

VS: Iran-backed Hamas Fires at Israeli Troops from Civilian-Filled UNRWA Compound

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Emne: Iran-backed Hamas Fires at Israeli Troops from Civilian-Filled UNRWA Compound



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Iran-backed Hamas Fires at Israeli Troops from Civilian-Filled UNRWA Compound ***Attack Comes During Israeli Ceasefire to Deliver Humanitarian Aid into Gaza***

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Iran-backed Hamas in Gaza used the cover of a United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) compound to fire on Israel Defense Forces (IDF) Thursday (Jan. 15), prompting Israeli troops to fire back. [1] Hamas's attack came during the daily humanitarian aid ceasefire instituted by Israel to ensure that Palestinian civilians receive food, medicine and other necessities. [2]

The UNRWA compound is the agency's headquarters for Palestinian refugees and also contains offices and a school. [3] At the time of the attack, the compound was serving as a shelter for hundreds of Palestinians. Hamas used anti-tank weapons and machine guns against the IDF. [4] Three UN staff members were injured when Israeli troops returned fire. [5] UNRWA has a long history of allowing its ambulances, schools and other facilities to be used by terrorist groups. [Click here for numerous examples](#)

After the incident, **Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert** told UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, *'This is a sad incident, and I apologize for it, but our forces were attacked from there and the response was harsh. We did not wish for such an incident to happen, and I don't know if you are aware of this, but Hamas attacked from within the UNRWA building during our humanitarian pause in Gaza.'* [6]

Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak told Ban and International Committee of the Red Cross President Jakob Kellenberger, *" Hamas is using Palestinian civilians as human shields, shooting at Israeli soldiers from positions close to UN facilities. IDF soldiers respond, and will continue to respond, to any attempt to harm them - this is basic self-defense. The IDF will continue to operate while making a supreme effort to avoid harming uninvolved civilians and to extend assistance to the UN organizations involved in humanitarian activity."* [7]

The Hamas attack, and Barak's comments to the UN secretary-general, came just minutes before the UN chief held a joint press conference in Tel Aviv with Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni. During the press conference, Ban insisted on an immediate ceasefire. Livni said Hamas violated the six-month ceasefire that began June 19 on a daily basis and continuously smuggled in weaponry, using the period of calm to rearm. *" Hamas cannot become legitimate until it accepts the terms of the international community,"* she said. [8]

Israeli officials also have said a ceasefire would be contingent on Hamas ending its constant rocket, mortar and missile attacks on Israeli civilians. Hamas and other terrorist groups in Gaza have fired more than 9,400 rockets and mortars at Israel since 2003 [9] and 6,500 since Israel withdrew from Gaza more than three years ago and turned the area to the Palestinian Authority. [10]

Yesterday (Jan. 15), **Hamas fired a mortar shell into Israel which contained white phosphorous.** The shell landed in a field near the town of Sderot. [11]

The security chief of the Eshkol Regional Council, Nikki Levy, said, *"The potential danger of using such a rocket is enormous. It is far more dangerous than other Qassam rockets and mortar shells. This is an escalation in the type of explosives the Palestinians use on civilians."* [12]

The deliberate use of white phosphorous against civilians is prohibited by international law. Hamas and other Palestinian terrorist groups direct their rocket and mortar fire at Israeli population centers which is itself a violation of international law. [13]

Palestinian terrorists fired approximately 23 rockets at Israel today (Jan. 15), one of which fell in the city of Beersheba, injuring seven people, including a young boy. The cities of G'dera, Ofakim and Sderot were also hit by the rocket fire. [14]

Since the beginning of Israel's defensive operation in Gaza Dec. 27, terrorists in Gaza have fired more than 650 rockets and mortars at Israel. The rocket fire has, however, significantly declined since the start of the operation. On Dec. 27, 2008, 94 rockets and mortars were fired from Gaza and yesterday (Jan. 14), the number of rockets and mortars fired was 19. [15]

Misuse of UN Facilities by Terrorist Groups

In recent years UNRWA has come under increased scrutiny for its involvement with Palestinian terrorist organizations in Gaza and the West Bank, especially by Hamas. U.S. and Israeli officials and diplomats have charged, and UN officials have admitted, that UNRWA has implicitly assisted terrorists in the misuse of UN infrastructure, including ambulances, schools and other facilities.

UNRWA's failure to report contact with Palestinian terrorist groups, or to prevent them, violate the UN's own conventions. Security Council resolutions oblige UNRWA representatives to take *"appropriate steps to help create a secure environment"* in all *"situations where refugees [are]...vulnerable to infiltration by armed elements."*

Said **Lanny J. Davis**, spokesperson for The Israel Project, *"We Americans see UNRWA as becoming more and more a propaganda organization rather than one that states the facts and remains faithful to its humanitarian mission. For example, UNRWA consistently omits telling the world that Iran-backed Hamas terrorists shoot rocket launches and live fire from in, and the vicinity of, UNRWA schools and facilities. They also consistently omit telling the world that it is Hamas that launches rockets intentionally trying to kill innocent civilians, whereas Israel is forced to defend itself and sometimes inadvertently causes injury or worse to civilians. The fact that UNRWA can't make that immense moral distinction undermines its credibility as an international organization."*

Specific examples of UNRWA's misuse include:

? On Jan. 6, 2009, as part of defensive operations in the Gaza Strip, IDF forces came under mortar attack from within the UNRWA-run al-Fakhora school in Jabalya. In response to the incoming enemy fire, the IDF returned mortar fire to the source. The IDF return fire landed outside of the school but reports indicate that dozens of Palestinians were killed. IDF spokesmen have said that among those killed were Imad Abu Iskar and Hassan Abu Iskar, two senior Hamas rocket operatives. The presence of Hamas fighters outside the school has been confirmed by first-hand accounts by residents of the area in reports in the Associated Press and *The New York Times*. Israeli defense officials told the Associated Press that booby-trapped bombs in the school had triggered secondary explosions that killed additional Palestinian civilians there. [16]

? On Oct. 29, 2007, terrorists in Beit Hanoun, Gaza used an UNRWA school to launch mortars into Israel. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon deplored the attack and asked UNRWA to conduct a full investigation. [17]

? In May 2008 Reuters reported that Awad al-Qiq, an Islamic Jihad rocket engineer, had been moonlighting as a science teacher and deputy headmaster at the Rafah Prep Boys School, run by UNRWA. Al-Qiq was killed while supervising a factory assembling rockets and other weapons for use against Israel, located just a short distance from the school. [18]

? Nahed Rashid Ahmed Attallah, UNRWA's Director of Food Supplies for Gaza, admitted to using his UN vehicle on multiple occasions during the summer of 2002 to transport arms, explosives, and activists from the Popular Resistance Committee to carry out terrorist attacks. Attallah also confessed to contacting members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine in Syria "in order to obtain money for transferring arms to the Gaza Strip as assistance for the PRC." [19]

? Armed Palestinians have been filmed using UNRWA ambulances to transport terrorists and, possibly, remains of fallen Israeli soldiers in Gaza. [20]

? Of the 17 UNRWA employees Israel has arrested and indicted since 2001 for aiding terrorists, seven have been convicted in military courts. [21]

? UNRWA's former Commissioner-General Peter Hansen admitted that the agency has employed members of Hamas and other terrorist factions but that he was not aware of any who were active members. According to Hansen: "*Hamas as a political organization does not mean that every member is a militant and we do not do political vetting and exclude people from one persuasion as against another.*" [22]

? On April 25, 2007 the UNRWA representative in New York, Andrew Whitley, revealed to congressional staff that UNRWA provided cash assistance to the families of Palestinian suicide bombers. [23]

? According to a November 2003 U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) report: "*During the first 6 months of 2003, assailants occupied or attacked UNRWA facilities on nine occasions.*" [24]

? Alaa Muhammad Ali Hassan, a Tanzim member affiliated with Fatah, confessed during interrogation that he had carried out a sniper shooting from a school run by UNRWA in the al-Ayn refugee camp near Nablus. He also told his interrogators that bombs intended for terrorist attacks were being manufactured inside the UNRWA school's facilities. [25]

? In 1982, President Reagan accused UNRWA of allowing its Lebanese camps to become armed bastions of the Palestine Liberation Organization. Forced to investigate when Reagan threatened to withhold U.S. funding for the organization, UNRWA admitted that several camps indeed had been militarized. While the Security Council hasn't enforced 1208 in the Palestinian territories, it has applied pressure on militant Palestinian refugees elsewhere. [26]

Footnotes:

[1] Ravid, Barak, ?Olmert to Ban: Gunmen fired at IDF troops from UN Gaza compound,? *Haaretz*, Jan. 15, 2009, <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1055761.html>

[2] Sofer, Roni, ?Olmert apologizes to UN chief for UNRWA compound strike,? *YnetNews*, Jan. 15, 2009, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3656903,00.html>

[3] Waked, Ali and Levy, Yael, ?Gaza:IDF shells UN compound, hospital also hit,? *YnetNews*, Jan. 15, 2009, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3656716,00.html>

[4] Ravid, Barak, ?Olmert to Ban: Gunmen fired at IDF troops from UN Gaza compound,? *Haaretz*, Jan. 15, 2009, <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1055761.html>

[5] ?Gaza pounded amid push for truce,? *BBC News*, Jan. 15, 2009, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7829912.stm

[6] Ravid, Barak, ?Olmert to Ban: Gunmen fired at IDF troops from UN Gaza compound,? *Haaretz*, Jan. 15, 2009, <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1055761.html>

[7] Statement by Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon and ICRC President Jakob Kellenberger, Israel Ministry of Defense, Jan. 15, 2009

[8] Kirsh, Elana, ?Ban: Death toll in Gaza 'unbearable',? *The Jerusalem Post*, Jan. 15, 2009, <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1231950861136&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull>

[9] IDF Spokesperson's Unit, Dec. 19, 2008; ?Iran-backed Terrorists in Gaza Kill 3, Wound Others in Continuing Rocket Attacks on Israel,? The Israel Project press release, Dec. 29, 2008, [http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5ioi_0jtO9RjMwPNRoXNCndRPRq3gD95DQIE00](http://www.theisraelproject.org/site/apps/nlnet/content2.aspx?c=hsJPK0PIJpH&b=3587015&content_id={4F0CF025-98BF-4875-A59B-B1F5E4B079F7}-oc=1; Barzak, Ibrahim and Friedman, Matti, ?Israel rejects truce call, pursues bombing Gaza,? Associated Press, Dec. 31, 2008, <a href=)

[10] Ibid.

[11] ?Israel: Hamas fires phosphorus shell,? *The International Herald Tribune*, Jan. 14, 2009, <http://www.ihrt.com/articles/ap/2009/01/14/news/ML-Israel-Phosphorus-Shell.php>

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[18] Entous, Adam. "Gaza headmaster was Islamic Jihad ?rocket-maker,?? Reuters, May 5, 2008

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[21] Myre, Greg, "Israel Feuds With Agency Set Up to Aid Palestinians," *The New York Times*, Oct. 18, 2004

[22] Ibid.

[23] Dear colleague letter from Rep. Mark Steven Kirk (IL-10) to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Dec. 11, 2007

[24] GAO-04-276R, ?Department of State (State) and United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) Actions to Implement Section 301(c) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961,? U.S. Government Accountability Office, Nov. 17, 2003, <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d04276r.pdf>

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