

Of Course Hamas Killed the Baby

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The recent disclosure that Omar Misharawi, the baby son of BBC reporter Jihad Misharawi, was actually killed by an errant Hamas rocket rather than by an Israeli missile, should have absolutely no moral implications. Of course the baby was killed by Hamas. He would have been killed by Hamas even if the missile that ended his life had been fired by Israel. Hamas is totally and wholly responsible for this death, as it is responsible for every civilian death in Gaza and in Israel. It is Hamas that always begins the battle by firing rockets at Israeli civilians. Generally Israel does not respond. When it does, its rockets occasionally kill Palestinian civilians. That's because Hamas wants Palestinians civilians, especially babies, to be killed by Israelis rockets. They want Palestinian babies to be killed precisely so that they can display the kind of photographs that were shown around the world: a grieving father holding his dead baby, presumably killed by an Israeli rocket. For years, I have called this Hamas' "dead baby strategy." The recent United Nations finding simply confirms the reality of this cynical strategy.

The errant rocket that killed Omar Misharawi was fired by Hamas terrorists from a densely populated civilian area adjacent to the home of the BBC reporter Jihad Misharawi. Hamas selects such locations for firing its rockets precisely so that Israel will respond by firing into civilian areas and killing Palestinian civilians. They regard such dead civilians as "shahids", or martyrs for the cause. It is better for Hamas' publicity campaign if the rocket that kills the Palestinian baby was fired by the Israeli Defense Forces, but even if the rocket was fired by Hamas terrorists, Hamas will claim, as they do regarding this death, that the lethal rocket was fired by Israel. Often the evidence is inconclusive, though the forensic evidence in this case points clearly to a Hamas rocket.

The important point is that it doesn't really matter who actually fired the rocket that killed the baby. The baby was killed by Hamas as part of a calculated strategy designed to point the emotional finger of moral blame at the IDF for doing what every democracy would

do: namely, defend its civilians from rocket attacks by targeting those who are firing the rockets, even if they are firing them from civilian areas. As President Obama said when he visited Sderot shortly before becoming President:

The first job of any nation state is to protect its citizens. And so I can assure you that if... somebody was sending rockets into my house where my two daughters sleep at night, I'm going to do everything in my power to stop that. And I would expect Israelis to do the same thing.

Babies like Omar Misharawi will continue to die in Gaza and in Israel so long as the world media continues to serve as facilitators of Hamas' dead baby strategy. Every time a picture of a dead Palestinian baby being held by his grieving parents appears on television or on the front pages of newspapers around the world, Hamas wins. And when Hamas wins, they continue with their deadly strategy. The media, therefore, is complicit in the death of Omar Misharawi as it is in the deaths of other civilians who are victims of Hamas' dead baby strategy. Pictures of dead babies in the arms of their grieving fathers are irresistible to the media. That won't change. What should change is the caption. Every time a dead Palestinian baby is shown, the caption should explain the strategy that led to his or her death: namely that Hamas deliberately fires its rockets from areas in which babies live and into which Israel must fire if it is to stop its own babies from being killed.

It may sound heartless to claim that Hamas wants its own babies to be killed as part of its strategy of demonizing Israel. But there is no escaping the reality and truth of this phenomenon. Indeed it has been admitted by Hamas leaders such as Fathi Hammad:

For the Palestinian people, death has become an industry, at which women excel, and so do all the people living on this land. The elderly excel at this, and so do the mujahideen and the children. This is why they have formed human shields of the women, the children, the elderly, and the mujahideen, in order to challenge the Zionist bombing machine. It is as if they were saying to the Zionist enemy: "We desire death like you desire life."

Of course these Hamas leaders don't desire their own death. They build shelters for themselves and for the terrorists who fire the rockets at Israeli civilians. As soon as these

rockets are fired from crowded civilian areas, the terrorist scurry into below-ground shelters, leaving babies, women and other civilians in the path of Israeli rockets that target the rocket launchers. This isn't martyrdom by the leaders and terrorists. It is cowardice. That too is part of the dead baby strategy: make martyrs of babies, while the leaders and terrorists hide in shelters. In Israel, it is precisely the opposite; shelters are for civilians; soldiers put themselves in harm's way. That's why the following illustration sums it all up:

