

Yes, Free Palestine—From Hamas

After his victorious bout in a major combat sports event this past Saturday night, UFC fighter Bassil Hafez said, “There is something I wanna say. I have been having it in my heart for a long time. I don’t support genocide. I don’t support innocent women and children being killed for war and for money and power. We are all God’s children and we all deserve a fair chance in life. Free Palestine.”

While Hafez didn’t mention Israel by name, his message was clear. Israel is committing genocide. Israel (with America’s help?) is killing “innocent women and children ... for war and for money and power.” Israel is not giving the Palestinians “a fair chance in life.” Palestine must be free from tyrannical, murderous Israel.

To be sure, I share his sentiments that “we are all God’s children” (in terms of being His creation; see Acts 17:28), that everyone deserves a fair chance at life and that it is absolutely tragic that innocent women and children are dying in Gaza.

And given Hafez’s ethnic background, it is no surprise that he uttered those words. As the Essentially Sports website explains, “While Bassil was born in America and holds an American nationality, he comes from a mixed Arab ethnic background. His mother was Syrian Arab, while his father was also Arab, hailing from Egypt.”

No wonder, then, as a caring man who “is very proud of his mixed Arab cultural heritage,” he used his platform on live national TV to speak his mind.

The tragic truth is that, if not for Hamas, innocent women and children would not be dying in Gaza. And, as outlandish as the

genocide charge is, if not for Hamas, Israel would not be waging war in Gaza right now at all. Those are undeniable facts.

As for the actual number of casualties in Gaza, it is significant that on May 13, it was announced that, "The UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), which releases impact reports on the situation in Israel and Gaza every two to three days, revised its tallies last week to show that approximately 5,000 women and 7,800 children have been killed as of April 30."

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As explained by Nick Logan for CBC News:

The overall number of Palestinians killed hasn't changed, but from the end of March until last week, OCHA reported the deaths of at least 9,500 women and 14,500 children.

Its Friday update said that as of May 9, there were 34,904 reported fatalities in Gaza since Oct. 7, the day Hamas-led militants attacked Israel. Soon after, the Israeli military began bombarding the territory with airstrikes. It launched a ground operation in the weeks that followed.

This is not to downplay the very real and terrible suffering being endured by the people of Gaza. Not for a moment. Nor is it to make light of the fact that, even with revised figures, thousands of women and children are being killed.

But I cite these figures to remind us that no genocide is taking place. Far from it. I also cite these figures to remind us how these numbers need to be treated with caution.

Digging even deeper into these figures, we must remember that: 1) the fatalities are being reported by Hamas, as if they can be trusted to be accurate and fair; 2) the totals include

people who died for any cause, which would likely amount to roughly 1,000 per month without war; 3) they do not list how many of those who died were Hamas combatants.

Since Israel claims to have killed roughly 15,000 members of Hamas, this would actually be more than the number of women and children killed, meaning that the civilian death rate could be as low as 1 to 1.

This would be an extraordinarily low civilian death rate given the difficult nature of the warfare, one in which nearly 20% of Israeli soldiers are being killed by friendly fire.

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Yes, you read that correctly. Nearly 20%.

Even more tragically, Israeli soldiers mistakenly shot and killed three Israeli hostages who had managed to escape from their Gazan captors. Talk about an agonizing mistake.

The point is that if Israel is accidentally killing its own due to the complexities of urban warfare, especially when Hamas embeds itself among civilians, it is no surprise that innocent Palestinians are being killed too, including Christians taking shelter in a church and aid workers.

This is no genocide, and to this moment, Israel continues to work hard to minimize civilian casualties. This is the price of war, which falls squarely on the shoulders of Hamas, the murderous, barbaric provocateurs of the conflict.

What we cannot forget, then, is that the people of Gaza are suffering because of Hamas, not because of Israel.

Just think of what the situation could be today for the people of Gaza if their oppressive, radical Islamic leadership had poured the hundreds of millions of dollars of international

aid they receive into schools and hospitals and job development rather than terror tunnels and weapons. And just think of how the Gazans could be thriving with leadership that truly wanted peaceful coexistence with Israel.

If you want to free Palestine, then help free it from Hamas.

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