

Israel Sends Medical Gear to Palestinians, Palestinians Accuse Israel of Spreading Coronavirus Among Them

by Hugh Fitzgerald



In following the world's media, one gets the impression that the Israelis are doing nothing much to help the Gazan Palestinians in their hour of need.

In their "hour of need," however, the Hamas terrorist group still can make room for continuing intermittently to shoot rockets into Israel. And at the beginning of April, **the leader of Hamas, Yahya Sinwar, demanded that Israel furnish his group with ventilators and threatened that "If ventilators are not brought into [Gaza], we'll take them by force from Israel and stop the breathing of 6 million Israelis."**

That's not the best way to behave toward a possible

benefactor.

Meanwhile, Israel has transferred to Gaza 200 testing kits (each capable of testing 100 people) on March 13, and another 500 testing kits to Gaza on March 20, as well as 1,000 PPE (masks, gloves, hospital gowns) from its own stores.

Israel has also sent a PCR machine to Shifa Hospital in Gaza, that will serve to double the rate of tests carried out in the Strip. In early April Israel announced that it was also prepared to send ventilators to Gaza, if Hamas were willing to release the four Israelis – two soldiers and two civilians –whom it continues to hold. In addition to what it sent to Gaza, Israel has sent to the PA in the West Bank 1,000 protective suits for medical teams, and 100 liters of sanitizer gel. On March 25, an additional 3,000 test kits and 50,000 masks from the World Health Organization (WHO) were delivered by Israel to the PA.

Of course, none of these deliveries of equipment supplied by Israel itself, or delivered by Israel on behalf of the WHO, have had any discernible effect on the campaign by both Hamas and the PA to blame Israel both for starting the coronavirus outbreak among the Palestinians and for worsening it as well. It's a crazy charge: Israel has an obvious stake in limiting the spread of the outbreak in Gaza and the PA territories, because its own citizens will be further at risk for contamination by their Palestinian neighbors. Typical of the outrageous claims made against Israel are those by Ibrahim Milhem, a spokesman for the PA, who on March 29 charged that Israeli soldiers had been spitting on Palestinians and contaminating ATM machines to purposely infect them with the coronavirus.

“The [Israeli] settlers are natural and exclusive agents for the coronavirus epidemic,” Milhem said. “They spread it through their touch and their racist and barbaric behavior that they are exhibiting toward the [Palestinian] citizens.”

Also on March 29, PA Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh alleged that Israeli soldiers “are trying to spread the virus on car handles. This is racism and hatred of people who long for the death of the other. We will record this in the list of [Israel’s] crimes.”

So Israelis deliberately “touch” Palestinians; somehow “their racist and barbaric behavior” helps to spread the virus; they “spit on Palestinians”; they contaminate ATM machines (where? In Gaza, where there are no Israelis? In Israel, where other Israelis might use those machines?) to “purposely infect [the Palestinians] with the coronavirus”; they even “spread the virus on car handles.” The malevolence of the Jews is once again demonstrated in this coronavirus outbreak. Never mind that they have delivered, in March alone, from Israel’s own stocks, and from the WHO, at least 4,700 thousand test kits, 50,000 face masks, and thousands of protective suits to the Palestinians. What Milhem and Shtayyeh also fail to mention is that Israel has been training Palestinian medical personnel – doctors and nurses – to deal with coronavirus patients. Some have been trained at a facility set up at the Erez Crossing. Another group was allowed to leave Gaza for training at the Barzilai Medical Center in Ashkelon; medical staff from both sides have held conference calls together. And despite all this, the Palestinian spokesmen, both for Hamas and the P.A., continue to insist that Israelis are deliberately spreading the virus in Gaza and the West Bank. The U.N., ordinarily so critical of Israel, sees things differently. Nickolay Mladenov, the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, has praised the coordination between the Israeli and Palestine authorities in reacting to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Now, in April, Israel continues to help the Palestinians, this time with a mass testing lab.

Al-Monitor carried the story [here](#):

The Gaza Strip has run out of coronavirus test kits but will

*soon have a new laboratory capable of conducting as many as 3,000 tests a day. Gaza Health Ministry Undersecretary Youssef Abu al-Rish said the 300-square-meter (3,229-square-foot) lab is expected to be assembled and equipped by April 16. **The lab will be a joint effort of Beijing Genomics Institute and Israel's AID Genomics.***

Ayman al-Halabi, the labs department director at the Gaza Health Ministry, spoke with Al-Monitor, stressing the need for this laboratory, particularly since the ministry's main lab in Gaza ran out of testing kits April 8. Since early 2020, the World Health Organization had supplied the Gaza Strip with 192 kits, with each pack able to perform 96 tests, including one kit from the Health Ministry in the West Bank, he said.

How many stories will there be in the Western media about this lab capable of the mass testing – 3,000 tests a day – that is now set up in the Gaza Strip? And of those stories, how many will bother to point out that the laboratory is a joint effort of Beijing Genomics Institute and Israel's AID Genomics? And will anyone at all, on the Palestinian side, recognize this testing lab as a significant contribution by Israel to helping the Palestinians deal with the coronavirus outbreak? No Palestinian spokesman has ever thanked Israel for sending its own testing kits, PPE (masks, gloves, hospital gowns), or other medical equipment, both to Gaza and to the Palestinian territories, or for delivering similar equipment supplied by the WHO. Nor has any Palestinian spokesman expressed gratitude for Israeli help in training medical personnel from Gaza, nor noted the PCR machine, an advanced medical device used to detect coronavirus, that Israel delivered to the Gaza Strip in mid-April.

But several such spokesmen, both for Hamas and for the PA, have accused Israel of deliberately spreading the coronavirus among the Palestinians by spitting on them, or by coating ATM

machines, and car door handles, with spittle. We all know such charges are absurd, though not for the BDS brigade that will always believe the worst about Israel. Israel's desire to help its Palestinian neighbors is not just the product of a charitable impulse, but undertaken as well in order to prevent the spread of the disease back into Israel itself from Gaza and the PA territories. Even if recognizing Israel's help sticks in the craw of Palestinians, could they not at least make a small effort at decency, by ceasing to make those preposterous charges about Israelis malevolently spreading the virus in Gaza and the West Bank?

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