



**News Release
For Immediate Release**

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"A response to Netanyahu and a Correction from the *Journal of Palestine Studies*"

August 21, 2014 –Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu during a press conference on 6 August 2014 cited the *Journal of Palestine Studies* as the authoritative source documenting the claim that Hamas puts children to work in “terror” tunnels, sending them to their death. This naked fabrication has been repeated by numerous pro-Israeli media outlets, starting initially with a July 2014 article in the Anglo-Jewish *Tablet Magazine* and subsequent articles in the *Jerusalem Post*, *Times of Israel* and the *Huffington Post*.

In question is a summer 2012 *JPS* article by Nicolas Pelham entitled [“Gaza's Tunnel Phenomenon: The Unintended Dynamics of Israel's Siege.”](#) Pelham is a respected British journalist who writes on Gaza and broader Arab affairs for outlets, including *The Economist* and *New York Review of Books*. The tunnels referred to in his article were the *commercial* tunnels to Egypt that were Gaza’s response to Israel’s imposition of a draconian blockade that drastically controls and at times has banned almost all goods entering the territory, from construction materials, and gasoline, down to such items as pasta.

The article, perhaps the most comprehensive available on the tunnel economy, makes very clear that these tunnels were overwhelmingly private enterprises, which were regulated by but largely not owned or operated by Hamas. Pelham’s argument is that Hamas, as the governing authority in Gaza, did not implement its own directives to prevent the use of child labor. Pelham never suggests, as the prime minister seemed to imply in his comments, that children were ever used to build tunnels for military purposes, least of all into *Israel*. Certainly it would be surprising if Hamas entrusted its best kept military secret to children.

The *Journal of Palestine Studies* must, however, admit to an unfortunate editorial error in the article by Pelham it printed: **the figure of 160 children killed in commercial tunnels is inaccurate.** In the *JPS* text, Pelham purportedly says: “At least 160 children have been killed in the tunnels, according to Hamas officials.” Rather, the figure 160 reflects the *total* number of deaths in the tunnels recorded by the Hamas authorities as of 2012. The qualifier “children” was inadvertently added by *JPS* at a late stage of editing. In fact, as of January 2013, [al-Mezan Center for Human Rights](#) in Gaza put the total number of Palestinians killed in the commercial tunnels at 235, only 9 of whom were children. It also noted that by that time another 20 Palestinians had been killed inside tunnels as a result of Israeli air strikes. We accept responsibility for this error and apologize for it.

Netanyahu's meretricious concern for Palestinian children is a callous and transparent attempt to draw attention away from his war crimes committed against a besieged and trapped refugee population with no ability to escape or protect itself against Israel's blanket bombing which has, according to the *New York Times* (20 August 2014), reduced "entire neighbourhoods to rubble." Thus far this has led to the deaths of more than 2000 Gazans and the maiming of more than 10,000 others, overwhelmingly civilians. Of the fatalities, more than 541 were children and 250 women (combined 39% of all fatalities). Of the wounded, some 3084 were children and 1970 women (combined 49% of all injured). These statistics are courtesy of the [PLO Negotiations Affairs Division as of 18 August 2014](#), but readers should note that fatalities continue to rise as the injured die, as more bodies are uncovered from the rubble, and as Israeli attacks continue.

Let there be no doubt, then, about the true source of threat to Palestinian children whether in Gaza, East Jerusalem or the West Bank. It is Israel, with its occupation, siege and perpetual resort, with its U.S.-provided war machine, to overwhelming force against the very population for whose safety and wellbeing it is responsible both morally and as the occupying power under international law.

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About the Journal of Palestine Studies

The *Journal of Palestine Studies* is the oldest and most respected English language journal devoted exclusively to Palestinian affairs and the Arab-Israeli conflict. It brings you timely and comprehensive information on the region's political, religious, and cultural concerns. With an emphasis on peaceful resolution of conflict, the journal unites sound research and analysis with a variety of well-informed perspectives by academics, policy makers, and diplomats. Published quarterly, the *Journal of Palestine Studies* is a vital resource for anyone interested in the Palestine Question. It is published by the Institute for Palestine Studies, a non-profit organization dedicated to research on Palestine. (<http://www.palestine-studies.org>)

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