Evidence of the Use of the Civilian Population as Human Shields:
Hamas operatives detained during Operation Cast Lead related that weapons were situated in schools, mosques and residential dwellings, that operatives shot from within residential neighborhoods, and that Hamas operatives stole the humanitarian aid for their own use.1

Overview

1. During Operation Cast Lead the IDF detained dozens of terrorist operatives, most of them belonging to Hamas. All the terrorists detained were transferred to the Israel Security Agency for interrogation, where they revealed a great deal of information about the use Hamas made of public buildings (including mosques and schools) and private residences as sites for storing weapons. They also related that rockets were fired from public and private buildings, and that public institutions were put to military use based on the assumption that the IDF would be deterred from attacking them.

2. In addition, the operatives said that Hamas had commandeered the humanitarian aid sent to the Gaza Strip and prevented it from being freely distributed to the Gazans. They said that Hamas exploited sources of external aid to reward operatives and as bait to enlist new ones. Palestinians who agreed to join Hamas received food coupons and other benefits.

1 Based on interrogations of Hamas operatives detained during Operation Cast Lead; information received from the Israel Security Agency. More details can be found on the ISA website, http://www.shabak.gov.il/English/EnTerrorData/Pages/cast-lead-Interrogations.aspx.
3. Operatives belonging to Hamas and the other terrorist organizations regularly fire rockets and mortar shells from close proximity to public buildings, including educational institutions. That is done primarily because such structures protect them from IDF attacks against rocket launchers and rocket launching squads, evidence of which could be found in the period before Operation Cast Lead.2

4. Additional evidence was provided by Nawaf Feisal Attar, a Hamas terrorist operative from Al-Atatra in the northern Gaza Strip, detained on January 11, 2009. During interrogation he admitted that Hamas regularly launched rockets from near schools. As examples he gave the Sakhnin school in the Abu Halima neighborhood and another in the Al-Mal neighborhood, saying that rockets were fired from both. He said that was because Hamas operatives knew Israeli aircraft would not attack a school.

5. During Operation Cast Lead, IDF forces often had to deal with booby-trapped schools and rocket launchers positioned near schools. In one instance, on January 18, after Israel had announced it was holding its fire, a rocket launcher was identified between two school buildings. The launcher was not attacked by the Israeli Air Force because of its proximity to the schools.

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Firing rockets near two school buildings after Israel announced it was holding its fire
(IDF Spokesman, January 18).

**Using Private Civilian Houses to Store Weapons and Firing Rockets from Nearby and from Agricultural Areas**

Weapons and military equipment uncovered in the house of Hamas operatives during Operation Cast Lead (IDF Spokesman, January 15, 2009).
6. Hamas stores weapons in civilian dwellings in densely populated areas, and sometimes rockets are launched near them. Both routinely and during Operation Cast Lead, when the Israeli Air Force carried out pinpoint aerial attacks, aircraft cameras captured powerful secondary explosions, evidence of the presence of large quantities of weapons and explosives stored in private houses. By situating weapons and firing from residential civilian areas, Hamas knowingly endangered Gazans’ lives.

7. Hamas operative Nawaf Feisal Attar, a resident of Al-Atatra, detained on January 11, 2009, said that masked Hamas operatives regularly launched rockets from civilian houses and agricultural areas despite the objections of the owners, who feared their houses and fields would be destroyed by the IDF. However, he said, local opposition was limited because the Palestinian population did not dare argue with Hamas operatives, who would shoot their legs or even kill them, claiming they were collaborators.3

8. Rami Misbah Abed Rabbo, a Hamas operative from Jabaliya, said during interrogation that this past year he often conducted observations from his house and reported to Hamas about IDF movements. He also said that during the lull arrangement he was approached by a Hamas operative who asked him to put IEDs in a citrus grove near his house. He said that Hamas stored large quantities of weapons in citrus groves. Raji Misbah Abed Rabbo, also a resident of Jabaliya, a Palestinian Islamic Jihad terrorist operative, said that he had stored IEDs in his house. He also said that Hamas operatives would hide IEDs in streets near mosques and in citrus groves.

3 Our January 6, 2009 bulletin, “Hamas Exploitation of Civilians as Human Shields,” cites many examples of Gazans who became casualties or suffered property damage as a result of rocket fire (See Section Four, “The price paid by the civilian population in the Gaza Strip,” page 65). The Gazans resented the harm done to them and sometimes expressed their feelings in the media. Hamas, however, was careful to suppress expressions of resentment and prevented the media operating in the Gaza Strip from fully reporting the suffering of the local population resulting from terrorist organization rocket fire.
9. **Imad Yusuf Hamed**, a Hamas terrorist operative from **Beit Hanoun**, said that three months ago Hamas operatives had been authorized to use land belonging to them and their families to hide barrels containing launchers and rockets. He said that he had buried three and had two more which he was supposed to bury. He also admitted that he had hidden Kalashnikov assault rifles and ammunition behind his house.

**Using Mosques as Weapons Storehouses**

![Weapons discovered in a mosque during Operation Cast Lead. Left: Anti-tank cannon (IDF Spokesman, January 13, 2009).](image)

![Weapons discovered in a mosque during Operation Cast Lead (IDF Spokesman, January 15, 2009).](image)
10. Hamas and the other terrorist organizations frequently use the many mosques scattered throughout the Gaza Strip for military purposes. Subhi Majed Attar, a Hamas terrorist operative from Al-Atatra in the northern Gaza Strip, revealed during interrogation that some of the military training he received from Hamas was theoretical. He was instructed in various issues, including rockets and RPGs. The lessons were held in the Bilal bin Rabah mosque in Al-Atatra.

11. Rami Misbah Abed Rabbo, Hamas terrorist operative from Jabaliya, said that Hamas stored large quantities of weapons in mosques such as the Salah al-Din mosque in the Zeitun neighborhood in Gaza City, which housed rocket and other weapons.
Using Public Institutions (Hospitals, Sports Clubs) for Military Purposes

Rocket Launching position near public buildings in the Sha'ati Refugee Camp in the northern Gaza Strip

12. **Imad Yusuf Hamed** said that Hamas situated one of its training camps in a **sports club** behind the **Omar Ibn Abed Al-Aziz mosque in Khan Yunis**. He said that a laboratory for the manufacture of IEDs and rockets was located in the civilian administration building in the **Jabaliya** refugee camp, in the northern Gaza Strip.

13. **Rami Misbah Abed-Rabbo** related that during Operation Cast Lead senior Hamas operatives took over a very large bunker **under the Shifa hospital in Gaza City and hid there**. In addition, after the operation (during the last week of January 2009) Hamas also took over a **Red Crescent clinic in Khan Yunis** and turned it into a facility for holding prisoners.
14. **Nawaf Feisal Attar**, from Al-Atatra, detained on January 11, 2009, said that workers for the Hamas administration received all the humanitarian aid sent from Israel to the Gaza Strip. Gazans who were supposed to receive the aid **for free had to pay for it**. He said it was easy to identify the aid that came from Israel because of the Hebrew letters on the packaging.

15. **Subhi Majed Attar**, Hamas operative from Al-Atatra, said that to encourage Palestinians to join its ranks, Hamas handed out coupons which could be redeemed for food. **Note**: It is reasonable to assume that Hamas acquired the food distributed to new recruits from the humanitarian aid delivered to the Gaza Strip.

16. **Hamad Faraj Saleh**, from Jabaliya, recounted Hamas’s control of the humanitarian aid which was delivered to the Gaza Strip by UNRWA. He said that the situation had existed de facto since Hamas took over the Gaza Strip [June 2007]. As a result, he said, Fatah activists did not receive aid, while food and equipment were transferred directly to Hamas operatives and their supporters.

17. During Operation Cast Lead complaints were often heard that **Hamas stole the humanitarian aid delivered to the Gaza Strip** and channeled it to Hamas supporters. For example, a surfer on a Fatah Internet forum said that “the aid goes into Hamas’s stores. They sell it to poor civilians…who are forced to wear green berets [identifying them with Hamas] to be able to buy it. If you don’t wear a green beret, there is neither food nor drink for you in Gaza.” Another surfer added that “the Hamas militias take the aid that arrives and give it to movement operatives…Hamas sells the aid…at higher than normal prices.” He also complained that the aid was not distributed by organizations such as UNRWA and the Red Cross, but by Hamas (Fatah forum, January 15, 2009). The claims made by Fatah supporters have been substantiated by the interrogations of Hamas operatives detained by the IDF.
18. On February 4, 2009, two weeks after Operation Cast Lead, UNRWA spokesman Christopher Jones said that on February 3 Hamas police raided the UNRWA storehouses and confiscated [i.e., stole] 3,500 blankets and more than 400 food parcels which were earmarked for distribution to the Gazan civilian population (AP, February 4, 2009).

UNRWA humanitarian aid delivered to the Gaza Strip (UNRWA website, January 17, 2009). Hamas steals the aid and steals channels it to its supporters.
Civilians as human shields: additional evidence from various sources demonstrating the use made by Hamas of civilian houses for military purposes during Operation Cast Lead - file no. 5

1. What follows is evidence from various sources - photographs, aerial imagery, air strike footage, prisoner interrogations, and a seized document - clearly showing how Hamas and other terrorist organizations made use of civilian houses for military purposes during Operation Cast Lead. The houses were used as laboratories for weapons production, arms storehouses, booby-trapped areas designed to hit any IDF soldiers entering them, and safe houses for terrorist operatives.1 IDF soldiers were fired upon from residential buildings. In addition, rockets and mortar shells were fired from residential areas.

2. In target-specific air strikes on terrorist sites during Operation Cast Lead, the Israeli Air Force cameras frequently caught massive secondary explosions, demonstrating the significant quantities of weapons and explosives stored in residential buildings. There is no doubt that by placing the weapons and explosives at the heart of residential neighborhoods and using them as rocket launch sites, Hamas knowingly risked the lives of local civilians.

1See our Information Bulletin: “Civilians as Human Shields: Operational sketches seized during Operation Cast Lead show Hamas locates firing positions, anti-tank positions and IEDs in military compounds situated in the heart of densely-populated neighborhoods in the northern Gaza Strip” (January 19, 2009).
3. The use of residential buildings inside densely populated neighborhoods for a variety of military targets was designed to inflict casualties upon the IDF and diminish the vulnerability of terrorist operatives of Hamas and other organizations during the fighting, knowing that Israel takes great care to avoid hitting civilians as much as possible. During the operation, the IDF was exposed to the problems involved in fighting terrorists operating from residential houses, assisted by civilians (including women and children) and sometimes dressed in civilian clothing (making it more difficult to distinguish between them and non-combatant civilians).

4. The present document contains evidence of the use of civilian houses for military purposes during Operation Cast Lead, divided into the following categories:

   a. Photographs showing the use of residential buildings for military purposes: booby-trapped houses and houses used for storing and manufacturing weapons and ammunition.

   b. Photographs documenting rocket and mortar shell launches in the vicinity of residential buildings.

   c. Aerial photographs of rocket, anti-tank, and small arms fire from inside and in the vicinity of residential buildings.

   d. Israeli Air Force air strike footage showing the use of residential buildings for military purposes: anti-aircraft, rocket, and mortar shell fire, as well as storing arms and ammunition.

   e. Information gathered from Hamas operatives apprehended by the IDF about the use of civilian houses for military purposes (launching rockets, storing weapons, hiding terrorist operatives).

   f. A seized document—a note left in a residential building by Hamas operatives who used the house for military purposes.

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2 Air strike footage and photographs courtesy of the IDF Spokesman and the Israeli Air Force.
Using residential buildings for military purposes

Booby-trapped residential building

Explosives found in a residential building

Explosive-filled dummy in a residential building

Booby-trapped residential building
Booby-trapped residential building

Storage of arms and ammunition in residential buildings

Rocket found in a residential building

IED found in a residential building
Storage of rockets in a residential building

Arms and ammunition found in the houses of Hamas operatives (IDF Spokesman, January 15)
Manufacturing arms and ammunition in residential buildings

Rockets manufactured in a residential building. The photographs show bags, including a bag of table salt (with Hebrew writing) used for manufacturing explosives.

Rocket and mortar shell launches in the vicinity of residential buildings
Aerial photographs from Operation Cast Lead showing weapons fired from inside and in the vicinity of residential buildings

Anti-aircraft cannon positioned on the roof of a residential building and covered with a camouflage net (January 6, 2009)

Rocket launcher situated between two residential buildings (January 6, 2009)

Underground pit for launching rockets dug out in a residential area
Terrorist shooting at IDF forces from the windows of residential buildings

Fortified position on the roof of a residential building in the heart of a civilian neighborhood in Beit Lahiya, northern Gaza Strip

**Israeli Air Force air strike footage from Operation Cast Lead showing the use of residential buildings for military purposes**

1. The video shows an *anti-aircraft cannon* positioned on the rooftop of a residential building in a densely-populated neighborhood, covered with a camouflage net (January 6, 2009). **Click here to watch**

2. The video shows a *rocket launcher* positioned between two residential buildings (January 6, 2009). **Click here to watch**

3. The video shows a terrorist launching a *mortar shell* on an IDF force. The launcher is situated on the rooftop of a residential building (January 6, 2009). **Click here to watch**
4. A video showing an Israeli Air Force attack on an **outpost** of the Hamas military wing, situated in the midst of residential buildings at the heart of a civilian neighborhood. Secondary explosions seen after the attack are testimony that massive quantities of explosives were stored there (January 6, 2009). [Click here to watch](#)

5. The video shows a rocket launch site situated inside a residential area (December 27, 2008). [Click here to watch](#)

6. The video shows an attack on a **weapons storehouse** situated inside a civilian residential area. The several secondary explosions which took place after the attack show that there was a significant quantity of explosives stored there (December 27, 2008). [Click here to watch](#)

7. The video shows an attack on a **weapons storehouse** situated inside a residential area. Also seen are the secondary explosions which took place as a result of the significant quantity of explosives stored there (December 27, 2008). [Click here to watch](#)

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**Information gathered from Hamas operatives detained by the IDF during Operation Cast Lead about the use of residential buildings for military purposes**

5. During questioning, Hamas operatives detained by the IDF during Operation Cast Lead provided ample information on the operative and military use made by Hamas of residential buildings. For example, **Nawaf Faysal Attar, a Hamas operative from Al-Atatra detained on January 11**, related that masked Hamas gunmen used to launch rockets from civilian houses and agricultural areas **despite objections raised by the residents**, who feared that their houses and fields would be destroyed by the IDF. He said that the resistance of local residents was limited because those who dared to oppose Hamas were shot in their legs or executed for collaboration.

6. In his questioning, **Rami Misbah Abed Rabbo, a Hamas operative from Jebaliya**, related that over the past year he used his residence as an observation post and reported IDF movements to Hamas. He further added that during the lull in the fighting, he was approached by a Hamas operative who asked him to set IEDs in an orchard near his residence, saying that
many weapons of Hamas were stored in such orchards. Raji Misbah Abed Rabbo, a Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) operative from Jebaliya, said that he used to store explosives at home. He said that Hamas operatives frequently set IEDs in the streets and in the vicinity of mosques and orchards.

7. Imad Youssef Hamad, a Hamas operative from Beit Hanoun, said that three months before the start of Operation Cast Lead he had authorized Hamas operatives to hide barrels with launchers and rockets in the land belonging to him and his family. He said that three barrels were hidden there, and two others were going to be hidden. He also related that arms and ammunition had been stashed behind his house, including a Kalashnikov rifle.

8. Muhammad Amasi from Jebaliya, an operative in the Hamas suicide bombing unit, related that another terrorist and he took over the Hamouda family residence in the neighborhood of Al-Salaam and used it to attack IDF forces who besieged it. He said there were incidents in which he and his fellow squad members fired at IDF soldiers from the house of a Gaza Strip resident, even though the latter refused to cooperate: "When we saw the IDF troops on the move, we came into the house of one of the residents and threatened him to let us fire at the soldiers from his house. He strongly objected, but we weren't asking him." Amasi also said that he had escaped to the residence of Sheikh Fathi Abu Ida in Jebaliya and found shelter there. The Sheikh helped him hide the rifle and grenades he carried on his person; however, IDF soldiers were able to locate the stash, raided the house, and arrested him (as related by Muhammad Amasi to Israeli Police interrogators, from an article by Shimon Ifargan, Ma'ariv, February 18).

Seized document--note left in a house by Hamas operatives who used it

9. During the operation, IDF forces found a thank you note left in a house by Hamas operatives who had broken in and used it for fighting (January 12). As already mentioned, according to information gathered from captive Hamas operatives, the residents' resistance to the use made of their houses for military purposes was limited due to concerns for their lives. In many cases, therefore, the civilians were forced to let their homes be used for military purposes.
Translation of the note:
“Greetings, honored residents of this house. We, your brothers, holy war fighters [mujahideen], used this house and some of the things in it. Our apologies.”
1. The pictures and film clips which follow were photographed during Operation Cast Lead. They clearly illustrate how Hamas and the other terrorist organizations used schools as rocket and mortar shell launching sites, and how they booby-trapped them to inflict losses on IDF forces.

2. A considerable percentage of the schools in the Gaza Strip belong to UNRWA. Using them for military purposes endangers the pupils and is a grave violation of the international laws of armed combat.

3. In addition to using schools for military purposes, Hamas used children as human shields during Operation Cast Lead.
Booby-trapped school in the Zeitun neighborhood in Gaza City

School in the Zeitun neighborhood which was completely booby-trapped. A delayed-action fuse leads from the school to a small zoo nearby where the animals were left in their cages. IDF soldiers neutralized the bombs. A cache of weapons was later found in the school building, including rifles and RPG launchers (IDF Spokesman, January 11, 2009).
Video of the booby-trapped school

Click to view

Hamas military camp situated near school

Using schools as rocket and mortar shell launching sites

Rockets positioned near schools
4. In one instance, after the ceasefire, the Israeli Air Force identified a rocket launcher which had been used to fire rockets into Israeli territory. It was situated between two school buildings in the Saja’iyya neighborhood, in eastern Gaza City. The Israeli Air Force did not attack the launcher because of its proximity to the schools.