

LEAKED: How Israel Calculates the Non-Value of Civilian Life in Gaza

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Glenn Greenwald (GG): Few events have soured Western opinion on Israel more than the horrific attack on a three car convoy of aid workers with the World Central Kitchen that we reported on on Monday, where even the IDF's own version of events makes clear how reprehensible this is. Even if you believe everything the IDF says. What they said is that we knew this convoy of aid workers was travelling on exactly this route. We could see their cars that were marked with the drones that we have, and yet we attacked each of those cars, one after the other, to ensure that everyone in that convoy was dead, for one reason: We thought, mistakenly, as it turns out, that there was one armed militant accompanying them. And because of that, they decided it was justified to exterminate the entire convoy of aid workers, which is exactly what they proceeded to do, killing seven people, including American and British nationals.

Now, the reality is, there's absolutely nothing different about what the Israelis did here that they've been doing in Gaza for not only the last six months, but the last several decades, just bombing and killing with very little to no regard for human life. The only difference is, is that the organisation that was targeted here is headed by a very popular Spanish chef, José Andrés, and as a result of that and the fact that it wasn't Palestinians who were killed this time, but Americans and British and other Westerners, there was a lot of pressure, obviously, on the governments of those citizens, the American government, the British government, to defend the lives of their citizens. And therefore they denounced it in vitriolic terms, extremely uncommon when the Americans and the British are talking about Israel. After all, it's the Americans and the British who are arming Israel and paying for their bombs and providing them with the bombs that they're dropping in Gaza. But there was reporting this week from the Israeli magazine +972 that shows exactly how extreme the Israeli Defence Forces have become in terms of their disregard for civilian life. We keep hearing that they're the most moral army in the world, they're only doing what every other country does in war, and therefore, the only reason why anybody would object is because you have some unique

desire to attack Israel, probably because you hate Jews and are bigoted and racist and anti-Semitic. And yet what the Israelis are doing is anything but normal. The destruction of civilian life is unlike anything seen in any 21st century war, and you even have to go back many decades in the 20th century to find things that are comparable in terms of civilian destruction, the destruction of civilian infrastructure and civilian life. But also the IDF has authorised a formula for determining how many civilians they're willing to kill on each strike in exchange for killing just one Hamas member. They just made the calculation that they were willing to kill seven aid workers to get one Hamas operative. And he turned out not to be there. But even if he had been, would anyone have accepted that justification? Oh, yeah, we wiped out seven aid workers because they were accompanied by one armed militant. Seven to one as a ratio. And yet, that's exactly what the Israelis are willing to do. In fact, double that according to their own documents and internal memos.

From Yuval Abraham in a widely cited article from this week, quote, '*Lavender: The AI machine directing Israel's bombing spree in Gaza*'. Quote: "The Israeli army has marked tens of thousands of Gazans as suspects for assassination, using an AI targeting system with little human oversight and a permissive policy for casualties +972 and Local Call reveal. Formally, the Lavender System is designed to mark all suspected operatives in the military wings of Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, including low ranking ones, as potential bombing targets. The sources told +972, and Local Call that, during the first weeks of the war, the army almost completely relied on Lavender, which clocked as many as 37,000 Palestinians as suspected militants – and their homes – for possible airstrikes. During the early stages of the war, the army gave sweeping approval for officers to adopt Lavender's kill lists, with no requirement to thoroughly check why the machine made those choices or to examine the raw intelligence on which they were based. One source stated that human personnel often served only as a, quote, 'rubber stamp' for the machine's decisions, adding that, normally, they would personally devote only about '20 seconds' to each target before authorising a bombing – just to make sure the Lavender-marked target is male."

Now, let me just interrupt here and say that I would not actually describe this as unusual in terms of comparing it to what the Americans were doing during the War on Terror. In fact, the very first story that I did when we created The Intercept and I was still in the middle of the Snowden reporting, is the one that I did with my then colleague Jeremy Scahill, who came to Brazil and we worked together on these documents. He had sources inside the military, and I had the Snowden documents, and we were able to join those together and report how the US was picking assassination targets by drone under President Obama using algorithms. So various people would be assigned certain points by an algorithm based on a variety of factors, such as where they went, how much in proximity they were to suspected terrorists, how often they talked to suspected terrorists and they would get a point system, a point value assigned, and based on that point value that's who they would then go kill. And one of the things we are able to show is that some of the people on the top of the list were journalists who were talking to, quote unquote, "terrorists", meaning members of the Taliban, because that's what if you're a reporter in Afghanistan or Pakistan, you, of course, are going to do is report on what the Taliban is doing, what al-Qaida is doing by going and interviewing them. But because

they had conversations, they were classified as terrorists by this algorithm, even though there was no human assessment of whether or not they really were. And we know now from other reporting as well, including reporting we did at The Intercept in the drone papers, a mountain of secret documents we got about the drone program, that when the United States would kill people, in nine out of ten instances that they killed someone, they had no idea what the identity of the person was that had been killed. They would just call them terrorists, because President Obama and the Obama administration redefined what a militant was to mean any male that was of fighting age, meaning 18 to 54, they were presumptively classified as terrorists unless someone could prove otherwise. And so they would just kill 14 people in a drone strike. They would release a press release saying we killed 14 militants, or terrorists, media outlets would just mindlessly publish that, even though they had no idea who they killed.

But here's the part that is extremely alarming and unusual, to put it mildly. Quote: "Moreover, the Israeli army systematically attacked the targeted individuals while they were in their homes – usually at night, while their whole families were present – rather than during the course of military activity. According to the sources, this was because, from what they regarded as an intelligence standpoint, it was easier to locate the individuals in their homes. Additional automated systems, including one called quote, 'Where's daddy?' – 'where is daddy?' is what they named it– also revealed here for the first time, were used specifically to track the targeted individuals and carry out bombings when they had entered their families residences. In an unprecedented move, according to two of the sources, the army also decided during the first weeks of the war that –and this is the IDF calculation, numerical ratio – for every junior Hamas operative that Lavender marked – so if the AI system targeted what they thought was a junior Hamas operative – it was permissible to kill up to 15 or 20 civilians". So you have a large family of 15 and 20 people, including young children and you think that one of the males in the house is a junior Hamas operative under IDF Rules of Engagement, for one low level Hamas operative, they were authorised to kill up to 15 or 20 civilians. A ratio of 15 or 20 civilians for every one militant. In the past, they said the military did not authorise any collateral damage during assassinations of low ranking militants. "The sources added that in the event that the target was a senior Hamas official with the rank of battalion or brigade commander, the army on several occasions authorised the killing of more than 100 civilians in the assassination of a single commander". This is not a battlefield war where you have two armies fighting one another. This is a country with one of the world's most sophisticated militaries, financed and armed by the most powerful country on the planet, the United States, against a population that's overwhelmingly civilian, 50% are under the age of 18, overwhelmingly women and children and innocent men. And so on many occasions, the Israelis, according to this reporting – and it's a very credible magazine, +972, composed of Israelis – authorised knowingly killed 100 civilians in order to get one senior Hamas commander. Not the head of Hamas, just somebody at the battalion commander level or above. Who's willing to kill a hundred innocent people to get one, or even 15 or 20 to get one?!

Now, if you're somebody who thinks that's morally justified, then my question to you would be what objection do you have to what Hamas did in Israel on October 7th? My condemnation of Hamas was based on the fact that I believe targeting civilians of any kind of number is always wrong. But look at the ratio of civilians to military members that died in Israel on October 7th. It was nowhere near 15 to 20 to one, let alone 100 to 1. Here's the Israeli news newspaper Haaretz in November of 2023. *How Haaretz Is Counting Israel's Dead From the October 7 Hamas Attack*. And they were talking about all the different sources they use. "The English newspaper's list currently bears 1219 names of civilians and members of Israeli security forces who died on October 7th, and in the subsequent Israel-Hamas War. Every name has been authenticated and cleared for publication, either by victims' families or the Israeli Defence Forces." So, originally, the Israeli said that 1400 people died in October 7th, they then lowered the number to 1200. But according to this, where they're counting not just the people who died in Israel on October 7th, but also the Israelis who have died in Gaza from October 7th to November 23rd, the number is 1200, which means something less than 1200 people, roughly 1100, 1150 died on October 7th in Israel. Quote: "Of the total number of fatalities on our current list, 851 are civilians, (including 59 from the police force and 13 from the emergency services) and 368 are IDF soldiers. Of these, 1105 died on October 7." So that's the ratio of October 7th; 1105 people died on October 7th. Let's call that 1105 Israelis. 851 of those are civilians. Which means that 350 at least, more than that, 380 are IDF soldiers. And if you add police, active police, you're talking about another above 400. So it's basically a ratio of 2 to 1. In other words, Hamas attacked police stations, they had military targets and they killed 400 security agents, IDF soldiers, 368, another 75 or so people in the police and emergency services, and that's about half of the number of civilians who died, which is around 800. So 2 to 1. And we were told this was the worst atrocity ever committed since the Holocaust. And yet, the Israeli ratio is not 2 to 1. They've had strikes where they were purposely willing to kill 100 civilians to get one person. For low level ones, 10 to 15 civilians for everyone. And we just saw in this attack on this convoy that they were willing to kill seven aid workers to get one low level armed Hamas militant. So if you're going to justify this, it's certainly not nor ordinary for a military to knowingly authorise the killing of up to 100 civilians at a time to get one person, or even 10 to 15. But if you think that's justified, you're gonna have a very hard time finding a way to condemn what Hamas did on October 7th, given that their ratio of civilians killed to soldiers was 2 to 1, not 15 to 1 or 101.

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