

Expert Says Israeli Artillery Killed Civilians

After claims by the Israeli army that Israeli artillery fire was not the cause of the June 9 deaths of seven civilian Palestinians who were picnicking on a beach in Gaza, Human Rights Watch, a U.S.-based non-governmental organization, called for an independent investigation. The group said that "Israel should immediately launch an independent, impartial investigation," of the incident, with the inclusion of international experts. It also called on the Palestinian National Authority to allow the investigators onto the scene.

Marc Garlasco, a former battle damage assessment officer for the Pentagon, who is now with Human Rights Watch, was the first independent examiner to visit the site in Gaza last week, reported the *Irish Examiner*.

Garlasco said that after retrieving shrapnel from the car where two children were wounded from the blast, and examining craters on the beach, and photographic evidence of the victims who died, he was "convinced this was from an Israeli shell." Whether the shell was fired from artillery guns offshore, or had been buried in the sand, was not known, he said. There were numerous other offshore strikes that day, one shell landing just 100 meters from where the people were killed.

—Michele Steinberg