

The Economist Blames Israel for the Parlous State of Gaza's Health-Care System

by Hugh Fitzgerald



Adam Levick of CAMERA [has noticed](#) that *The Economist* has chosen to blame Israel for the parlous state of Gaza's health-care system. Its method is the Lie Direct:

The Economist is the latest British media outlet to mislead on the coronavirus-related healthcare crisis in Gaza. Their March 26th article ("Gaza, already under siege, imposes lockdown"), published in their print edition, included the following:

*An outbreak would be catastrophic. Gaza is one of the world's most densely populated places. **The health-care system,***

*shattered by the long blockade, would be unable to cope. Even in normal times, **basic items like antibiotics are often in short supply.** [emphasis added]”*

However, the medicine shortage in Gaza has nothing whatsoever to do with the Israeli blockade – a fact that we proved in a previous post, which included a definitive statement from COGAT that there are NO restrictions on medicine and medical equipment and there never have been.

Why did *The Economist* not check with the Israelis before describing Gaza’s health-care system as being “shattered by the long blockade”? Its reporter could have asked a simple question: does Israel now, or has it ever, restricted any medicines or medical equipment from entering the Gaza Strip? As Adam Levick points out, the Israelis have never prevented either medicines or medical equipment from reaching Gaza. In 2019 800 trucks entered Gaza filled with medicines and medical equipment.

Levick again:

In fact, even The New York Times has acknowledged – after communication with CAMERA– that “the import of medicine [to Gaza] is not restricted.”

The shortage has more to do with Hamas’ decision to spend millions on terror tunnels and other military items, instead of on domestic needs such as healthcare. Another major factor is the longstanding inter-Palestinian rivalry, which resulted in Palestinian Authority measures that have significantly reduced medical funds to Gaza.

In the past the PA has upon occasion restricted transferring medicines to Gaza, claiming that Hamas has not been paying its bills to the PA for such shipments. This is part of the continuing war between the PA and Hamas; those suffering are

the people of Gaza. Israel has nothing to do with it.

The *Economist* article also included the following claim:

Doctors in Gaza say they received only about 200 kits to test for the virus. Most have already been used. They are pleading with Israel and the WHO to send more, but it is unclear when, or if, they will.

Levick responds:

This is inaccurate. The 200 kits are only what they [the Gazans] received directly from Israel. The actual total number is around 1,200, as Gaza received an additional 1,000 from the WHO via COGAT [Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories]:

Yesterday [April 1] over 3,000 #COVID19 testing kits, donated by @WHO, and 50,000 protective masks, donated by @UNWRA, were transferred from Jordan via Allenby Bridge with the coordination of COGAT for use by medical teams in the Palestinian healthcare system in the region.

Earlier today, [April 2] 1,000 of the coronavirus testing kits that were transferred were forwarded by the @WHO into the #Gaza Strip with the coordination of the Gaza CLA.

Moreover, The Economist article obfuscates the larger story: the extraordinary cooperation between Israel and the Palestinians in response to the pandemic. Even Nickolay Mladenov, the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, praised the coordination and cooperation established between the two parties in tackling COVID-19 – calling it “excellent.”

It's a puzzlement: why did *The Economist* 's reporter fail to ask the most obvious questions? There is the one already mentioned above about the effect of the blockade. The reporter

could have asked the Israelis whether or not they had ever prevented medicines and medical equipment from entering Gaza, and, if so, by whom? He (or she) could then have asked the PA if it had ever prevented shipments of medicine or medical equipment from reaching Gaza, in order to put pressure Hamas to pay its bills from the PA. Finally, that reporter could have checked with Nickolay Mladenov, the UN's Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Processes, to ask him whether he had any reason to believe that Israel had ever withheld medicines or medical equipment, and what he thought about the current cooperation between Israeli and Palestinian medical personnel, in both Gaza and the West Bank?

That, of course, would require a little work: a few emails, a few telephone calls. How much easier it is simply to assume that Israel's blockade explains what's wrong with the health system in Gaza. That fits the general anti-Israel narrative that *The Economist*, the BBC, the *Guardian*, and all other pillars of the media's anti-Israel establishment, feed their audiences. They are now being kept ja bit more honest, usually by CAMERA pointing out errors, and exacting a retraction or a correction which is welcome, though corrections seldom are given the prominence of the original story for which a correction is being supplied. It is a never-ending task, to note the mistakes, vulgar errors, and sheer animus in the coverage of Israel, and then to persuade the offenders to issue corrections and retractions. We should be grateful to those who, like Adam Levick, are alert to every such misstatement, and able to rapidly respond to, and demand correction of, these errors.

Let's sum up what we know about the Gaza health care system. It's in bad shape. There are two reasons for that. First is the effect of colossal corruption – the grand theft by Hamas leaders of billions in aid money. For more than two decades the Hamas Lords of Misrule have chosen to divert large sums to themselves. Khaled Meshaal and Mousa Abu Marzouk were two of

the top Hamas leaders; each has managed to amass a fortune of at least \$2.5 billion dollars, according to both Western and Arab sources. Other leaders, such as the current head of Hamas, Ismail Haniyeh, are not in their league when it comes to stealing, but have nonetheless acquired tens of millions of dollars. There are also 600 Hamas millionaires who have built villas on the Gazan seafront. That is the first reason for the underfunding of the health-care system in Gaza.

The second reason for the poor state of Gaza's health-care system is the choice Hamas has made: instead of spending on a decent health care system, Hamas leaders have chosen to spend large sums on war-making: weapons of all kinds, including expensive rockets, and hundreds of terror tunnels running from Gaza into Israel. None of this was Israel's fault. Hamas could have chosen to spend less on war-making, and more on the health of its own citizens. It did not.

Perhaps in the future a chastened *Economist* will run a piece explaining the two reasons for the wretched state of the health-care system in Gaza: first, the diversion of billions of dollars in aid money into the pockets of Hamas leaders; second, the decision by Hamas to spend more on war against Israel, and less on the health of its own citizens. Let's hope that *The Economist* will do more than simply issue a correction here and there, but make clear to its readers the full and dismaying truth about Gaza's health-care degredation.

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