

What really happened on 7th October?

by **Robert Inlakesh & Sharmine Narwani** on [The Cradle](#)



Two weeks after the Hamas breakout assault on Israel on 7 October, a clearer picture of what happened u2013 who died, and who killed u2013 is now beginning to emerge.

Instead of the wholesale massacre of civilians claimed by Israel, incomplete figures published by the Hebrew newspaper [Haaretz](#) show that almost half the Israelis killed that day were in fact combatants – soldiers or police.

In the interim, two weeks of blanket western media reporting that Hamas allegedly killed around 1,400 Israeli civilians during its 7 October military attack has served to inflame emotions and create the climate for Israelu2019s unconstrained destruction of the Gaza Strip and its civilian population.

Accounts of the Israeli death toll have been filtered and shaped to suggest that a wholesale civilian massacre occurred that day, with babies, children, and women the main targets of a terror attack.

Now, detailed statistics on the casualties released by the Israeli daily [Haaretz](#) paint a starkly different picture. As of 23 October, the news outlet has released information on 683 Israelis killed during the Hamas-led offensive, including their names and locations of their deaths on 7 October.

Of these, 331 casualties u2013 or 48.4 percent – have been confirmed to be soldiers and police officers, many of them female. Another 13 are described as rescue service members, and the remaining 339 are ostensibly considered to be civilians.

While this list is not comprehensive and only accounts for roughly half of Israel's stated death toll, almost half of those killed in the melee are clearly identified as Israeli combatants.

There are also so far no recorded deaths of children under the age of three, which throws into question the Israeli narrative that babies were targeted by Palestinian resistance fighters. Of the 683 total casualties reported thus far, seven were between the ages of 4 and 7, and nine between the ages of 10 and 17. The remaining 667 casualties appear to be adults.



Age distribution of the Israelis killed during Hamas' October 7 operation (as of 23 October).

The numbers and proportion of Palestinian civilians and children among those killed by Israeli bombardment over the past two weeks – over 5,791 killed, including 2,360 children and 1,292 women, and more than 18,000 injured – are far higher than any of these Israeli figures from the events of 7 October.

Revisiting the scene

The daring Hamas-led military operation, codenamed Al-Aqsa Flood, unfolded with a dramatic dawn raid at approximately **6:30 AM** (Palestine time) on 7 October. This was accompanied by a cacophony of sirens breaking the silence of occupied Jerusalem, signaling the start of what became an extraordinary event in the occupation state's 75-year history.

As per the spokesperson of Hamas' armed wing, the Al-Qassam Brigades, around 1,500 Palestinian fighters crossed the formidable Gaza-Israel separation barrier.

However, this breakout was not limited to Hamas forces alone; numerous armed fighters belonging to other factions such as Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) later breached the armistice line, along with some Palestinians unaffiliated with any organized militia.

As it became apparent this was no ordinary resistance operation, hundreds of videos quickly flooded social media, most of which have been viewed by The Cradle, depicting dead Israeli troops and settlers, fierce gunfire battles between various parties, and Israelis being taken captive into Gaza.

These videos were either taken on the phones of Israelis, or were released by Palestinian fighters filming their own operation. It wasn't until hours later that more gruesome and downright dubious allegations began to surface.

Unsubstantiated allegations of ' Hamas atrocities 2019

Aviva Klompas, a former speechwriter for the Israeli mission to the UN, was the first Israeli of note to spread the claim that there were reports of " [Israeli girls being raped and their bodies dragged through the street](#)

She posted this on X at 9:18 PM (Palestine time), on 7 October, although [an op-ed Klompas published with Newsweek](#) at 12:28 AM (Palestine time), on 8 October, made no mention of any sexual violence.

Klompas is also the co-founder of [Boundless Israel](#), a "think-action tank" that works "to revitalize Israel education and take bold collective action to combat Jew-hatred." An "unapologetically Zionist" charitable group that works to promote Israeli narratives on social media.

The one case touted as proof of rape was that of a young German-Israeli woman named Shani Louk, who was filmed face down in the back of a pickup truck and was widely assumed dead.

It was unclear whether the fighters filmed with Louk in the Gaza-bound vehicle were members of Hamas, as they do not sport the uniforms or insignia of the Al-Qassam troops identifiable in other Hamas videos – some even wore casual civilian clothing and sandals.

Later, her mother [claimed to have evidence](#) that her daughter was still alive, but had suffered a severe head wound. This rings true with information released by Hamas that indicated Louk was being treated for her injuries at an unspecified Gaza hospital.

Complicating matters further, on the day these rape allegations arose, Israelis would not have had access to this information. Their armed forces had not yet entered many, if not most, of the areas liberated by the resistance and were still engaged in armed clashes with them on multiple fronts.

Nevertheless, these rape claims took on a life of their own, with even US President Joe Biden alleging, during a speech days later, that Israeli women were "raped, assaulted, paraded as trophies" by Hamas fighters. It is important to note that The Forward's 2019 article on 11 October reported that the Israeli military acknowledged they [had no evidence of such allegations](#) at that point.

When the army later made its own allegations of decapitations, foot amputations, and rape, [Reuters](#) pointed out that "the military personnel overseeing the identification process didn't present any forensic evidence in the form of pictures or medical records." To date, there is no credible evidence of these atrocities that has been presented.

Other outrageous allegations, such as the story of Hamas " [beheading 40 babies](#)" made headlines and the front pages of countless western news outlets. Even Biden claimed to have seen " [confirmed photos of terrorists beheading babies](#) ." The claims trace back to Israeli reserve settler and soldier [David Ben Zion](#), who has previously incited violent riots against Palestinians and called for the West Bank town of Huwara to be wiped out. No evidence was ever produced to support these claims and the White House itself confirmed later that Joe Biden had never seen such photos.

The Hamas plan

There is little to no credible evidence that Palestinian fighters had a plan to – or deliberately sought to – kill or harm unarmed Israeli civilians on 7 October. From the available footage, we witness them engaging primarily with armed Israeli forces, accounting for the deaths of hundreds of occupation soldiers. As Qassam Brigades' 2019 Spokesman Abu Obeida made clear on 12 October:

"Al-Aqsa Flood operation aimed to destroy the Gaza Division (an Israeli army unit on Gaza's borders) which was attacked at 15 points, followed by attacking 10 further military intervention points. We attacked the Zikim site and several other settlements outside the Gaza Division headquarters."

Abu Obeida and other resistance officials claim that the other key objective of their operation was to take Israeli prisoners that they could exchange for the approximately [5,300 Palestinian prisoners](#) held in Israeli detention centers, many of whom are women and children.

Hamas Deputy Head of the Political Bureau of Saleh Al-Arouri, in an [interview](#) after the operation, stressed: "We have a large and qualitative number and senior officers. All we can say now is that the freedom of our prisoners is at the doorstep."

Both sides play this game: Since the start of its military assault on Gaza, Israel has [rounded up and imprisoned](#) more than 1,200 Palestinians in the occupied West Bank. To date there have been 38 prisoner exchange deals between the resistance factions and Tel Aviv's 2013 deals that [Israelis often resist](#) to the very last minute.

While these kinds of testimonies trickle out, reports are emerging that Israeli authorities have

dialled up the [mistreatment](#), torture, and even killing of Palestinian prisoners in their custody u2013 a violation of the Geneva Conventions, which ironically, a non-state actor like Hamas appears to have followed to the letter.

In relation to the events of 7 October, there are certainly some videos depicting possibly unarmed Israelis, killed in their vehicles or at entrances to facilities, so that Palestinian troops could gain access.

There are also videos which show the fighters engaging in shootouts with armed Israeli forces, [where there were unarmed Israelis taking cover in between](#), in addition to videos of fighters shooting toward houses and throwing grenades into fortified areas. Eyewitness testimony also suggests [grenades were thrown](#) into bomb shelters, though by whom is unclear.

Even at the Israeli "peace rave", which has been cited as the single deadliest attack committed by Palestinian fighters during their operation, videos emerged that appeared to show Israeli forces opening fire through a crowd of unarmed civilians, toward targets they believed to be Hamas members. ABC News also reported that [an Israeli tank](#) had headed to the site of the festival.

An Israeli massacre in Kibbutz Beu2019eri?

In its report on the events at Be'eri Kibbutz, ABC News photographed artillery pieces [resembling Israeli munitions](#) outside a bombed-out home. The reporter, David Muir, mentioned that Hamas fighters, covered in plastic bags, were found in the aftermath.

Additionally, videos of the scene show homes that appear to have been struck by munitions that Hamas fighters did not possess. Muir reported that about 14 people were held hostage in a building by Palestinian fighters.

A Hebrew-language Haaretz article published on 20 October, which only appears in English in a must-read [Mondoweiss](#) article, paints a very different story of what went down in Beu2019eri that day. A Kibbutz resident who had been away from his home – whose partner was killed in the melee – reveals stunning new details:

"His voice trembles when his partner, who was besieged in her home shelter at the time, comes to mind. According to him, only on Monday night (9 October) and only after the commanders in the field made difficult decisions u2013 including shelling houses with all their occupants inside in order to eliminate the terrorists along with the hostages u2013 did the IDF complete the takeover of the kibbutz. The price was terrible: at least 112 Beu2019eri people were killed. Others were kidnapped. Yesterday, 11 days after the massacre, the bodies of a mother and her son were discovered in one of the destroyed houses. It is believed that more bodies are still lying in the rubble."

Photo evidence of the destruction in Beu2019eri corroborates his account. Only the heavy munitions of the Israeli army could have destroyed residential homes in this manner.



Aftermath of Be'eri Kibbutz after the fire power of the two sides ceased

Hamas behaviors: Evidence vs allegations

Yasmin Porat, a survivor from Kibbutz Beu2019eri, said in an interview for an Israeli radio-show, hosted by state-broadcaster Kan, that Israeli forces "[eliminated everyone, including the hostages](#)," going on to state that "there was very, very heavy crossfire" and even noted tank shelling.

Porat had attended the Nova rave and testified to the humane treatment throughout different

interviews she conducted with Israeli media. She explained that when she was held prisoner, the Hamas fighters "guarded us", telling her in Hebrew to "Look at me well, weu2019re not going to kill you. We want to take you to Gaza. We are not going to kill you. So be calm, youu2019re not going to die." She also added the following:

"They give us something to drink here and there. When they see we are nervous they calm us down. It was very frightening but no one treated us violently. Luckily nothing happened to me like what I heard in the media."

Increasingly, and to the horror of some Israeli officials and news outlets, Israeli eyewitnesses and survivors of the bloodshed are testifying that they were treated well by Palestinian fighters. On 24 October, Israeli state broadcaster Kan [bemoaned](#) the fact that prisoner Yocheved Lifshitz, released by Hamas the day before, was allowed to make statements live on air.

As she was handed over to Red Cross intermediaries, the elderly Israeli female captive was caught on camera turning back [to squeeze the hand](#) of her Hamas captor in her last goodbyes. Lifshitzu2019s live broadcast, in which she spoke about her two-week ordeal, "humanized" her Hamas captors even further as she recounted her daily life with the fighters:

"They were very friendly toward us. They took care of us. We were given medicine and were treated. One of the men with us was badly injured in a motorbike accident. Their (Hamas) paramedics looked after his wounds, he was given medicine and antibiotics. The people were friendly. They kept the place very clean. They were very concerned about us."

Following her release from Gaza by Hamas, 85 year old Yosheved Lifshitz is interviewed about her experience in captivity. – The Cradle (@TheCradleMedia)
[October 24, 2023](#)

More questions than answers

It is essential to recognize that in many reports by western journalists on the ground, the majority of information regarding the actions of Hamas fighters comes from the Israeli army – an active participant in the conflict.

Emerging evidence now indicates that there is a high probability, especially due to the scale of the infrastructural damage, that Israeli military forces could have deliberately killed captives, fired on incorrect targets, or mistaken Israelis for Palestinians in their firefights. If the only source of information for a serious claim made is the Israeli army, then it has to be taken into account that they have reason to conceal cases of friendly fire.

Israeli friendly fire was rampant, even in the days that followed, from an army with very little actual combat experience. In the city of Ashkelon (Askalan) on 8 October, Israeli soldiers shot dead and shouted insults at the body of a man they believed to have been a Hamas fighter, yet later realized they had executed a fellow Israeli. This is just one of [three such examples of friendly fire in one day](#) , resulting in the killing of Israelis by their own troops.



Amid the fog of war, parties to the conflict have different perspectives on what occurred during the initial raid and its aftermath. It's not disputed that Palestinian armed groups inflicted significant losses on the Israeli military, but there will be plenty of ongoing debate regarding everything else in the weeks and months to come.

An independent, impartial, international investigation is urgently needed, one that has access to information from all sides involved in the conflict. Neither the Israelis nor the Americans will agree to this, which itself suggests that Tel Aviv has much to conceal.

In the meantime, Palestinian civilians in Gaza endure ongoing, indiscriminate attacks with the most sophisticated heavy weapons in existence, living under the persistent threat of forced and potentially irreversible displacement. This Israeli air blitz was made possible only by the flood of unsubstantiated u2018 Hamas atrocitiesu2019 stories that media began to circulate on and after 7 October.