

Hamas Casualties in "Operation Cast Lead" - Final Findings and Conclusions

Dr. Tal Pavel*

Summary

This survey is a continuation of the previous one¹, which referred to the initial findings relating to the Hamas casualties in "Operation Cast Lead", which took place between 27.12.2008-18.1.2009. The period of the survey has been widened and instead of six weeks, it now covers four complete months: 27.12.2008 – 27.3.2009.

Within this framework, all the hundreds of messages posted by participants on the Organization's online forums, were systematically examined. At least 564 names of those killed, (compared to 433 in the first survey), were mentioned in these messages, and there is a high likelihood that they are Hamas fighters, who were killed during "Operation Cast Lead"; casualties *affiliated* with the organization or one of its units, or who *bear a title* identifying them as Hamas casualties (a fighting shahid, a Qassami shahid" etc.) Also, during the data gathering process of the survey, we revised data gathered earlier, including the elimination of a number of names which were found to be duplicated.

* Dr. Tal Pavel, has a Ph.D. in M.E. Studies from Bar Ilan University. He is a Middle East and Islamic World Internet and Technology specialist - info@TalPavel.com

¹ "Hamas casualties from "Operation cast Lead"; Initial Findings and conclusions," International Institute for Counter-Terrorism, The Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya, 27.04.2009.

The Aim

The present survey was meant to create a comprehensive, reliable and all-inclusive picture, with regard to the Hamas casualties during "Operation Cast Lead", based on many more messages and over a longer period of time. This was done in order to validate the conclusions reached from the initial findings, as a result of all the data gathered.

Findings

Those killed during the first day of the Operation – We ascertained from the data gathered, that of the 564 killed during the Operation, 221 were killed on the first day (27.12.2008)², 90 others were killed on the remaining 21 days of the Operation, and with regard to 253 others, no date of death is mentioned. The significance of this is that over 39% of the casualties were killed on the first day of the Operation, and it is possible, that there are also others amongst the remaining 45% whose date of death is unknown.

Table No. 1 – Casualties According to the Day of the Operation

Item	No. of Casualties	Percentage
Total No. of Casualties	564	100%
No. of Killed on first day	221	39.18%
No. of Killed on Remaining 21 days of the Operation	90	15.96%
No. of Killed without known date of death	253	44.85%

² With regard to five of them, there are two different dates (from various messages) and regarding eight others, this was stated verbally (without a date) that they were killed on the first day of the Operation.

As the number of casualties on each of the remaining days of the operation is significantly lower than those killed on the first day,³ if we adhere to the same ratio which exists between those killed on the first day and those killed on the remaining 21 days of the Operation, also taking into account those without a date of death (253), we reach a total of 400 casualties (221 known + 179 estimated) during the first day of the Operation, which comprise approximately 71% of all the casualties. This could point to the considerable accuracy of the I.D.F.'s first strike.

The Women's Place – In all the messages posted on the Hamas forums, no reference was made to women amongst the casualties, with the exception of two, Wafaa' al-Dasuqi and Ni'ma al-Maghazi, where it was explicitly mentioned that they were "fighting shahids" and that they were killed on the first day of the Operation.

³ The largest number of those killed on the remaining days of the operation, occurred on the 7.1.2009 when 10 people were recorded

Table No. 2 – Hamas Casualties According to Unit

Hamas Unit	No. of Casualties	Those who served in the Palestinian Police
Al Nusirat Battalion	22	3
Dir al-Balach Battalion	17	4
Jabalya Battalion	33	15
Al-Burej Battalion	8	3
Al-Mughazi Battalion	6	1
Al-Tufah Battalion	2	2
Salah-Al-Din Battalion	1	1
Al-Shati Battalion	1	-
Tel-Al-Islam Battalion	1	1
Artillery Unit	12 (3 belonging to battalions)	4
Special Unit	7 (4 belonging to battalions and other units)	2
Suicide Bomber Unit	4 (1 belonging to another unit)	3
Missile Unit	3 (1 also belonging to the artillery unit)	
Armored Corps Unit	6	1
Members of Palestinian Police		205
No organizational affiliation	261	

The Situation Regarding Civilians – An attempt was made to avoid including those who might even remotely be classified as civilians. Therefore, only those with a high likelihood of being affiliated with the Hamas, were included. There are cases, where a casualty is identified as a "shahid", which could ostensibly point to his being a civilian and not a member of the organization or a fighter in the military arm: from amongst 261 with no organizational affiliation (table 2) there are allegedly 84 killed, who are also not identified with the organization, as they have no title affixed to their name ("Qassami shahid", "Qassami fighter shahid", etc.). Amongst these there are: 58 defined as "shahids", 20 as a "hero shahid", 5 without a title. However, 3 of the 84, were photographed against the background of the organization's posters bearing arms, with the Hamas bandana on their heads, and with regard to two others, it was stated that they were killed whilst their post was being bombed or in buildings where other Hamas fighters were killed.

Therefore, a total of 79 casualties of the 564 unaffiliated with the Hamas, remain without a title. However, from the analysis of the data, it would seem that the definition of a casualty as only a "shahid", does not necessarily mean that the person killed was a civilian;

1. In addition to the 58 killed identified as "shahids", but without and organizational affiliation, there are 21 other casualties identified as "shahids" who are directly affiliated with one of the Hamas units.
2. Out of those defined as "shahids" but without organizational affiliation, two are photographed bearing arms or wearing uniforms, against the background of the organization's posters, wearing the organization's headscarf (Munir Amin Hamouda and Mohammad Abu Matir).
3. There are many cases where casualties are identified by various titles including "shahid" in one message, whilst in others they are identified as belonging directly to the organization, with a title, position, photograph etc. For instance, in the following cases:
 - Abd Al-Hamid Hamed Hamada, now identified as "The commander Shahid"
 - Sharf Mohammad Abu Shamala now identified as "a Qassami shahid"

- Yussuf Marshad Al-Najar now identified as a "Fighter shahid"
- Ahmed Hussein and Bassel Abu Jabara now identified as "The hero shahid"

Obviously, the opposite is true with regard to individual casualties, who were previously identified in various ways as the organization's casualties, and are now identified as Hamas casualties (owing to their definite affiliation with the organization, they were classified as organizationally affiliated now as well). These include:

- Imad Salman Al-Darausha ("the Qassami fighter shahid")
- Taufiq Ali Al-Filat ("the Qassami Hero shahid")
- Vassim Azara and Moein Mohammad Al-Kan ("fighter shahid")
- Mamun Al-Sid, Issam Al-Gharbawi and Ibrahim Abu Al-Rus ("the hero shahid")

4. Referring to a casualty as a "hero shahid" and not specifically as a "Qassami shahid" or a "Qassami fighter shahid", is also not proof that the casualty does not belong to the organization:

There are at least two cases where casualties identified as a "Hero shahid" are photographed against the background of the organization's posters or carrying arms (Ahmad Khader Zabih and Annas Nayim). Sometimes there is a reference to a casualty as a "Hero shahid" and in later messages, as a "Fighter shahid" (A-Nur Atallah, Hussam Ziam and others), "a Qassami shahid" (Tareq abu Tabih), "a Qassami fighter" (Mohammad Ahmad Shweidah) and even the "Qassami commander shahid" (Hussein Faez Shamiya).

5. There is a reference to a casualty as a "shahid" and sometimes also to a "hero shahid", even if he is a Palestinian policeman. We should point out that even the Palestinian Police Commander in Gaza, Tawfik Jaber, is identified as "General shahid".
6. All the casualties on the list are men with the exception of two women who from the beginning were identified as fighters belonging to the organization. The reports hardly mention women, children or civilians explicitly.

From the above, it is apparent that ostensibly, 79 of the casualties are not identified directly with the organization, not according to unit, nor by a title attached to their names. However, there is a strong likelihood that amongst these too, there are many with Hamas organizational affiliation.

An examination of the casualties from amongst the ranks of the Palestinian Police in Gaza shows that there too there are many from operational units:

Table 3 – Casualties of Palestinian Police in Gaza according to Unit

Unit in Palestinian Police	No. of Casualties
Intervention and Public Order Force	40
Disciplinary	25
Security	19
The Naval Force	16
Anti-Drug Unit	11
Mounted Police	11
Rescue	6
Orchestra	6
Interrogation	5
Law Court Guards	4
Legislative Security Against Aggression	
Guards	6
Unaffiliated with any unit	51

Connection to the Palestinian Police – From the data in the tables, we can see the close connection between the Hamas and the Palestinian Police in Gaza.

Double Organizational Affiliation – At least 40 of the casualties who are affiliated with the Hamas fighting alignment, based on their *unit affiliation* (Table 2), hold a position in the Palestinian Police in Gaza.

Double title – At the same time, at least 70 of the casualties affiliated with the Hamas, based on their title, are also affiliated with the Palestinian Police. This can be seen from the following Table which examines the Hamas casualties in accordance with the title stated next to their name. Also, 79 of the 143 casualties of the Palestinian Police (Table No. 5) are affiliated with the Hamas based on an additional title next to their name.

Table No. 4 – Hamas Casualties According to Title

Title	No.	Rank Holders in the Palestinian Police
Shahid	96	16
The hero shahid	41	7
The fighter shahid	101	15
The Commander shahid	11	-
The Qassami shahid	41	16
The Qassami hero shahid	1	-
The Qassami fighter shahid	155	36
The Qassami Commander shahid	9	3
The Qassami Commander hero shahid	1	-
The Qassami Field Commander shahid	5	-
Without an affiliating title	26	-

The Fighting Alignment

Many of the casualties are identified with the organization's fighting alignment;

- 324 according to their title (table No. 4)
- 114 according to their affiliation with one of the various units (table No. 2).
41 casualties defined as "hero shahid" must be added.
- Most of the casualties are referred to as "Qassami fighter shahid" (155)

Table No. 5 – Palestinian Police casualties in Gaza according to rank

Rank in the Palestinian Police	No.	With additional title affiliated with the Hamas
Captain	9	7
1 st Lieutenant	3	3
2 nd Lieutenant	21	9
First sergeant major	2	1
Sergeant major	13	8
Staff sergeant	27	16
Sergeant	12	6
Corporal	21	13
Policeman	34	16
Soldier	1	

Of the 205 casualties organizationally affiliated with the Palestinian Police, 143 are ranked. The rest are members of the Palestinian police by affiliation but are not ranked in the various messages.

Conclusions

The above brings us to the following conclusions which were formulated following the initial findings and validated at the end of our data gathering process of all the names and the formulation of conclusions from the final findings:

1. It was established that most of the casualties belong to the Hamas ranks and that there is a high likelihood that the casualties identified as "shahids" or "hero shahids" also belong to the organization.
2. The final data reinforced the conclusion regarding the difference in the casualties' titles, in the various reports. The longer period gave us a wider reference to the various casualties with regard to their titles, in a way that almost completely rules out any connection between the lack of a specific title and the non-affiliation of the casualty with the Hamas organization.
3. There is a close connection between the Hamas and the Palestinian Police in Gaza in everything relating to casualties affiliated with both entities simultaneously.
4. Many casualties are from the fighting and operational units, both from the Hamas ranks and those of the Palestinian police.
5. The conclusion was reinforced regarding the marginal place of the civilians and the women, from the reports on the Hamas online forums regarding the casualties in "Operation Cast Lead".