and then hit, often several times, but almost always with precision munitions. Buildings nearby had been damaged and there had been some clear mistakes, like the firebombing of the UN aid headquarters. But, in most the cases, I saw the primary target had borne the brunt. ...

But, for the most part, I was struck by how cosmetically unchanged Gaza appeared to be. It has been a tatty, poorly-maintained mess for decades and the presence of fresh bombsites on streets already lined with broken kerbstones and jerry-built buildings did not make any great difference.