

Israeli war crimes apparent in Gaza assault, says HRW

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Human Rights Watch on Tuesday accused the Israeli military of carrying out attacks that “apparently amount to war crimes” during the 11-day war in May against the Hamas militant group.

The human rights organisation issued its conclusions after investigating three Israeli air strikes that it said killed 62 Palestinian civi-

lians. It said “there were no evident military targets in the vicinity” of the attacks.

The report also accused Palestinian militants of apparent war crimes by launching more than 4,000 unguided rockets and mortars at Israeli population centres. Such attacks, it said, violate “the prohibition against deliberate or indiscriminate attacks against civilians”. The report, however, focused on Israeli actions during the fight-

ing, and the group said it would issue a separate report on the actions of Hamas and other Palestinian militant groups in August.

“Israeli forces carried out attacks in Gaza in May that devastated entire families without any apparent military target nearby,” said Gerry Simpson, associate crisis and conflict director at HRW. He said Israel’s “consistent unwillingness to seriously investigate alleged war

crimes”, coupled with Palestinian rocket fire at Israeli civilian areas, underscored the importance of an ongoing investigation into both sides by the International Criminal Court.

The HRW report looked into Israeli air strikes. The most serious, on May 16, involved a series of strikes on Al-Wahda Street, a central thoroughfare in downtown Gaza City. The strikes destroyed three apartment

buildings and killed a total of 44 civilians, HRW said, including 18 children and 14 women. Twenty-two of the dead were members of a single family, the al-Kawlaks.

In its investigation, HRW concluded that Israel had used U.S.-made GBU-31 precision-guided bombs, and that Israel had not warned any of the residents to evacuate the area ahead of time. It also found no evidence of military targets in the area.