

ISRAELI TERRORISM
AND OTHER VIOLATIONS
OF INTERNATIONAL LAW

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Introduction

Sometime in the year 2000 I was reading the Los Angeles Times at breakfast, as I usually do, and I happened to open the paper to an inside page with a story that nearly escaped my eye. It was a small article, about two column-inches, a report on an incident somewhere in the West Bank.

An Israeli soldier had forced a Palestinian man to undress in the street just to embarrass him. It was a power play. The man had done nothing wrong.

It was pure chance that I happened to read the article. I don't know why I even read it, but it bothered me a lot. Why would a soldier who obviously had the power to make an unarmed civilian do anything force a civilian to do something so degrading? Especially, a Jewish soldier. I automatically assumed that Jewish soldiers were straitlaced decent people. The article caught me by surprise. From that day on, I thought about that article often.

In truth, I knew virtually nothing about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I knew that the Palestinians were led by a man named Arafat, and I had the vague notion that you couldn't trust him. I don't think I could have named the Prime Minister of Israel.

But that picture of an Israeli soldier using his power

ISRAELI TERRORISM...

over a Palestinian civilian just because he could, and because it gave him some sense of superiority – that got me mad. I began looking around for other articles on Israel in the Times, but I never found anything that made me feel that the Jews of Israel were anything but decent upstanding people. Could that arrogant soldier be a rare exception to the rule that Israeli Jews were good, decent people? It seemed that way.

Not exactly. I had an acquaintance, Kathleen Wang, a woman who had majored in political science in school, and who made no bones about it: she knew a lot about the Israelis and she didn't like them. Previously, I did not take her seriously. But this soldier-civilian episode – it made me think twice. To what extent were Kathleen's feelings based on facts? If every Israeli were like that soldier, I wouldn't like the Israelis.

Actually, Kathleen had an answer to my question. Were her feelings about Israel based on facts? It turned out that she was in several groups who were very well informed about the Israeli conflict, and she put me on her e-mail lists. From then on, I would receive dozens of e-mails about the conflict each month. Not only were they far from flattering to Israel, they essentially made Israel out to be the problem in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. These e-mails recounted many different incidents in which Israelis treated the Palestinians with gross disrespect.

By that time, I had begun reading both Israeli and Palestinian news sources on the Internet, and international news sources as well, for example Xinhua and Reuters. What kept me hooked? The sheer number of incidents in which Israelis apparently acted like thugs or hoodlums. It was an entirely new concept to me. All the Jews I had ever known as I grew up were straightforward honest decent people. The treatment that Jews in general gave Palestinians in general, at least as recount-

ed in these e-mails and articles, was entirely unknown to me before that time.

If it had turned out that the Israelis were like the Jews I knew when I grew up, straightforward, nice, decent people, my interest in the conflict would have waned and after a while dwindled to nothing. What caused my continuing interest in the conflict was the stream of reports of Israelis acting like thugs or hoodlums toward Palestinians. It got me angry. Of all the people in the world who should treat others decently, the Jews should be foremost, since they had seen the most bestial treatment that human beings could possibly see, the attempt of the Nazi state to completely eradicate them. But the stories I read about the way the Jews treated Palestinians didn't seem much different.

It was not a matter of Kathleen having a bad influence on me. I did not assume that her sources were the gospel truth. I immediately expanded to reading sources on both sides of the conflict, available on the Internet. Why shouldn't the Israelis and Israel-sympathizers have their say? But the more I read on both sides, the more I found stories of inhuman treatment of Palestinians by Israeli Jews, and the more I read of inhuman treatment, the more hooked I became and the more angry I became. It was a terrible concept to swallow – crummy rotten arrogant Jews. My interest was strengthened by my own family's history, which hung over me like a shroud.

In Golovanevsk Russia, my father watched his pregnant sister murdered for being a Jew, her unborn baby being cut out of her belly and murdered for being the unborn baby of a Jew, and her husband who tried to stop it murdered for being a Jew. Furthermore, I grew up during the Nazi conflict, in which millions of Jews were murdered just for being Jews. That made me very aware of my special heritage. I was a member of a group that had been unfairly picked on and slaughtered in large

numbers just for being ourselves. How could we possibly do that to someone else? Unfortunately, my readings made it appear that Israeli Jews were doing precisely that to another group. That's what got me hooked.

Don't get me wrong. They always gave reasons, chief among them the assumed presence of terrorists. But too many innocent civilians got killed. More than that, some of the actions of soldiers and settlers discussed in the stories were nothing short of savage.

I had previously vaguely pictured Israel as a group of hardy pioneers who were beset on all sides by hostile Arabs, particularly the Palestinians. It never occurred to me that Israeli Jews could be cruel, more than that, savage, and without good reason, or just without reason.

My picture of Israel was becoming very different from that of the average American. I felt that I could not defend myself in an argument about Israel. I began collecting headlines from the Internet, and I also recorded the names of the web sites. In a few months, I found that this was not workable. Some web sites disappeared. I had to download whatever information I wanted, and the web page address, so that if this information disappeared from the Internet, I would at least have a record of what the article said and where it was located. In short, I had turned from casual observer of the Israeli conflict to historian, collecting data that the sands of time would otherwise erase.

I went through different phases. At one time I collected information mainly from well-known international news sources, not confining myself to American media. Then, I went through a phase of looking more at Israeli and Palestinian sources. Later, I concentrated mainly on Israeli and Palestinian sources. Despite the fact that I was becoming disenchanted with Israel, and perhaps because of that disenchantment, I made sure that I got

a good sampling of Israeli news sites.

In 2005 I wrote a novel about the reaction of an American Jew to learning about the downside of the Israeli occupation, called *Awakened*. I did not try hard to sell it because I still felt like a novice, a person who was not sure of his knowledge of the conflict. The only way I could shake that feeling would be to write a newsletter that others read. This would force me to read the most competent and complete sources on each day's events in Israel and the Palestinian territories.

That is precisely what I did. I took on the daunting task of writing an e-mail newsletter daily, called The Occupation Report, in which I wrote reviews of stories covered in online daily news media. At first I used any news source that appeared to competently report on the incidents. In a short time I settled on four Israeli news sources and four Palestinian news sources, and maintained that mix until I stopped publication at the beginning of 2008. By that time I knew infinitely more about the occupation than I knew in 2005, and in 2005 I already knew infinitely more about the occupation than I knew in 2000 when I read the story about the Israeli soldier who forced a Palestinian man to undress in the street.

By the time I started my e-mail newsletter it was clear to me that the newspapers I read locally skipped about nine tenths of the daily details of the occupation and skewed the news in favor of the Israelis. In other words a typical American in my community, Southern California, would not know most of the important events going on in the Israeli occupation, because the newspapers weren't giving him an accurate picture of the relevant news.

My newsletter expanded in circulation to several hundred readers, including activists who visited Israel and the occupied territories. Some of them said that it

was indispensable to them. That gave me faith that I was accurately reporting important news.

As one gets more involved in following the occupation, one learns the name of the important writers in the field. I will talk about two of them and my reactions toward them.

Norman Finkelstein, an American historian who concentrates on Israeli history, and Alan Dershowitz, a Harvard University law professor, have an ongoing, at times legal, battle. Dershowitz is a pro-Israel Zionist. Finkelstein is an anti-Zionist. I wouldn't necessarily call him anti-Israel. He is clearly against the current policies of Israel.

When I was first referred to an article written by Alan Dershowitz, I did not know his politics. In this article, he argued that targeted assassinations were at times justified. My reaction was to disagree. I felt that the person being targeted had no chance of going to trial, and would have no legal representation. He would simply be murdered on the basis of purported criminal acts which might be known with accuracy or inaccuracy. Only a trial could determine whether or not this person was guilty of his alleged crime(s). Dershowitz's article gave me a sour taste in my mouth. Not realizing that he was a well-known Zionist, I didn't like him.

My friend Kathleen Wang had high regard for his opponent, Norman Finkelstein, and had several of Finkelstein's books. I went with her to a talk by Finkelstein at Cal State Fullerton. He had a flair for presentation before crowds. He always made his point in the form of an argument. He would do his best to tear opposing viewpoints to shreds, logically, by presenting enough information to verbally decimate his opponent. Even if he were a Zionist, I would probably have liked him. He was very thorough in his arguments.

I got my first taste of a Zionist group in action at that lecture. Students in the back of the auditorium began

screaming at Finkelstein. Campus police had to restore order. Finkelstein took it in stride. He was not perturbed. When some of them demanded that he answer their questions, he did his best to answer.

I found online groups that had heated discussions about the occupation. The Zionists had no problem advocating killing Palestinians and taking their land, because they saw the Palestinians as wanting to kill Jews and take back their land. They always were sure to tell you that the Hamas charter advocated the destruction of Israel, and these Zionists justified Israeli killing of civilians as necessary in order to get the bad guys. Those opposing the occupation came in different types. Some decried all violence. Some felt that violence was necessary for Palestinians to prevent their own extermination.

I found that the word “anti-Semite” took on a different meaning when used by Zionists. I had grown up assuming it referred to people who irrationally attacked Jews. Zionists used the term to describe anyone against any Israeli government policies. In order for the Zionist spin to be correct according to the definition I had learned, Israeli government policies would have to be beyond reproach, meaning that those who attacked Israeli government policies were attacking a clean upstanding government, meaning that their attacks were irrational. Unfortunately, the reason I got hooked into the conflict was that the Israeli government did not seem to be beyond reproach, in permitting and encouraging actions by soldiers and settlers that clearly damaged both non-combatant Palestinians and their property.

I have met people online who complain about Jews, people whom I would call anti-Semitic. They look for ways to find fault with Jews, all Jews, for any reason whatever. That's not how I feel about Jews. My current

problem is with Israel as a nation, in its relationship with the Palestinians, not with Jews in general. Yet, Zionists online call me an anti-Semitic self-hating Jew.

This book has come about as a result of trying to set the record straight for the average American. I want to make it clear that I am not advocating for Palestinian militants who send rocket fire into Israel with the intention of killing either civilians or soldiers, or damaging either civilian or military property, without discrimination. I don't pretend to have an answer for people in the predicament of the Palestinians. I do think I have answers for people in the position of the Israelis, who clearly, according to the knowledge I have gleaned in the past seven years, have the lion's share of the power.

In my searches I have come to know people who have devoted their lives to peace: Jews, Arabs, others who are trying to end the conflict. I do want to mention some for whom I have special regard.

Kathleen Wang, a friend for several years, is an anti-occupation activist, a member of several anti-occupation organizations, who has taken part in activities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, endangering herself. What I like most about Kathleen is that her feelings show openly. During the recent attack by the Israelis on the Gaza Strip, she spent days crying and losing sleep, as if every Palestinian under attack was a close relative.

Greta Berlin and Mary Hughes are two intrepid activists who have visited the West Bank and Gaza Strip and put themselves in danger for the sake of the Palestinians. Greta has been shot by an Israeli soldier. Mary was soundly beaten by an Israeli settler about 45 years her junior. That didn't stop either one of them from being on the first boat to make it through the Israeli siege of the Gaza Strip.

Bassam Aramin, a Palestinian who lives near Ramallah, was in an Israeli jail for seven years for being a member of the Islamic Jihad. He emerged as a man of peace who helped to form the Combatants for Peace organization. A few years ago, his peaceful philosophy was put to the test when an Israeli border policeman killed his 10-year-old daughter after she left school one day. Bassam created a garden in her honor. Bassam is a remarkable person.

Khalid Amayreh is a Palestinian journalist who doesn't know how to use tactful language. If he thinks that the Israeli government is a bunch of Nazis, he will call it a bunch of Nazis. Of course he does it for effect in part, but he does it mainly because he believes in freedom of speech.

I am familiar with various members of the Israeli Peace Bloc, Gush Shalom, but when it comes to articles, Uri Avnery and Adam Keller put out the lion's share. They seem to be beating their collective heads against the wall; they don't seem to affect Israeli government policy much; but they are always trying. Another Israeli activist who never seems to rest is Jeff Halper of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions. The Israelis demolish Palestinian homes, and Jeff and his people are out there rebuilding them.

Another hard worker is Jeff Warner of Los Angeles Jews for Peace, who writes his congresspersons regularly, and who sends an e-mail every day to others encouraging them to exercise their constitutional rights to influence their congresspersons.

I would like now to get into my subject matter and tell you what I have learned in these past seven years that I think you should know. You will find that sometimes I talk about events that happened years ago and sometimes I talk about relatively recent events. If I had perfect records, I might present my subject matter in a more

organized fashion, but in writing, I have tried to be sure to present enough examples to give you a pretty good idea of what each action that I call an abuse was like, and how often it occurred.

Chapter 1

Defining and Describing Terrorism

When I think of terrorists, two types come to mind. The first consists of a person or people doing, say, a string of illegal acts that terrify people. I think of serial killers and rapists as examples. The other type of terrorist is someone who acts to terrify people for political reasons. That's the kind of terrorist I will be talking about here.

Since I have been using the Internet for everything from buying toothbrushes to memory cards, I thought that the Internet would be a proper place to find a decent definition of terrorism. I was surprised to find instead many web sites that said that terrorism was hard to define. My task then became finding a definition that would make sense to most people, and that would assign responsibility properly to terrorists when they tried to get out of it.

FreeDictionary.com and danielpipes.org¹

FreeDictionary.com is a web site with dictionary definitions, encyclopedia references, spell checking, and grammar checking. I checked it for a definition of terrorism, and this is the first definition it gave: "the unlawful use or threatened use of force or violence by a person or

an organized group against people or property with the intention of intimidating or coercing societies or governments, often for ideological or political reasons."²

I have a problem with this definition: the word "unlawful". Suppose a dictator comes into power and makes it lawful for police to kill any citizens who say they don't like the dictator, even citizens with completely clean records otherwise. This certainly looks like terrorism to me, but since it has been made lawful the definition doesn't name it as terrorism. I rejected this definition as leaving a loophole for government-sponsored terrorism.

I found a web page at the danielpipes.org web site,³ with a reader comment on an article about terror, giving two quick definitions of terrorism, one from the US Department of Defense and the other from the US Army Manual. Both used the word "unlawful" in the definitions. For that reason, I reject these definitions as inadequate. They allow the United States to support regimes that terrorize civilians while dismissing their terrorist actions as lawful and therefore not terrorism. Furthermore, these definitions would exempt the Nazi government of World War II, since it passed laws permitting the extermination of innocent people, thereby making their extermination lawful.

FreeDictionary.com gave another terrorism definition, from a different source, that was terse, but it made sense: "the systematic use of violence and intimidation to achieve political ends."⁴

Wordreference.com

This web site gave a definition that was fairly thorough and sensible at the same time: "the calculated use of violence (or threat of violence) against civilians in order to attain goals that are political or religious or

ideological in nature; this is done through intimidation or coercion or instilling fear."⁵

Dictionary.com⁶

I found the definitions on this web site to be adequate and usable. Here they are:

1. the use of violence and threats to intimidate or coerce, esp. for political purposes.
2. the state of fear and submission produced by terrorism or terrorization.
3. a terroristic method of governing or of resisting a government.⁷

This web site is the first I saw that said that a government could institute terrorism. Any reader who is a history buff can remember several examples of reigns of terror by governments.

My local library

I checked the giant-sized dictionary in the reference section of my local library in Seal Beach, and its definition of terrorism made sense: "the use of violence and threats to intimidate or coerce, especially for political purposes."⁸

Homing in on a definition

That's enough for definitions from different sources. Now, let's see what we can extract as a definition of terrorism that makes sense. Wordreference.com names the victims as civilians. FreeDictionary.com names the victims as persons or property. Could the victim be a member of a government? Yes. The goal would be political or ideological in nature. It would instill fear.

Could the victim be an armed soldier or policeman on-duty, or an armed fighter or a commander of such an armed force? There are some cases in which you wish

to instill fear in a population by destroying members of its army. For the most part, however, killing or wounding or otherwise debilitating armed people is done in self-defense.

I am not a mind reader, and thus cannot probe the motives of those who kill or wound soldiers or resistance fighters. For the purpose of this book, I will automatically assume that these actions are defensive, and thus may not be considered terrorism. In other words, if an Israeli soldier kills a Palestinian resistance fighter or a Palestinian resistance fighter kills an Israeli soldier, neither is perpetrating an act of terrorism.

The second FreeDictionary.com definition says that terrorism is the *systematic* use of violence and intimidation. The Wordreference.com definition says that terrorism is the *calculated* use of violence. Suppose a student finds that his family has been killed in an explosion and is so angry that he immediately volunteers to be a suicide bomber. He is outfitted with a belt by a resistance fighter, and goes to a public place where he blows himself up and kills people. I would definitely think of that as terrorism, but in this case it was neither systematic nor calculated. I think that most terrorism is systematic or calculated, but that these characteristics are not necessary for an act to be terrorism.

The word "political" must mean that government or a governing body that may not be recognized as a government is involved. For example, terrorism can be perpetrated against members of a government or citizens of a country that terrorists want to harm, or it can be used by a government against a civilian populace.

The government discussed in the above definition need not necessarily be officially recognized. For example, at the present time, Israel does not recognize the Hamas government in the Gaza Strip as a legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, but continually

refers to any actions done by Hamas members meant to harm Israelis as terrorism.

I will make one last point before drawing up the definition of terrorism that will be used in this book.

In order for an action to be clearly recognized as terrorism, the victim must be unarmed. More specifically, the victim must be someone who is not planning to harm the person harming the victim. KPFK-FM radio station host Don Bustany (the show is *Middle East in Focus*) has used the term "noncombatant civilian" to describe such a victim. If the victim of a shooting were either a soldier or a resistance fighter, or a person helping a soldier or resistance fighter to do his job, the victim would not be a noncombatant civilian. People helping soldiers or resistance fighters are part of the fighting force, and must not be considered noncombatant civilians. Similarly, the governments who form armies and the unrecognized governing bodies who form resistance-fighter groups cannot be considered noncombatant civilians. They breathe life into their respective fighting groups.

Taking all this into account, I am left with the following definition: Terrorism is any kind of harm or threat of harm to noncombatant civilians for political reasons. The reasons may be ideological or religious, or simply the assertion of superiority of one political group or another, but the victims are always noncombatant civilians. The reasons may include intimidation or coercion, but are not necessarily limited to these. For example, revenge might be a motive, revenge not intended to intimidate or coerce, but simply to get back at a person. Harm to that person would terrify the people around him.

Let's repeat the definition in its simplest form, so it can stand out alone: Terrorism is any kind of harm or threat of harm to noncombatant civilians for political reasons.

We usually think of terrorism as being bad. Can there be such a thing as good terrorism? Think of the end of World War II. The United States atom-bombed Hiroshima and Nagasaki, killing over 200,000 civilians. Six days after the bombing of Nagasaki, the Japanese announced their surrender, bringing World War II to a close. Many people say that these bombings, obviously terrorism since many noncombatant civilians were killed, were good because they ended the war. Others say that the United States should have arranged a demonstration of an atomic bomb for the Japanese high command without killing anyone, to let them know what would happen to them if they continued fighting; so these bombings were bad. Still others say that the US high command knew that the Japanese had given up, so these two atomic bombings were callous murders of Japanese citizens, meant to impress the Russians with our power at the beginning of the Cold War.

Prior to that, United States bombers flew missions over Germany daily. Altogether, over a million German civilians were killed in World War II. The killing helped to demoralize the German population and bring the war to a close sooner. Some call the killing of German civilians bad. Others call it good because it brought the war to a close sooner.

The point I am making is that while terrorism is generally accepted as being bad by the victims and their friends, some say certain terrorism is good, and all terrorists believe that their terrorism accomplishes worthwhile goals.

The police function of a democratic state involves the use of force in arresting a suspect and incarceration behind bars or the levy of fines, both of which are unwelcome to the suspect. I therefore see the police function of a democratic state as terrorist in nature, but acceptable to the public at large because it is agreed

upon by the public as beneficial to the smooth operation of society. I think it is important that we remember that despite its acceptability to society at large, the police function works through the use of terrorism. It is not against international law because it is accepted by the society. On the other hand, the terrorism perpetrated by an occupying state like Israel against its Palestinian victims is uniformly unacceptable to the Palestinians. Much of Israeli terrorism has been declared in violation of international law by various nations and agencies, and we will go further into this subject later in this book.

We will be focusing on Israel. Israeli newspapers call any harm to either Israeli soldiers or Israeli civilians by any person or militant group terrorism. Their definition differs from ours. Let's look at the difference for a few moments. Take the case in which Israelis invade the Gaza Strip for the alleged purpose of killing resistance fighters. It is typical for such a force to spray civilian neighborhoods with bullets, or shell civilian areas, or destroy houses or cars, often killing civilians. Soldiers often break into homes. If a civilian fights entry into his home and injures such a soldier, can this be considered terrorism? Israeli newspapers will typically call the Palestinian a terrorist. We would not call him a terrorist. He is unarmed and is resisting someone with arms. To the contrary, we would call the Israeli soldier a terrorist, since he is threatening a noncombatant civilian.

Some examples of terrorism in actual daily events

The Palestinian victims of Israeli terrorism try to bring it to a stop either by negotiations or by resistance. The resistance can be nonviolent, i.e. there are no threats made by the resisters and no violence is used. Such resistance may be in the form of a march or sit-in, in which people carry signs making their complaint. In other resistance, particularly resistance activities on

Fridays in several Palestinian villages or towns, the resisters may march toward a wall or fence that they consider to be illegal, and climb over the wall or fence to get to land that was confiscated from them. The resisters call themselves nonviolent because they bring no weapons, although they will push roadblocks out of the way or possibly break parts of a fence that they consider to be illegally built. The Israelis may call such resisters violent, and attempt to beat up some of them, or use tear gas to disperse them, or arrest them. The Israelis may claim that the resisters use violence on the basis that some may fight back when beaten.

In any case, by the definition we are using here, none of the resisters are terrorists, but if soldiers harm the resisters, they are terrorists, even if the resisters happen to be members of armed groups; remember, they are unarmed.

Resistance may come from armed fighters. If the fighters harm Israeli soldiers, or civilians helping the Israeli army, we would not call this terrorism. If the fighters harm noncombatant Israeli civilians, we would call it terrorism.

Now let's take a simple example of Israeli terrorism from the news. I will discuss a set of articles I saw in the Palestinian media, echoed in Israeli media. Just a comment before I start. My experience in collecting data from various news sources is that it is difficult, or perhaps impossible, to get total accuracy in a news story. I will discuss a news story published by three different news sources, and you can see that there were differences in the three stories.

The International Middle East Media Center posted a story the day I wrote this page, about Yousif Abu Thahier, a 55 year-old farmer who was working his land near the city of Khan Younis in the Gaza Strip.⁹ Israeli

troops from a nearby army post opened fire, killing him. Witnesses said the soldiers opened fire at the farmers without any reason. Israeli media said that the Israeli troops were engaging in armed clashes with Palestinian resistance fighters. In this case I believe the Israeli media. I do not think that Israeli troops fired without reason. Clashing with resistance fighters was reason enough.

But let's go on. The Palestinian Information Center (PIC) named the victim as Yousef Abu Daher, age 70, saying that he was hit near his home, and that soldiers continued to fire at the area, preventing citizens or ambulances from evacuating him.¹⁰ PIC said that he died from his bleeding.

Wafa Palestine News Agency identified him as a farmer, but said his name was Mohammed Abu Daher.¹¹ The Wafa account said that ambulances could not reach the scene due to heavy Israeli gunfire aimed at people's houses and farms.

Had I read just the PIC story, I might have concluded that Israeli soldiers deliberately let the man die by preventing ambulances from reaching him. The Wafa story clarified that ambulances could not reach him because there was too much gunfire going on in the area. So it helps to read as many sources as possible about the same incident. Putting all the stories together, what do I make of it? I believe that an old farmer was killed near his home, that he may or may not have been working his farm but he probably was, he was a noncombatant civilian, not a resistance fighter, and that his life might have been saved if ambulances had been able to reach him quickly after he was shot.

In any case, I am pretty sure that he was a noncombatant civilian, not a resistance fighter, and that he was killed by Israeli gunfire. That makes it a case of terror-

ism, pure and simple.

The Israelis will point out that they were hunting down resistance fighters who were firing missiles at Israel and they had a right to defend themselves against missiles fired by Palestinians. My point is that it doesn't matter what you say. If you kill a noncombatant civilian, and you are the employee of a government, in this case a soldier working for Israel, you are a terrorist. There is a political reason for the soldier's using a gun in that area.

From several years' experience following both the Palestinian and Israeli accounts of the occupation, I have found that Israel always gives self-defense as the reason for its attacks, but in months of siege of the Gaza Strip, Israel has killed noncombatant civilians almost daily. In fact, about half the Palestinians killed were noncombatant civilians, often women, often children.

If March 24, 2008 were the first time a Palestinian noncombatant civilian was killed when Israelis were trying to kill resistance fighters, I might be tempted to call it an accident, although technically it would be counted as terrorism by the definition I am using here. But the death of civilians in clashes supposedly between the Israeli army and Palestinian resistance fighters has been going on for years. Thus, most Israeli attacks stated to be for the purpose of stopping the firing of missiles at Israel are terrorist attacks in that they either kill or wound noncombatant Palestinian civilians, or they damage property belonging to noncombatant Palestinian civilians.

A particularly serious case of Israeli terrorism, for which I think Israel took practically no responsibility, occurred November 8, 2006. Israel had just finished a six-day invasion of Beit Hanoun in the Gaza Strip that claimed the lives of 65 Palestinians and left over 100 injured. Israel announced that it was finished with the invasion, and then Israeli artillery shells hit a neighbor-

hood including the Al-Athamna family's homes in Beit Hanoun, killing 18 members of the family and two others.¹² This was a family with several prominent doctors. The Israeli military investigated. It turned out that Israeli artillery gunners were apparently aiming for an empty spot in a field; i.e. the shelling was meant to terrify the Palestinians but not kill any, but there was a flaw in a targeting mechanism kit that had been installed in the gun five days previously, and seven shells were fired in the wrong direction, raining shells on civilian homes. Normally, the margin of error in firing was twenty five meters but the firing pattern of these shells had a variation of two hundred meters.

Defense Minister Amir Peretz expressed regret and ordered the Rafah border crossing to be opened with preference given to ambulances, medical and humanitarian aid. Past that, I could find no evidence that the remaining Al-Athamna family members got so much as one shekel of remuneration. I'm not saying it didn't happen. I just didn't see any mention, among about a dozen references to this horrible incident that I personally scanned, of the Israeli government paying the family any remuneration.

Even if the shells had been aimed correctly and no one was hurt, the purpose was to terrify, and therefore that shelling could have been called terrorism, in the form of scaring people, perhaps damaging property as well.

I don't think it pays to read the minds of the people performing terrorism or trust what comes out of their mouths. They say what they think they have to say – we regret the deaths, but we maintain our right to defend ourselves, or in the case of Palestinians, fighters might say this missile attack was revenge for the killing of one of their leaders.

I think that if we are to talk about terrorism in real terms we simply must quantify the damage that is done and not pay much attention to what the perpetrators say. In the case of the November 8, 2006 shelling, several homes were destroyed in one neighborhood and 20 Palestinians including 18 members of one family were killed. That's what counts. Whether or not it was a mistake does not count in terms of the effect on human lives. The fact is that without warning several houses in one neighborhood were destroyed and 18 members of one family were killed. All were noncombatant civilians. The soldiers who fired their guns were working for the Israeli government, so the purpose in firing their guns was political.

Coming back to the present, as I write this page it is March, 2008, and for many months, the residents of Sderot in Israel have complained mightily about Palestinian shelling of their town. And it is true that the Palestinians have literally fired thousands of rockets at Israeli targets, mostly in Sderot, and also nearby Ashkelon, because these communities are within the range of missiles fired from the Gaza Strip. As it turns out, since the beginning of the uprising called the Second Intifada, which started September 2000, the thousands of these rockets and mortar shells fired by Palestinians have killed 24 Israelis.¹³ That's an average of three Israelis killed per year.

The Palestinian fighters who fired their missiles knew ahead of time that the great majority would land harmless, and the fact is that perhaps nineteen out of twenty landed in the desert without harming any people or property, or may have even landed inside Palestinian territory. The purpose in firing these missiles was to spread fear. That one in twenty that did some harm ended up damaging buildings at random, here and there a vehicle, perhaps putting it out of commission, once in

a long while actually blowing up a vehicle, wounding an Israeli at random here and there, and killing a very small number. The other nineteen missiles might as well have been loaded with powder puffs or marshmallows, for all the damage they did. But that twentieth missile did enough damage, over a period of many months, to send the people of Sderot to the Prime Minister's home, complaining, demanding protection; and more recently demanding tax breaks. So any damage done by these rockets is terrorism. The fear spread by the rockets that did no physical harm is also terrorism.

What did the Israelis do in reply to these missile strikes? A lot of air strikes at the Gaza Strip, intended to take out missile launching sites and resistance fighters who were launching them. At least that's what the Israelis said, but they generally killed civilians as well. For example, on February 27, 2008, Israeli aircraft killed five Palestinians in the Gaza Strip including three children.¹⁴ They wounded nine other Palestinians including six children. One victim was a seven-month-old baby. Five Palestinians in one day killed means that one day's aircraft strikes killed the same number of Palestinians as Israelis killed by Palestinian rockets in 20 months.

What did I see in the newspaper on the topic? A lot about Palestinian terrorists firing rockets at Sderot. A lot about the horrors undergone by the civilians of Sderot. Some headlines about Israeli aircraft striking terrorists in the Gaza Strip. In terms of actual terrorism, neglecting those wounded, figuring deaths alone, Israelis did at least as much terrorism in one day as Palestinians did with their rockets in a year. How do I figure that? Three noncombatant civilian children were killed in the air strikes. The two others killed may have been fighters. Assuming that all the Israelis killed in a year by rockets were noncombatant civilians, we can call all three killings

by Palestinians terrorism. Three killed in a year by the Palestinians versus three killed in a day by the Israelis.

I neglected counting the wounded and estimating property damage because that takes more research. For this example I just wanted to make a point. I would say offhand that Israeli terrorism by air strikes is a lot more efficient and damaging than Palestinian terrorism by rockets, but we see a lot more attention paid to Palestinian rockets than Israeli air strikes in the United States newspapers.

That brings me to my next point: we *never* see any Israeli military action called terrorism in our newspapers. It is either overtly stated or it is implied that all Israeli military action is self-defense. It is implied that the terms terrorism and self-defense are mutually exclusive. For that matter, I have never seen the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki labeled terrorism in any American media, and similarly, American media never labeled the daily bombings of Germany terrorism.

In other words, the perpetrators who see their terrorism as self-defense never use the word "terrorism" to explain their actions to the public. Terrorism is what the bad guys do, and since we're the good guys, what we do is not terrorism (although it scares the living day-lights out of a lot of noncombatant civilians and kills a lot more).

In closing, terrorism has been clearly defined in the dictionaries but nations apparently never call themselves terrorists, no matter how much terrorism they commit. For purposes of this book I have decided to take on terrorism from the standpoint of the damage it does rather than the perpetrators' (alleged) motives, since the damage can be measured but the perpetrator's motives are often cloaked.

Notes

Chapter 1

Defining and Describing Terrorism

1. Free Dictionary definitions of terrorism were found on <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/terrorism>.
2. The source for this definition was given as the American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition copyright ©2000 by Houghton Mifflin Company, updated in 2003, published by Houghton Mifflin Company.
3. The Daniel Pipes website, Submission by Chadrock (reader comment), May 20, 2004, *Definition of Terrorism*, <http://www.danielpipes.org/comments/15298>.
4. The source for this definition was given as the Collins Essential English Dictionary 2nd Edition, 2006, © HarperCollins Publishers 2004, 2006.
5. wordreference.com states the following about this definition: "Adapted From: WordNet 2.0 Copyright 2003 by Princeton University. All rights reserved." It also states that the definition would be for terrorism, act of terrorism, or terrorist act.
6. These definitions were found on <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/terrorism>.
7. Dictionary.com Unabridged (v 1.1). Based on the Random House Unabridged Dictionary, © Random House, Inc. 2006.
8. This definition was taken from the Webster's

- Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language, 2001.
9. IMEMC, March 24, 2008, *The Israeli Army Kills a Palestinian Farmer in Gaza and Another Man Dies of Earlier Wounds*, <http://www.imemc.org/article/53697>.
 10. Palestine Information Center, March 24, 2008, *Palestinian old man hit in IOF shooting left to bleed to death*, <http://www.palestine-info.co.uk/en/default.aspx?xyz=U6Qq7k%2bcOd87MDI46m9rUxJEpMO%2bil%2bs7IL9tY44eCQs%2b9VCpPqY0yMMwWhLGGI8UzYID8DyIQBEIwWchz3m%2bO3Lqy3aAZx6IN4WF2do%2bPu8gd4GIMpaocWcW1UNkquDHHmMOJZOHX8%3d>.
 11. WAFA Palestine News Agency, March 24, 2008, *IOF Kills Farmer in South Gaza Strip*, <http://www.wafa.ps/english/body.asp?id=11370>.
 12. IMEMC, March 24, 2008, *20 civilians killed in Beit Hanoun, Palestinians call Security Council to meet*, <http://www.imemc.org/content/view/22509/1/>.
 13. The Israel Project, May, 2008, *Fatalities and Physical Injuries from Palestinian Rocket and Mortar Fire, 2001-2008 (Jan-May)*, <http://www.theisraelproject.org/atf/cf/%7B84DC5887-741E-4056-8D91-A389164BC94E%7D/FATALITIES%20AND%20INJURIES%20GRAPH2.JPG>.
 14. IMEMC, February 27, 2008, *An Israeli air strike kills three children, bringing today's death to 12*, <http://www.imemc.org/article/53093>.