



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Sir Robert Chote  
UK Statistics Authority  
Fry Building  
1st Floor, 2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DF

Monday, 25<sup>th</sup> March 2024

Dear Sir Robert,

We are writing to express my concern about the statistics used by official authorities in the UK relating to the casualty figures in the Israel/Gaza conflict.

All loss of life in a conflict is a tragedy and to be deeply regretted. It is of course important to recognise that, behind the statistics, every single instance of loss of life is an appalling tragedy for the loved ones, family and friends of the deceased. In a conflict where thousands are killed that is a human tragedy of appalling proportions and significant global impact.

It is therefore all the more important at a time of increased geopolitical tensions that His Majesty's Government and its agencies are alert to the fact that, in an ongoing conflict, disinformation may be deliberately utilised to secure greater diplomatic and financial support for one of the combatants in the conflict.

This is especially so when information is sourced via a recognised terrorist organisation, proscribed as such in the United Kingdom. It is accepted that Hamas control the so-called 'Health Ministry' in Gaza, from which disinformation has regularly been disseminated, and the motivation of Hamas to inculcate hatred and terror against Jewish people and the State of Israel are well known and openly documented, even in their founding Charter. It is patently obvious that Hamas cannot be treated as a reliable source.

It is therefore of paramount importance that the media, Government and Opposition in the United Kingdom do not depend on this obviously unreliable propaganda source to parrot the unproven claims of one side in an ongoing conflict.

This is not just a political matter. It is a use of statistics relevant to the UK taxpayer, not only for reasons of propriety and the global reputation of the UK, and not even also for the wish to avoid an exacerbation of an already tense global crisis, but also because the figures are presumably used by UK authorities to help calculate the *quantum* of provisions and supplies sent by the UK Government, on behalf of the UK taxpayer, to the conflict zone.

[Cont...]



Consequently, if the figures of persons injured, for example, have been dramatically exaggerated by the Hamas 'Health Ministry' then a greater amount of goods may be sent than is actually needed, which might then be misappropriated by malefactors, to be sold and the proceeds used to purchase items which may be utilised to sustain Hamas, an armed party to the conflict. It is clear from the evidence that aid to Hamas has been misappropriated in the past.

Earlier this month, a leading academic statistician, Professor Abraham Wyner, a Professor of Statistics and Data Science at the University of Pennsylvania Wharton School of Business, an 'Ivy League' university whose business school is regularly ranked as one of the highest-rated Business schools in the world, calculated that the Hamas casualty figures are ... "highly suggestive...[of]...a process unconnected or loosely connected to reality...". His report was published in *Tablet* magazine on 7<sup>th</sup> March.

Professor Wyner wrote that the reported casualty rate from Hamas increases with "metronomical linearity"- a "regularity...[that]...is almost surely not real." In other words- he assesses that the figures are far too uniform and have clearly been created to follow a precisely-increasing trajectory. The graph he uses in his report shows a highly unrealistic exponential increase with "strikingly little variation."

The Professor continues in his Report that "Most likely, the Hamas ministry settled on a daily total arbitrarily. We know this because the daily totals increase too consistently to be real."

For the full report please see: [www.tabletmag.com/sections/news/articles/how-gaza-health-ministry-fakes-casualty-numbers](http://www.tabletmag.com/sections/news/articles/how-gaza-health-ministry-fakes-casualty-numbers)

This issue was raised last week in the House of Commons with the Leader of the House, and Ms Mordaunt confirmed that "[the government] need to ensure that we have the most accurate data..." The Minister went on to say that they were collecting that data from other sources as well as Hamas, including satellite imagery.

However, in the circumstances outlined above we are concerned that the Government and Opposition are relying on inaccurate figures in a way which is injurious to the public discourse, at a time of inflamed tensions, and contrary to the UK national interest. My primary concern is that the maximum amount of aid can be sent by the UK to actually support the urgent needs of the Palestinian civilians within Gaza and not be misappropriated for nefarious purposes.

[Cont...]



As the Statistics Authority in the UK, which has proven itself willing to criticise leading political figures over their use of statistics, including recently, we would be grateful for your assessment of the situation and we look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Ellis'.

Sir Michael Ellis  
Member of Parliament for Northampton North

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Percy'.

Andrew Percy  
Member of Parliament for Brigg and Goole