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Just how many of Gaza's civilians are entirely 'innocent'?

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5–6 minutes

If [Israel invades Rafah](#) to wipe out the remaining Hamas terrorist cadres, as it vows to do, collateral civilian deaths are likely — even though Israel takes more care than any other military to prevent such casualties.

Yet who exactly are these “civilians” and just how innocent are they?

Sure, every baby and young child in Gaza is 100% innocent.

Yet among adults, including women, there are many who fall far short of that.

That doesn't mean civilians deserve to die in the fighting. But Israel goes out of its way to [protect non-combatants](#).

And remember, Gaza's adult “civilians” include those who wear civilian clothing and work in civilian jobs by day but fire rockets by night.

And those who aren't part of Hamas but who take part in the terrorism, as many did on Oct. 7, nonetheless.

They include those who harbor and directly assist terrorists in their

murderous activities, as well as those that [help them hide hostages](#).

They include the thousands who built the terror tunnels, and those who allow their homes, hospitals, schools and mosques to be used to store rockets and ammunition, or to accommodate entrances and exits to the tunnels.

And those who contribute money, food or even medical care to Hamas terrorists.

Finally, though perhaps to a lesser degree, they include those who brought Hamas to power and who keep it there.

(Recall Albert Einstein's letter holding responsible the "fine Germans" who brought Hitler to power.)

Being a civilian and innocent are matters of degree.

The difficulty, if not impossibility, of distinguishing between combatants and civilians in Gaza may be one of the reasons Hamas adamantly refuses to separate these categories [when supplying death tolls](#) from the fighting.

Instead, it gives a total number (almost certainly exaggerated) and then indicates how many are children, without disclosing that it counts as a child anyone under 19, including active terrorists and combatants.

It also identifies the number of women who have purportedly been killed by Israel.

Yet there, too, it fails to identify female fighters as combatants.

Also, it fails to distinguish genuine civilians who have been killed by misfired Hamas and Islamic Jihad rockets.

And Hamas deliberately excludes civilians killed as the result of being used as human shields. To be sure, these do count as civilian deaths, but they are attributable to Hamas even if the weapons that killed them were fired by Israel.

Similarly, Hamas doesn't break out the number of civilians it itself *intentionally* kills for trying to escape being used as a human shield or for the even worse "crime" of actually collaborating with Israel.

When all these factors are taken into consideration, the number of "innocent" civilians killed by Israel is certainly far fewer than the numbers given suggest, and perhaps even fewer than the number of slain combatants.

Every dead innocent civilian is a tragedy, of course. And, again, Israel goes to great lengths to avoid such collateral damage.

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It does so for two reasons: 1) The Israel Defense Forces is a moral army carefully trained to minimize civilian casualties; 2) Israel loses in the information war every time it inadvertently kills a civilian, whose body is then paraded in front of CNN cameras.

So Israel has everything to lose and nothing to gain by deliberately or even carelessly killing civilians.

Hamas, on the other hand, has everything to gain and nothing to lose when innocent civilians are killed.

So if and when the IDF goes into Rafah to destroy the remaining Hamas battalions and capture their leaders, and if then death tolls are announced or civilian bodies shown on TV, think about the real facts on the ground.

The truth is that no country in modern history has made more efforts, and has been more successful, in avoiding civilian casualties than Israel.

And, yet, no nation in modern history has been condemned so irrationally for civilian deaths — which are largely the fault of those who started the war in the first place and fought it by using civilians as human shields.

The world must come to realize that there is no moral, political, diplomatic or legal equivalence between terrorists who deliberately murder and rape, and democracies that seek to protect their citizens and take precautions to reduce civilian deaths.

That was true when the Allies fought the Nazis.

And it is true today as Israel fights for its very survival against Hamas.

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