**A Lab and a Showroom: how the Israeli military tested new equipment on the Great March of Return**

War Resisters International

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<https://www.wri-irg.org/en/story/2018/lab-and-showroom-how-israeli-military-tested-new-equipment-great-march-return>

In March, April and May 2018, thousands of people in Gaza took part in mass demonstrations against the ongoing land, sea, and air blockade that has been maintained by Israel and Egypt since 2007. The response of the Israeli military was brutal and violent – over a hundred people were killed, and many thousands injured by live fire, rubber bullets, and tear gas.

A new report called “A Lab and A Showroom” from Hamushim – a project by Coalition of Women for Peace (CWP), a feminist organization active in the struggle to end the Israeli occupation of Palestine – exposes how the extreme violence used by the Israeli military against Palestinian protesters also supports the development and sale of military equipment by Israeli arms companies. The use of violence against Palestinians as a marketing tool has been a recurring theme for many years. For example, as outlined in the report, Magal Security Systems is an Israeli company specialising in security fencing – the company built the “smart” fence enclosing the Gaza Strip. In 2011 the then-CEO Saar Koursch claimed “Gaza has become a showroom for the company’s ‘smart fences,’ as customers appreciate that the products are battle-tested.”

Drones

The “A Lab and a Showroom” report explains how “The violent response to the Great March of Return, in which the ISF made deliberate choices to kill and permanently injure considerable numbers of Palestinian civilians, also provided the military with a platform to introduce and showcase the use of drones as the strategic choice of the present and future.”

Throughout the Great March of Return protests, the Israeli military used customised unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) to disperse large volumes of tear gas. A drone armed with tear gas called “the sea of tears” was allegedly specifically designed for use in Gaza as a crowd dispersal tool and appears to have been first used during the Great March of Return. The “sea of tears” is an adapted Matrice 600, built by Da Jiang Innovations, with the original camera replaced with a tear gas launcher, and was tested in Gaza for several weeks before being used against the Great March of Return.

Video footage on twitter showed drones armed with tear gas being used against large groups of people, and there were reports of tents of women and children were targeted with tear gas, as well as groups of journalists.

Within days of the initial protest starting, Ma'fat, the agency responsible for acquiring weapons ordered hundreds of drones from abroad. A spokesperson said “We operated quickly and made immediate purchases of many drones from abroad”

Drones were also developed and used to drop bags of skunk water – a foul smelling liquid – on protesters, with the Israeli militaries research and development unit even posting video footage of the “Shocko drone” being tested on twitter. The drone was built by an company called Aeronautics.

Expo

The Hamushim report ends by describing how on the 15th May, one day after the deadliest of the Great March of Return, a magazine called IsraelDefence held their annual arms conference in Tel Aviv. “Fire, Maneuvering, and Intelligence in a Complex Environment” was attended by a thousand members of the Israeli military and and military industries, and “learned about the new developments at the Gaza border, and the future of combat.”

The full report can be found here: https://enhamushim.files.wordpress.com/2018/06/report-with-covers1.pdf