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William Van Wagenen

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William Van Wagenen

## Devil in the details:

### How HRW laundered Israel's 7 October falsehoods

Human Rights Watch's recent report not only whitewashes Israel's killing of its own citizens during Operation Al-Aqsa Flood, but also omits critical evidence of the occupation army's orders to deliberately target fellow 'civilians.'



(Photo Credit: The Cradle)

Human Rights Watch (HRW) issued a new [report](#) on 17 July entitled "I Can't Erase All the Blood from My Mind," in which the US-based rights group brazenly claims that Hamas'

leadership issued orders for its fighters to deliberately kill Israeli civilians during their attack on Israeli military bases and settlements in the Gaza envelope on 7 October.

Then, based on that unsubstantiated premise, HRW declares that Hamas leaders are guilty of committing crimes against humanity for launching last year's Operation Al-Aqsa Flood.

However, any close reading of the report reveals that HRW bases these allegations on dubious evidence. The rights group deliberately ignores the much stronger evidence – presented by numerous Israeli military sources – that [Israeli military leaders issued orders](#) to their forces to kill Israeli civilians deliberately.

### **HRW omits the Hannibal Directive**

But the massive 67,000-word HRW report fails to mention the controversial Israeli military doctrine, known as the [Hannibal Directive](#), which directs Israeli forces to kill Israeli civilians and soldiers rather than allow them to be taken captive by an enemy.

As *The Cradle* and other independent news outlets have [documented](#), multiple reports in the Hebrew language media show how the occupation military used Apache attack [helicopters](#), Zik [drones](#), and Merkava [tanks](#) to fire heavy weapons at Israelis within Israeli territory, including in settlements (kibbutzim), military bases, the town of Sderot, and the grounds of the Nova music festival.

HRW even ignored a detailed account [published](#) in major Israeli daily *Haaretz* just this month, which outlined the occupation state's use of the Hannibal Directive on 7 October:

**Documents obtained by *Haaretz*, as well as testimonies of soldiers, mid-level and senior IDF officers, reveal a host of orders and procedures laid down by the Gaza Division, Southern Command and the IDF General Staff up to the afternoon hours of that day, showing how widespread this procedure was, from the first hours following the attack and at various points along the border.**

“The instruction,” said a source in the army's Southern Command, “was meant to turn the area around the border fence into a killing zone.”

By omitting Israel's own reporting, HRW misleads by implying that Hamas and other Palestinian resistance groups killed virtually all of the 1,195 Israelis who died during the 7 October resistance operation.

### **The Nova Festival**

The HRW report covers events at multiple locations that day, starting with the Nova music festival, an [event](#) “dedicated to peace and love” attended by some 4,000 settlers, which took place next to Israel's Re'im military base and right on the border with the open-air prison that is Gaza.

HRW uses passive language to note the number of people killed at the festival, suggesting that Hamas and other Palestinians killed all 364 of them. The report quotes testimony from the Nova festival security manager Roi G., who said he counted at least 300 bodies on the ground after the fighting ended.

“Many were burned, including some lying on the sides of the roads where gunmen attacked, along with many burned-out cars,” HRW writes.

HRW also quotes Nachman Dyksztejn, a member of the [dubious volunteer rescue organization](#) ZAKA. According to the report, when Dyksztejn and his colleagues reached the festival site, “Many of the bodies were still smoldering from being burned – Dyksztejn said his plastic gloves and the body bags started melting as they wrapped some of the bodies.”

But how were so many bodies and cars burned? One plausible explanation is that Israeli helicopters used high-caliber incendiary munitions to turn the festival area into a free-fire zone, following the issuance of the Hannibal directive to prevent Hamas and other Palestinian fighters from taking partygoers captive back to Gaza.

HRW, however, completely ignores [reports](#) from the Israeli police confirming that Israeli attack helicopters opened fire on the festival site – which it doesn’t bother to investigate – instead stating, “It is unclear what led to the cars being set on fire.”

HRW also avoids this critical question when discussing the Israeli military’s response to the Hamas attack on Nova. The report claims HRW was “not able to obtain sufficient information about the Israeli military response to the attack on the Supernova music festival to accurately report on what occurred once soldiers arrived in the area.”

This omission allows HRW to avoid discussing [reports](#) that anti-terror police commandos from the Israeli Border Patrol were dispatched to the Nova site early in the morning on 7 October and set up roadblocks, trapping partygoers as helicopters began opening fire.

### **ZAKA’s links to Israeli intelligence**

Continuing with its passive rhetoric, the HRW report also avoids mention of attacks by Israeli helicopters when discussing the events at Kibbutz Be’eri, instead brashly implying that the 97 Be’eri residents killed that day were all slain by Hamas and other Palestinians.

HRW once again cites ZAKA member Dyksztejn, who showed its researchers the photograph of a body he “found in the rubble of a collapsed house” in Be’eri, adding that there were bodies of “terrorists all around.”

HRW writes that it was “unable to identify the body or the cause of death,” but implies that the victim was killed by Hamas or other Palestinian fighters.

HRW adds that another ZAKA member “found one of the legs severed five to seven meters from the body.”

It is unclear why HRW cites testimony from ZAKA, whose members have [spread](#) many of the more ridiculous atrocity falsehoods – later fully debunked by media and experts – including the myth of the beheaded 40 babies.

As [detailed](#) previously on *The Cradle*, ZAKA has links to Israeli intelligence, and many of its members who have provided testimony to Israeli and foreign media outlets are also members of the Israeli army. Ironically, even the testimony given by ZAKA members suggests Israeli forces killed the victims.

If ZAKA members found bodies missing limbs in collapsed houses near the bodies of dozens of dead Hamas fighters, this indicates that Israeli forces attacked the homes with heavy weapons from drones, tanks, or helicopters, killing both Israelis and Hamas fighters.

### **Mass Hannibal, constant missile attacks**

Multiple testimonies have appeared in the Israeli press confirming that occupation forces opened fire on homes in the kibbutzim using helicopters, tanks, and drones, causing massive destruction and inevitably killing large numbers of Israeli civilians.

In November, *Mishpacha Magazine* [reported](#) that Squadron 161, which operates Israel’s fleet of Hermes 450 Zik drones, carried out strikes on Israeli kibbutzim and military bases “on an undreamt-of scale.”

In late October, *Haaretz* [reported](#) that “According to Be’eri members, some of the kibbutz was destroyed by the army’s attack helicopters, which shot dead hundreds of terrorists ... one-third of the houses are irreparable.”

Noam Lanir, a former drone pilot in the army, [wrote](#) on X on 7 October that his close friend, an Apache helicopter pilot, had “shot into the kibbutzim like a madman.”

Erez Tidhar, a rescue and evacuation volunteer for the Eitam unit of the army who deployed to Be’eri, [described](#) how he witnessed strikes on the kibbutz from both Apache helicopters and tanks:

**Every minute a missile comes down on you, every minute.**

The extensive HRW report, however, only *once* acknowledges a case in which an Israeli helicopter killed an Israeli civilian, and only because the Israeli military itself officially disclosed it. HRW writes that an internal inquiry found that an Israeli military helicopter “apparently killed” Nir Oz resident Efrat Katz, 68, as fighters were attempting to take her and others to Gaza in a tractor.

In that case, however, HRW makes no mention of the Hannibal Directive or that the Israeli army had turned the Gaza border into a “killing zone,” instead suggesting the helicopter killed Katz by accident.

To note, in November, Israeli air force (reserve) Colonel Nof Erez [revealed](#) to *Haaretz* that Apache helicopter pilots deliberately targeted Israeli civilians in the Gaza border area in a “mass Hannibal” event.

Testimony cited in the HRW report from Be’eri also undermines the claims that Hamas fighters were ordered to kill civilians. The report cites Nira Herman Sharabi, 54, who was taken prisoner by Hamas along with her husband and three children, and testified that when the fighters took them out of the house, they took a selfie with the family, got a shirt for her teenage daughter who was not fully dressed, and took them to a garden where another family was being held.

The fighters later put Sharabi’s husband and a 15-year-old boy from the other family in a black car and abducted them to Gaza. Rather than kill Sharabi and the other women and children, the fighters simply let them go.

HRW cites another similar case from Kibbutz Kfar Azza that indicates fighters were not under orders to kill civilians. Rotem Holin, 44, told HRW that when six gunmen dressed in black entered her home, their commander said in English, “I am a Muslim. We are not going to hurt you.”

The gunmen then asked her where “the soldiers” were, expecting to fight the Israeli army. “For the next two hours, one gunman sat in the safe room watching her and her children, while the rest ate, drank, and used the toilet, before they eventually left,” HRW writes.

#### **‘Even at the cost of civilian casualties’**

The HRW also whitewashes the well-known instance in Kibbutz Be’eri where the Israeli army fired not one, but four, tank shells at a home where Hamas fighters were holding 14 Israeli civilians captive.

Thirteen Israeli civilians were killed in the incident, but HRW appears to believe that the tank shells miraculously failed to kill any of them. Instead, HRW inexplicably suggests the Israeli civilians were shot and killed by the Hamas fighters, even though the fighters were also using them as human shields to secure safe passage back to Gaza.

HRW denies that Israeli forces killed the Israeli civilians, even though General Barak Hiram acknowledged to the *New York Times* that he [ordered](#) the tank to fire at the home “even at the cost of civilian casualties.”

HRW makes its claim even though one of the survivors, Yasmin Porat, who HRW interviewed elsewhere, testified that Israeli fire killed the civilians – and even [clarified](#) the Hamas fighters treated her and the other Israeli captives “humanely” and that “their objective was to kidnap us to Gaza. Not to murder us.”

According to Porat, Israeli forces “undoubtedly” killed the Israeli captives. “They eliminated everyone, including the hostages,” the mother of three told Israeli broadcaster *Kan*.

### **Ignoring key facts or propaganda for genocide?**

HRW relies in part on “planning documents” allegedly carried by Hamas fighters during Operation Al-Aqsa Flood to claim the Hamas leadership ordered them to kill and torture civilians.

HRW somehow deems the documents credible while acknowledging they were “reportedly found by Israeli authorities” and HRW “was unable to verify their authenticity.”

At the same time, HRW refuses even to mention the evidence acquired by *Haaretz*, including documents from the army and testimonies from soldiers and mid-level and senior army officers indicating that the Israeli military leadership issued orders to kill Israeli civilians.

This raises further questions not only about the tarnished [credibility](#) of the US-based Human Rights Watch as an organization but also about the influence the Israeli government can exert over HRW researchers and directors to help spread its propaganda and justify its ongoing genocide of Palestinians in Gaza.

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