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U.N. reports say Israel targeted civilians in Gaza

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* Reports say child used as human shield

* Right to food, health violated, report says

* Report also cites Hamas violations

By Robert Evans

GENEVA, March 23 (Reuters) - United Nations investigators said on Monday Israel violated a range of human rights during its invasion of Gaza, including targeting civilians and using a child as a human shield.

The accusations came in reports to the U.N. Human Rights Council which also called for an urgent end to Israeli restrictions on humanitarian supplies to Gaza and a full international investigation into the conflict.

"Civilian targets, particularly homes and their occupants, appear to have taken the brunt of the attacks, but schools and medical facilities have also been hit," said one report by Radhika Coomaraswamy, the U.N. Secretary-General's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict.

The Sri Lankan human rights lawyer visited the region in early February. She cited a long series of incidents to back her charges.

In one, she said, Israeli soldiers shot a father after ordering him out of his house and then opened fire into the room where the rest of the family was sheltering, wounding the mother and three brothers and killing a fourth.

In another, on January 15, at Tal al Hawa south-west of Gaza City, Israeli soldiers forced an 11-year-old boy to walk in front of them for several hours as they moved through the town, even after they had been shot at.

An Israeli commander in the 22-day Gaza invasion said on Monday Israel's efforts to protect troops from Palestinian fire may have contributed to unwarranted killing of civilians.

"If you want to know whether I think that in doing so we killed innocents, the answer is, unequivocally, yes," Tzvika Fogel, a reserve brigadier-general, told Reuters. Fogel added that such incidents were exceptional.

ISRAEL CRITICISES REPORT

Coomaraswamy's comments formed part of a much longer report from nine U.N. investigators including specialists on the right to health, to food, to adequate housing and education and on summary executions and violence against women.

All cited violations by Israel -- and in some cases by the Hamas Islamic movement that controls Gaza -- during the invasion from December 27 until January 17 which Israeli leaders say was launched to stop rocket attacks by Hamas from the territory.

Palestinian officials say 1,434 people in Gaza -- 960 of them civilians -- were killed in the fighting, a figure Israel contests. The report from the nine gave the total as 1,440, saying of these 431 were children and 114 women.

The overall report was criticised in the 47-nation Council by Israel's ambassador Aharon Leshno Yar, who said it "wilfully ignores and downplays the terrorist and other threats we face," and the use by Hamas of human shields.

Leshno Yar said the 43-page document was part of a pattern of

"demonising Israel" in the Council -- where an informal bloc of Islamic and African nations usually backed by Russia, China and Cuba has a built-in majority.

Another report presented to the Council on Monday came from Robert Falk, a U.S. academic and the body's special rapporteur on human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Falk, whom Israel barred from entry last year after accusing him of bias and prejudice, said Israel had subjected civilians in Gaza to "an inhuman form of warfare that kills, maims and inflicts mental harm."

His report, in which he called for an independent experts group to probe possible war crimes by Israel and Hamas and also suggested that the U.N. Security Council set up an ad hoc criminal tribunal, was issued late last week. (Editing by Dominic Evans)

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