



Security Council

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Letter dated 28 December 2023 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I would be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex, sent to the Secretary-General regarding the United Nations flawed verification system for Palestinian terror, distributed as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) **Gilad Erdan**
Ambassador of Israel to the United Nations



Annex to the letter dated 28 December 2023 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

As you are aware, whenever Israel or Israeli actors – be it officials or civil society – submit concrete evidence of Hamas atrocity crimes, we are told that the United Nations needs to authenticate this information through its rigorous internal processes, including its “triangular verification” process. We are told that this process is employed by your organization for anything from photographic evidence submitted by our United Nations Mission of babies charred to death by Hamas to official statistics submitted by our Ministry of Education reporting how many children in Israel have missed school due to Hamas rocket attacks.

We are interested in understanding if information submitted by the terrorist organization Hamas, and the so-called “Ministries” that it controls and funds, such as the “Hamas Ministry of Health” in the Gaza Strip, or by other Palestinian actors receives similar scrutiny and is subject to similar United Nations verification analysis. We are asking for greater transparency to understand if reports and statistics received from Hamas and other Palestinian sources undergo the same rigorous triangular verification and, if so, how it is possible to confirm the validity of such information in real time for the Palestinian side, when it generally takes weeks to do so for concrete evidence submitted to the United Nations by Israel and Israeli sources (take, for example, the countless submissions of Israel showing acts of grotesque sexual violence against Israeli women and children, and United Nations senior officials’ response calling for the need to “verify” such evidence rather than take it at face value).

As we count our injured, missing and murdered in the wake of the deadly 7 October massacre perpetrated by Hamas against Israeli and other citizens in southern Israel, we are, quite tragically, learning just what a long, onerous, drawn-out process collecting evidence and analysing it is for purposes of drawing up an accurate, objective and reliable list of civilian casualties, even with the most sophisticated capabilities and technologies in place. Therefore, we are curious how it is, in the chaos of the Gaza Strip, that Hamas’ so-called Ministry of Health or other authorities are almost always able to determine the number of injured or dead within a matter of minutes after the incident, and how the United Nations often relies and reports on this information in real time given its rigorous verification standards that it cites repeatedly to us in Israel. We saw this, for example, with the attack on the al-Ahli hospital on 18 October 2023 and your immediate report of “the killing of hundreds of Palestinian civilians”, relying on Hamas Ministry of Health statistics, as well as false reports that Israel had hit that hospital, when in fact the attack was due to a misfired Palestinian Islamic Jihad rocket.

In this vein, we are interested in understanding the following:

- What methodology is employed by the United Nations and its agencies to collect and analyse civilian casualty counts in real time in the Gaza Strip?
- Upon which sources of information do Hamas authorities rely?
- Do Hamas authorities or United Nations bodies that routinely cite such information have verification processes in place to ensure the validity and accuracy of initial assessments of casualties undertaken in accordance with the methodology outlined in question No. 1 above?
- What is the impression of your office and the United Nations of the level of professionalism of the Hamas “Ministry of Health”?

- We understand that the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has often presented casualty and injury statistics conveyed by the “Ministry of Health” in Gaza in the periodic reports that it has issued throughout the war upon which the relevant United Nations agencies rely. Is proper context provided to explain that these figures are those given by Hamas and may be grossly inaccurate and inflated?
- In reporting on casualties, does the United Nations conduct an investigation into how many of the casualties were combatants or direct participants in hostilities, including teenage combatants? How does the United Nations deal with the fact that many Hamas combatants and direct participants in hostilities wear civilian clothing rather than distinctive gear? How can your office provide important and necessary context for many of these deaths and distinguish the death of combatants and direct participants in hostilities from civilians?

In this vein, we would also like to raise concerns about recent reports that we have seen in the mainstream media that Hamas has live actors “play dead” and lie in body bags in order to give the (false) impression via the media and social media that Israel has perpetrated mass atrocity crimes against the Palestinians and that the number of dead is much greater than had previously been believed. We would like to understand what actions have been taken by your office to ensure that the United Nations or the media are not swayed by these types of manipulations, and what actions are undertaken when incidents of fake news are discovered after the fact.

Israel expects nothing less than the same commitment to transparency, rigorous triangular verification standards and the provision of the full context that the United Nations and your office apply to Israel to be applied to Hamas and Palestinian sources of information. In that spirit, we welcome detailed answers to the questions posed to you above.

I would be grateful if you would distribute the present letter as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) **Gilad Erdan**
Ambassador of Israel to the United Nations
