

Israeli soldiers used an 80-year-old Gazan as a human shield. Then they killed him

Sunday 23 February 2025, by [PE'ERY Illy](#) (Date first published: 16 February 2025).

Soldiers put an explosive cord around the man's neck and forced him to scout buildings for eight hours. After his release, another division shot him dead.

A senior officer in the Israeli army's Nahal Brigade tied an explosive cord around the neck of an 80-year-old Palestinian man and forced him to serve as a human shield, ordering him to scout out abandoned houses under threat of having his head blown off. After he had served this purpose, the soldiers ordered the man to flee with his wife, but upon being spotted by another battalion they were both shot dead on the spot.

Soldiers present at the scene told the Israeli investigative outlet The Hottest Place in Hell that this incident took place in May in the Zeitoun neighborhood of Gaza City. While conducting a sweep of houses in the area, soldiers came across the elderly couple in their home, who told Arabic-speaking soldiers that they were unable to flee to southern Gaza due to their mobility difficulties; their children had already left, and the man needed a cane to walk.

"At that stage, the commander decided to use them as 'mosquitoes,'" one soldier explained, referring to a [recently exposed procedure](#) by which the army forces Palestinian civilians in combat zones to serve as human shields to protect soldiers from being shot or blown up.

Several soldiers detained the woman at her house, while the man, using his cane, was made to walk ahead of the brigade's soldiers. "He entered each house before us so that if there were [explosives] or a militant inside, he would [take the hit] instead of us," one soldier explained.

According to one of the soldiers, before starting the sweep, an officer took a detonation cord — an explosive fuse used to connect charges and explosives — attached it to an initiating charge, and tied it around the elderly man's neck "so he wouldn't run away, even though he was walking with a cane. He was told that if he did anything wrong or didn't follow orders, the soldier behind him would pull the cord, and his head would be torn from his body."

Illustrative photo of Israeli soldiers operating in Beit Lahiya, northern Gaza Strip, November 28, 2024. (Oren Cohen/Flash90)

After eight hours like this, the soldiers brought the elderly man back to his home and ordered him and his wife to evacuate on foot toward the "[humanitarian zone](#)" in southern Gaza. According to the testimonies, the soldiers did not inform the nearby forces from different divisions that an elderly couple was about to cross through the area. "After 100 meters, the other battalion saw them and immediately shot them," a soldier said. "They died like that, in the street."

As also indicated by additional testimonies received by The Hottest Place in Hell, the army's open-fire regulations in Gaza state explicitly that any person found moving in a combat area after the designated 'evacuation time' has passed is considered an enemy combatant — even when it is an

elderly couple in their 80s. The IDF denies this, but the protocol exists.

Last month, The Hottest Place in Hell [exposed](#) another case of the Mosquito Procedure, which was also carried out by the Nahal Brigade. According to that report, a Palestinian who had received permission to remain in a building with the soldiers was shot dead by a commander who had not been informed of his presence. In response to the article, the army stated that the incident had been investigated and that “lessons were learned.”

In response to a Haaretz investigation last August that exposed the Mosquito Procedure, the IDF Spokesperson stated: “IDF directives and orders prohibit the use of Gazan civilians found in the area for military tasks that deliberately endanger their lives. IDF orders and instructions on this matter have been clarified to the forces.” The use of civilians as human shields was also banned by the Israeli Supreme Court during the Second Intifada, following the army’s use of the strategy in what was known as the “Neighbor Procedure.” However, soldiers testified to The Hottest Place in Hell that especially since October 7, “this procedure has become routine in the military.”

“The Mosquito Procedure is fully institutionalized, and it’s a very gray area within the army,” a Nahal Brigade soldier said, explaining that the army tries to cover it up by shifting blame to junior soldiers. “It’s something that comes down as an explicit order from the battalion commander level and below. But somewhere at the brigade commander level, they completely deny it. When problems start, they push the responsibility downward and say not to do it.”

“Even when [the outcome of] investigations are published, there’s no chance the IDF will admit that this is an official order,” a soldier explained. “But if you ask any combat soldier who fought in Gaza, there’s not a single one who will tell you this doesn’t happen. There’s no battalion, at least in the regular army, that can honestly say it hasn’t used this practice.”

The use of an explosive cord as part of the Mosquito Procedure has not been reported previously. “It’s possible it happened elsewhere too, but this was an extreme incident,” one soldier said.

The IDF Spokesperson responded: “Following an inquiry based on the information provided in this request, it appears that the case is not known. Should additional details be received, further investigation will be conducted.”

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P.S.

- +972 Magazine. February 16, 2025:
<https://www.972mag.com/gaza-human-shield-mosquito/>

A version of this article was first published in Hebrew on The Hottest Place in Hell. Read it [here](#).

- Illy Pe’ery’s article on +972 Magazine:
<https://www.972mag.com/writer/illy-peery/>

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Our team has been devastated by the horrific events of this latest war. The world is reeling from Israel's unprecedented onslaught on Gaza, inflicting mass devastation and death upon besieged Palestinians, as well as the atrocious attack and kidnappings by Hamas in Israel on October 7. Our hearts are with all the people and communities facing this violence.

We are in an extraordinarily dangerous era in Israel-Palestine. The bloodshed has reached extreme levels of brutality and threatens to engulf the entire region. Emboldened settlers in the West Bank, backed by the army, are seizing the opportunity to intensify their attacks on Palestinians. The most far-right government in Israel's history is ramping up its policing of dissent, using the cover of war to silence Palestinian citizens and left-wing Jews who object to its policies.

This escalation has a very clear context, one that +972 has spent the past 14 years covering: Israeli society's growing racism and militarism, entrenched occupation and apartheid, and a normalized siege on Gaza.

We are well positioned to cover this perilous moment - but we need your help to do it. This terrible period will challenge the humanity of all of those working for a better future in this land. Palestinians and Israelis are already organizing and strategizing to put up the fight of their lives.

Can we count on your [support](#)? +972 Magazine is a leading media voice of this movement, a desperately needed platform where Palestinian and Israeli journalists, activists, and thinkers can report on and analyze what is happening, guided by humanism, equality, and justice. Join us.

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