**How Does the IDF Minimize Harm to Palestinian Civilians?**

IDF Blog

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[https://web.archive.org/web/20190204073450/https://www.idfblog.com/2012/11/15/how-does-the-idf-minimize-harm-to-palestinian-civilians/](https://web.archive.org/web/20190204073450/https%3A//www.idfblog.com/2012/11/15/how-does-the-idf-minimize-harm-to-palestinian-civilians/)

The IDF is currently engaged in Operation Pillar of Defense against the Hamas and other Palestinian terrorist groups in the Gaza Strip. As a result of Hamas’ strategy of using civilian areas for military purposes, it is inevitable that there will be civilian casualties in Gaza. Nonetheless, the IDF goes to great lengths to avoid civilian casualties and to minimize collateral damage.

[EMBEDDED VIDEO: <https://youtu.be/nTEDVC5ZqPA>]

**Methods of Avoiding Civilian Casualties**

The following are some ways the IDF uses in order to avoid civilian casualties. While these warnings ruin the element of surprise and can help the enemy escape or call for his neighbors to serve as human shields, the IDF believes that it must take these steps whenever possible in order to avoid harming innocent bystanders.

1. **Phone calls**: During the last 24 hours of the operation, thousands of Israeli phone calls were made to residents of the Gaza Strip, warning them of IDF strikes in the area.

2. **Leaflets**: The Israel Air Force has dropped leaflets over Gaza that warn civilians to “avoid being present in the vicinity of Hamas operatives.”

The leaflets read in Arabic:

“Important announcement for the residents of the Gaza Strip:

For your own safety, take responsibility for yourselves and avoid being present in the vicinity of Hamas operatives and facilities and those of other terror organizations that pose a risk to your safety. Hamas is once again dragging the region to violence and bloodshed.

The IDF is determined to defend the residents of the State of Israel. This announcement is valid until quiet is restored to the region. Israel Defense Forces Command.”

3. **Diverting missiles in mid-flight**: During Operation Cast Lead in 2008-09, the IDF aborted many missions seconds before they were to be carried out, due to civilians being present at the site of the target. The following video is an example of an IAF airstrike that was called off as the missile was on its way to the target.

[EMBEDDED VIDEO: <https://youtu.be/JUeSE3WWX_M>]

4. **Roof Knocking**: “Roof knocking” is when the IAF targets a building with a loud but non-lethal bomb that warns civilians that they are in the vicinity of a weapons cache or other target. This method is used to allow all residents to leave the area before the IDF targets the site with live ammunition.

5. **Pinpoint Targeting**: The IDF, whenever possible, singles out terrorists and targets them in a way that will endanger few or no bystanders. This can often be hard to do, since terrorists prefer to hide in crowded areas. Watch the pinpoint strike on Hamas leader Ahmed Jabari:

[EMBEDDED VIDEO: <https://youtu.be/P6U2ZQ0EhN4>]

The former Commander of the British Armed Forces in Afghanistan, Col. Richard Kemp, has explained the IDF’s efforts to avoid civilian casualties:

“The UN estimate that there has been an average three-to-one ratio of civilian to combatant deaths in such conflicts worldwide. Three civilians for every combatant killed. That is the estimated ratio in Afghanistan: three to one. In Iraq, and in Kosovo, it was worse: the ratio is believed to be four-to-one. Anecdotal evidence suggests the ratios were very much higher in Chechnya and Serbia. In Gaza, it was less than one-to-one.”

Watch Col. Kemp speak to a U.N. committee:

[EMBEDDED VIDEO: <https://youtu.be/NX6vyT8RzMo>]

Despite all precautions, IDF forces may have mistakenly targeted sites and hurt Palestinian civilians. The IDF is fully committed to ensuring that every allegation of wrongdoing be fully and fairly investigated, though this will happen after the conclusion of the operation.