UN Report Gives Hezbollah the Green Light

June 23, 2015

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YNet News

[http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4671655,00.html](http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0%2C7340%2CL-4671655%2C00.html)

The main problem with the [United Nations report on Operation Protective Edge](http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0%2C7340%2CL-4671512%2C00.html%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) is that it artificially tries to create a moral and legal symmetry between the State of Israel and the IDF – and Hamas and the other Palestinian organizations.

The report fails to mention the fact that Hamas is the one which opened fire and initiated the fighting, and it gives no weight to the fact that Israel did everything in its power to reach a ceasefire before moving on to a full-scale counterattack, including a ground offensive in the Strip.

A second fact that the report does not emphasize sufficiently is that Hamas intentionally opened fire in order to harm Israeli civilians, while the IDF hurt those defined as "non-fighters" unintentionally and did everything in its power to minimize the number of civilian casualties.

This fact makes all the difference between Hamas' intention to target Israeli civilians indiscriminately – children, women, adults and elderly people – and the IDF's sincere effort to avoid hurting a non-fighting population.

The third main flaw in the report is the attempt to compare Hamas, which intentionally used a non-fighting civilian population as a human shield not only for its fighters but also for its rocket and mortar launchers, to the IDF, which – if it did actually use this measure – did it in few cases and locally, and the matter is now being investigated by military advocate general.

The report's biggest fault is ignoring these three fundamental issues, and when this is the leading trend in the report's wording, that there are two sides here with the same combat ethics and the same operational procedures, the report can no longer reflect reality.

The UN Human Rights Council's report does include, however, one issue which deserves our attention – the IDF's excessive use of fire from the air, from the ground and from the sea in order to minimize the number of casualties among our forces.

The sensitivity towards casualties among an army's forces is not unique to the IDF. The Americans, the British and the French all did that before us, starting with the atom bomb dropped by the United States at the end of World War II to the American forces' pullout from Afghanistan late last year.

The fire is becoming more accurate, which allegedly means that much fewer uninvolved people should have been hurt, but at the same time the arms have become more lethal, leading to civilian casualties. The committee notes that the arms used by the IDF in Gaza are legal under international law, but claims that the excessive use of these arms, especially inaccurate artillery fire, led to a large number of casualties among non-fighting civilians.

This problem, as I said, exists in all Western armies which prefer to minimize the risk to their soldiers' lives, even if it means increasing the risk to a non-fighting civilian population. That's why it's so important in such wars to see who initiated them. Israel clearly tried to avoid entering Operation Protective Edge, and Hamas – which began bombarding Beersheba and Tel Aviv - brought a disaster on itself.

But the problem is a problem, and the UN committee fails to explain why an Israeli soldier has to get killed because Hamas chose to locate its launchers and tunnels in the heart of Gaza's Saja'iyya neighborhood. The report also fails to explain how Israel could have destroyed the tunnels, which put the Gaza vicinity communities in danger, without trying to bomb them from the air as a first preventive measure.

 **Israel will get through this report**

Nonetheless, we cannot settle for a self-righteous statement that the report is just as biased as we expected, and tell ourselves that the entire world is against us and wait for the storm to pass over our heads. Mainly because of the next war.

We will somehow get through the "second Goldstone report" which hit us on Monday, because the important thing for the Americans right now is that Israel won't torpedo their negotiations with Iran, and they will support us at the UN.

But the report's conclusions serve as a flickering warning sign against what might happen to us in the international arena if a war breaks out in the north with Hezbollah or with Hezbollah and the Syrians.

Hezbollah has placed a considerable part of its heavy rockets and missiles inside houses. The heavy rockets and missiles have become the Shiites' subtenants south of Zahrani. IDF Chief of Staff Gadi Eisenkot has warned that in the next Lebanon war, Israel will require a million and a half Lebanese to vacate their homes in order to handle the missiles and rockets hidden in those homes, in urban neighborhoods and villages south of Beirut.

The question is what will happen if these million and a half Lebanese don't vacate their homes as required or if Hezbollah prevents them from leaving and some of them remain in the houses – will the Air Force avoid bombing those houses?

The UN report on Operation Protective Edge explicitly states that the fact that the IDF warned the residents of neighborhood in Gaza to vacate their homes, and that some of them did not leave, makes the IDF responsible for the death of many of them. The report also implies that these were war crimes committed by the IDF. Imagine what will happen when are fired on from Lebanon, and the Air Force and ground forces embark on a mission to oppress the heavy and destructive fire hitting the Israeli home front.

The UN report on Operation Protective Edge should concern us not because it will isolate us in the international arena and maybe get us involved in investigations and trials at the International Criminal Court in The Hague, but mainly because this report points to the fact that the IDF will have a big problem with the basis of the operation it is planning.

If nothing radical is done in the international arena to neutralize the effect of the "second Goldstone report," this report may critically erode Israel's ability to defend itself in the next war, whether it erupts in the north or in the south.