## Examination Of The Names Of Palestinians Killed In Operation Protective Edge - Part Five\*

## September 22, 2014

Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/article/20715

**The findings to date**

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| 1.   **This information bulletin is the fifth in a series of publications of the Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center (ITIC)**, as part of a project examining the names of the Palestinians killed in Operation Protective Edge. The project’s goal is to determine which of the fatalities are terrorist operatives and which are non-involved citizens, and to examine the ratio between them. The findings of our investigation so far (based on approximately 40% of the names of the dead) suggest that **terrorist operatives constitute about 49% of the fatalities who have been identified, while non-involved civilians constitute approximately 51%.**This ratio may change as we continue our examination. |

 2.   The number of names of those killed, examined by the ITIC to date, **is around 750, i.e., about 35% of the number of Palestinians killed to date** (a total of 2157, according to a report by the Palestinian Ministry of Health issued on September 14, 2014). The examinations carried out by the ITIC are based on the names of the dead that appear on the Palestinian Health Ministry’s lists, despite the reliability problems and deficiencies found in them. From the lists examined we have removed duplicate names and added the names of terrorist operatives, who do not appear on them (both for technical reasons and as a result Hamas’s policy of concealment and deception). **Therefore, the number of fatalities examined by the ITIC to date is 842** (i.e., **approximately 39%** of the total number of fatalities).

3.   Weighting the findings of the current examination and the findings of the four previous examinations (detailed in the ITIC’s previous documents) **indicates the following distribution of the 842 fatalities:**

A.  **354 of those killed were terrorist operatives.**

B.  **367 of those killed were non-involved civilians.**

C.  **121 people who were killed are unidentified at this stage.** Therefore, it is not possible to determine whether they were terrorist operatives or non-involved civilians.

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| 4.   Of the 721 dead who could be identified, **terrorist operatives constitute approximately 49% of the names. Non-involved civilians constitute approximately 51%.**This ratio may vary as the ITIC continues to examine additional names of those killed. |

**Methodological notes**

5.  The current document examined an additional basic list issued by the Palestinian Health Ministry. The list includes the names of 150 Palestinians, most of whom were killed **from July 22 to July 24, 2014.**

6.  In this document as well, to the number of dead who appeared on the Palestinian Health Ministry’s list we added **25 terrorist operatives who were killed in battle in Shejaiya and whose names have not yet been published due to Hamas’s policy of concealment** (as we did in the two previous documents). To date, a total of **75 terrorist operatives** have been added (three groups of 25 operatives). This was done in order to balance the bias that was created by the lists of the Hamas-controlled Health Ministry (for an explanation of our methodology, see Part Three of the examination of the names of Palestinians killed in Operation Protective Edge). If Hamas publishes reliable data about its operatives who were killed in the fighting in Shejaiya, the ITIC will carry out the necessary adaptations and will change the number of operatives that were added.

7.  On the basis of additional information that we have obtained, a number of errors have been corrected and supplementary data has been added to the previous examinations that we performed. Principal corrections and supplementary data (for details see Appendix D):

A.  Three of the fatalities, who appeared in previous lists and were identified as non-involved civilians, **have been re-identified as three terrorist operatives, according to the following breakdown:**

1)   Two Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades operatives.

2)   One PIJ Al-Quds Battalions operative.

B.  One operative, who was listed as unidentified, was identified as a **terrorist operative** in the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades.

(**Note**: these changes were taken into account in weighting the findings of the examinations as appear in paragraph 3).

**The findings of the current examination**

8.  **An examination of 150 names**that appeared on the Palestinian Health Ministry’s list (Appendix C), with the addition of 25 terrorist operatives killed in battle in Shejaiya, **yielded the following findings:**

A.  **52 of those killed were identified as terrorist operatives** (photos of 29 terror operatives were found, see Appendix B). To this figure we added 25 operatives whose organizational affiliation is unknown (killed in battle in Shejaiya). **Hence, the total number of terrorist operatives who were killed is 77.**

B.  **54 names were identified as non-involved civilians.**

C.  The ITIC was unable to identify **44 names** that appeared on the list, and have designated them as **unidentified**.

9.  Below is a breakdown of the organizational affiliation of the **77 terrorist operative fatalities:**

A.  **35 Hamas / Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades operatives** (one of them was an operative in Hamas’s security forces in Gaza)

B.  Eight PIJ / Al-Quds Battalions operatives

C.  Four members of Fatah's operational networks

D.  One PFLP military operative

E.  One DFLP operative

F.  One Salah al-Din Brigades operative (the military wing of the PRC)

G.27 terrorist operatives whose organizational affiliation is unidentified

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| 10.   Of the 131 fatalities who have been identified in the current examination (75% of all the dead), **77 are terrorist operatives, representing approximately 59% of the fatalities who have been identified.** 54 of those killed were non-involved civilians, representing approximately 41% of the fatalities who have been identified. |

**The PIJ has published data on its fatalities, while Hamas continues with its policy of concealment.**

11.   On August 29, 2014, three days after the announcement of the ceasefire that ended Operation Protective Edge, the PIJ reported **that 123 operatives of the organization were killed in the operation** (Al-Quds Battalions website, August 29, 2014). The organization also published **photographs of 96 operatives who were killed, some of whom held military positions** (see Appendix A). On September 9, 2014, it was reported that another casualty of the organization had died in an Egyptian hospital (Al-Quds Battalions website, September 9, 2014). However, we believe that there is **still a discrepancy between the number of fatalities reported by the PIJ and the actual number of fatalities, which is a few dozen higher, in our assessment.**

12.   The PIJ’s practice of publishing the number of those killed and glorifying its senior military operatives (comparing them with Hamas officials who were killed in the war) is part of a propaganda campaign, which is designed to highlight **the important role played by the PIJ in the fighting and its military “achievements”.** **Hamas, on its part, still continues to conceal the number of its casualties, which we estimate at hundreds of operatives and, in our opinion, exceeds 500. This despite the fact that Hamas pays a political and image-related price for this vis-à-vis the PIJ,** and vis-à-vis the Palestinian Authority, which also exploits the concealment policy in order to challenge Hamas. Hamas does so as part of its political and media strategy, **which prioritizes the assimilation of the (false) message that the vast majority of those killed were civilians, a message used in its legal-political campaign against Israel on the day after.**

13.   However, at this stage, these are still **only overall estimates.** The ITIC’s examination of the names of the casualties in Operation Protective Edge on an individual basis, as expressed in its five documents, is still in progress. On completion of the examination, it will be possible to achieve more accurate data about the number of terrorist operatives killed, their organizational segmentation, and the proportion of war casualties of each of the various terrorist organizations.

**Erosion of Hamas’s policy of concealment?**

14.   On September 12, 2014, Hamas senior figure Khalil al-Hayya delivered the Friday sermon at the Al-Farouq Mosque in Nuseirat (YouTube video).[2] During the sermon, he said that **"it is no secret that over sixty members of the Al-Nukhba unit died in the operation."** He added that those killed were members of the **Quran Reciters Group** (which operated in the Al-Farouq Mosque and possibly in other mosques as well). Hamas senior figure **Fathi Hamad** (former Interior Minister) said that most of the operatives in Hamas’s elite forces are Quran Reciters who underwent physical and security training (Palestine Online, September 16, 2014).

 Khalil al-Hayya, a member of Hamas's political bureau, delivering the Friday sermon at the Al-Farouq Mosque in Nuseirat, in which he admitted that the number of fatalities of the Al-Nukhba unit exceeds sixty (YouTube video, Hamas forum, September 12, 2014)

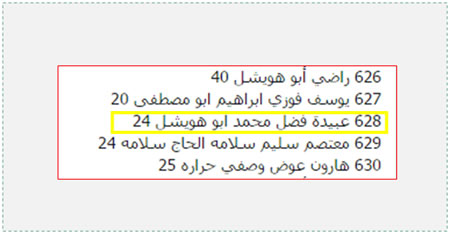
15.   **Al-Nukhba is an elite unit of the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades,** earmarked for “quality” operations in the Gaza Strip and elsewhere. In our assessment, choosing its members from among the Quran Reciters Group is intended to ensure that they are religiously motivated. During Operation Protective Edge, the unit was deployed for infiltration missions into Israeli territory through tunnels and for attacking IDF forces operating in the Gaza Strip. Following Khalil al-Hayya’s statement, videos were posted on YouTube (September 12 and 15, 2014) showing the wills of two Al-Nukhba operatives, **Walid Tawfiq Darabiya** and **Amro Khadr Mehjiz**, which were recorded before they left for the battlefield. They were killed in eastern Jabaliya, in the northern Gaza Strip. Besides the reading of the wills by the operatives before leaving for battle, the video documents the training that the two men underwent in the Al-Nukhba unit.

16.   This is the first time that Hamas has published numerical data about the fatalities in one of its units, accompanied by photos of several operatives who were killed. However, to date Hamas has not published a systematic list of the names of the dead in the Al-Nukhba unit and the total number of those killed in its battalions and brigades, who bore the brunt of the fighting, so it is still continuing its policy of concealment. **We believe that the figure that Khalil al-Hayya quoted (“over 60”) is minimal and does not reflect all the Al-Nukhba unit’s fatalities.** This is either out of a desire not to significantly deviate from Hamas’s concealment policy or because Al-Hayya (and Hamas) do not yet possess complete data on the fatalities, some of whose bodies are still in the tunnels and various battle sites.

**Exploitation of a child as a supporter of terrorist activity and an attempt to hide his age[3]**

17.   The examination of the present list revealed the case of a nine year-old boy who was a terrorist supporter of his uncle, a senior Hamas operative in the Nuseirat refugee camp (central Gaza Strip). The boy and his uncle were killed in the fighting. The boy was **Obeida Fadhel Mohammad Abu Hweishel** who, according to our examination, was nine years old (born in 2005). However, **in the Palestinian Health Ministry’s list his age appears as 24**. In our assessment, this was done to conceal the fact that a child was exploited as a supporter of terrorist activity.

 Obeida Fadhel Mohammad Abu Hweishelshown covered with a shroud bearing the insignia of the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades with a headband bearing the words “the Al-Qassam Brigades” (facebook.com).

 Obeida Fadhel Mohammad Abu Hweishel, whose age appears as 24 in Dr. Ashraf al-Qudra’s list (marked in yellow). We believe that this is not an innocent technical error but rather a deliberate manipulation.

18.   The photo shows the dead child (referred to on the Facebook page as “the hero child shahid”) covered with a shroud bearing the insignia of the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades with an Al-Qassam Brigades headband (facebook.com). The Hamas forum (July 23, 2014) reported that he had assisted his uncle, **Adel Mohammad Abu Hweishel, in his “jihad activity”** (Hamas forum, July 23, 2014). **The uncle was a commander of Hamas’s rocket network in the Nuseirat refugee camp**.

19.   **The ITIC believes that the case of Obeida Fadhel Mohammad Abu Hweishel is not an isolated instance.**In the ITIC’s assessment, it reflects a phenomenon whose extent is unclear, of terrorist organizations making use of children and teenagers as collaborators or even as operatives. Children and teenagers in the Gaza Strip undergo military training during the school year and summer vacations, so they possess basic military training, and probably also a high level of motivation to serve Hamas (or other terrorist organizations) during the fighting.[4]

**Appendices**

20.   The document includes **four appendices**:

A.  **Appendix A:** Findings of the examination of 150 additional names of those killed in Operation Protective Edge, based on a list released by the Palestinian Health Ministry’s spokesman, Dr. Ashraf al-Qudra.

B.  **Appendix B:** Photos of 29 terrorist operatives out of 54 operatives who appear on Dr. Ashraf al-Qudra’s list.

C.  **Appendix C:** An additional 150 names (in Arabic), based on a list released by Dr. Ashraf al-Qudra.

D.  **Appendix D:**Additional information and correction of errors that occurred in the previous documents.