

# A closer look at Gaza's "30,000 killed"



by Lev Tsitrin

The word "innocent" in reference to Gaza is liberally thrown around nowadays to scare us with the sheer number of Palestinian casualties, and to make the Israelis stop. Here is President Biden, in his State of the Union address: "This war has taken a greater toll on innocent civilians than all previous wars in Gaza combined. More than 30,000 Palestinians have been killed most of whom are not Hamas. Thousands and thousands of innocents – women and children. Girls and boys also orphaned."

This statistics is not being disputed by the Israelis – but merely qualified by pointing out, as Israel's Prime Minister Netanyahu does in every media interview, to Hamas' use of

human shields, which results in inevitable deaths of the civilians.

“Civilians”? This doesn’t make any sense – for two reasons: one that is military, and one that is sociological.

As to the military reason, a shield is a tool of war. It is used to protect a combatant, giving him the ability to fight. This applies to human shields just as it does to a tank or a wall – they are combatants, not “civilians.” Human shields participate in a battle, albeit inactively.

This point made, let’s take a sociological look at Palestinian casualties. Who is it that acts as a human shield, protecting Hamas gunmen? President Biden has the answer for us: “women and children.” He is right, but this invites a sensible sociological follow-up question, “how are those ‘women and children’ related to the gunman whom they protect”? Are they his wives, by any chance? His kids? Do they protect him out of fear, being compelled by force – or out of the personally-felt commitment to his cause?

I doubt that President Biden has the answers. At this point – in the chaos of war – no sociological analysis of casualties is possible. And yet, Mr. Biden confidently uses the word “innocents” – even though such is clearly not the case for those who volunteer, due to their ideological commitment, to serve as human shields. They are in no sense “innocents,” but are “voluntary combatants.” As to those “women and children” who have been bullied into serving as shields, they are also combatants, although the “conscripted” ones. No matter how they came to serve as shields, all “human shields” are combatants – simply because a shield is an implement of war. Whether volunteers or conscripts, their role in a battlefield is a combat one.

The Israeli statistic that about a third of Palestinian casualties are gunmen fully supports this analysis. It is

obvious that those killed along with gunmen were in close physical proximity to them – and of the Gaza's women and children, who would be huddling close to a man, unless they are his wives, kids, or siblings? Someone else's wife, someone else's kids, someone else's siblings? Highly unlikely in the extremely conservative Arab Middle East!

And if human shields are family and kin of the gunmen, they share the jihadi worldview that motivates the gunmen they shield: every family conversation (just as every school lesson) would be saturated with the hate of Israel and the Jews. Clearly, the majority of “women and children” cited by President Biden are by no means “innocents,” as he assures us, but are volunteer shields, with a smattering, here and there, of the “conscripted” ones – conscripted at a gunpoint by some hamaser. But either way, every single “human shield” is a combatant.

Now, as to the talismanic number 30,000 that gets thrown around, let's take it in context – in the context of the number of Hamas combatants, both armed and unarmed.

The estimates I saw cited some 40,000 men under arms; add another 40,000 Hamas apparatchics. These are core hamasers whose deaths should cause zero controversy. That's 80,000 – already dwarfing the 30,000 over whom the progressives pull their hair out. But that's not all – add the “voluntary” human shields: the siblings, wives, and progeny of the above-cited 80,000. They are every bit as committed to the fight, and every bit as passionate in their hate of Israel, as are the armed combatants themselves. Even at a conservative ratio of casualties of roughly 1 gunman to 2 “shields,” that approximates Israeli figures, the total number of combatants – both those who do the shooting, and those who are shielding the shooters from getting shot, would stand at 240,000 – a far cry from the number 30,000 by which President Biden is trying to scare us – and scare himself into restraining Israel's Gaza campaign.

As some wit observed long ago, “there are three kinds of lies – lies, damned lies, and statistics.” President Biden’s “statistics” that of “more than 30,000 Palestinians [who] have been killed most ... are not Hamas” does not stand up to serious scrutiny, even if he is right that this figure includes “thousands of women and children,” because they were human shields, and therefore, combatants.

Any statistic of the Gaza war should treat human shields as implements of war that they really are. They should be treated as such both on the battlefield, and in the battle for the world’s hearts – and especially, minds.

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