A Manipulation of Human Rights

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Op-ed: The IDF is not perfect, and some of Breaking the Silence's claims on the fighting in Gaza may be true, but these deviations have been put on display, without any context or proof.

The report released by Breaking the Silence is already making waves around the world. Isn't it simply wonderful to preach human rights? It's a position in high demand. The thing is, we're dealing here with another piece of major deception, another link in the chain of effort to turn Israel into a living monster, and more help for the BDS campaign.

Why deception? First, when Israel is accused of harming civilians, or when people talk about proportionality, one has to ask: What are the proportions? It turns out there aren't any – and not by chance either. Because every comparative review definitively shows that Israel causes less civilian casualties than those witnessed on other similar battlefields.

Yes, there have been reports here and there about extensive civilian casualties elsewhere. But no one has launched a global campaign. No one has run around university campuses in the United States or Europe to distribute horror stories about anomalous incidents involving British, American or NATO forces. But the activists from Breaking the Silence do the job with glee.

Second, a country like Britain also has anti-war organizations. But no foreign country supports exposing the testimonies of British troops who have returned from conflict zones. So why the hell does Britain allow itself to finance Breaking the Silence? Why do the British think their dual morality is morality?

Third, four other countries – Switzerland, the Netherlands, Sweden and Denmark – are funding a Ramallah-based organization, the Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law Secretariat, which also aids Breaking the Silence. HR IHL funds a series of groups such as Al-Haq, BADIL, Al-Mizan and others, which are a part of the BDS campaign network.

We're not dealing with criticism of Israel, but an ideology that opposes the very existence of Israel. This is the ideological environment of the Breaking the Silence report.

Fourth, the organization refuses to reveal the identities of the complainants, despite the fact that such individuals have never been taken to task for speaking out. The Israel Defense Forces wants to review the testimonies and investigate the claims, but the organization won’t budge. There's no way of verifying or refuting the testimonies. So how can they be taken seriously?

Fifth, the IDF is not perfect, and not all IDF soldiers are angels. Some of the claims may be true. There are anomalies – in every army in the world and on every battlefield. But when these deviations from the norm are put on display, without any background context, without proof, without a comparative picture, without presenting the fact that a Hamas-issued document ordered the organization's fighters to take cover among the civilian population, hide in population centers, the report released by Breaking the Silence is not merely deception; it's manipulation too.

"Blessings to all the commissions, individuals, civil society groups and human rights organizations that worked to break the siege on Gaza and who fought against the fence and the settlements. Moreover, we bear in mind those liberals of the world who stood by our cause and against the Zionist war on our land," Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh declared in a speech in October 2013.

In the same speech, Haniyeh made clear that he opposes any political settlement, and that the struggle is for "all of Palestine." Legend has it that Vladimir Lenin delivered a similar speech about his followers. But he didn't call them human rights activists; he called them by their true name – useful idiots.