

BCNM01 - Human Rights in the Middle East Book Report

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**Title :** Night in Gaza

**Author :** Mads Gilbert

Mads Gilbert is a Norwegian Doctor by practice, who over the course of the previous four military attacks on Gaza has traveled to lend his assistance to the Al-Shifa hospital, one of the primary hospitals on the Gaza Strip . Throughout this book he details the fifteen days he spent serving at Al-Shifa hospital in July of 2014 and the human suffering he witnessed. His words are brought to life through the eyes of a camera he kept with him on duty every day while serving at Al-Shifa.

The book provides a gripping and instilling first-hand insight into what actually happened in Gaza during the summer of 2014 and the hardships forced upon the civilian population as a result of Israeli military attacks. Through the eyes of Mads Gilbert we are granted a somewhat biased and unfiltered view of the harrowing events that is not often granted to us via Western media outlets due to close ties between the Western world and Israel.

*“This book is a testimony, not an academic thesis or a neutral journalistic report”*

As well as providing us with these first-hand accounts, throughout the book Mads Gilbert also details some very astounding statistics (referencing his sources) that effectively highlight the removal of the basic human rights from the people of Gaza. I will discuss how Mads Gilbert highlights the infringements upon the citizens of Gaza with respect to several of these human rights.

**Article 24 :** *Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.*

In Mads short essay titled ‘The Lads on the Beach’, he details the events that unfolded on the 16th July 2014 when four young boys were shot and killed whilst playing football on the beach. Luckily enough this event managed to capture the Western media's attention as three young boys who were wounded in the event managed to drag themselves to the nearby Al-Deira hotel where foreign journalists were staying. Throughout this short essay Mads details the boys accounts of the attack whilst treating them at Al-Shifa.

*“They shot at us even though they knew we were children playing football on the beach... It was probably an Israeli officer who didn’t like us playing football.”*

These accounts combined with the pictures accompanying them throughout the essay make it close to impossible to argue that civilians of all ages in Gaza are unjustly having their basic right to rest and leisure taken away from them.

**Article 25 (1) :** *Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care*

In another of Mads short essays titled ‘The Massacre of Shuja’iyya’, he discusses the heavy Israeli military bombardment on Shuja,iyya, a district on the eastern edge of Gaza city. The civilians living in Shuja’iyya were granted no option but to sit there helplessly and face the attacks as *“paramedics could not reach many of the injured due to the violent bombardment, while ambulances were also fired at, and ambulances workers wounded and killed.”* Some of the photos of the injured that did manage to be rescued and evacuated to Al-Shifa hospital are extremely graphic and highly disturbing. The town of Shuja’iyya posed no military threat to the state of Israel and it is clear that these attacks were carried out with the sole purpose of inflicting harm on the civilian population.

*“The only possible reason for doing that is to kill a lot of people in as short a period of time as possible.”*

Both the population of the town of Shuja’iyya and the larger population of Gaza are evidently having their basic rights described under Article 25 (1) of the UDHR taken away from them at the merciless hands of the state of Israel.

**Article 26 (1) :** *Everyone has the right to education.*

**Article 26 (2) :** *Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.<sup>1</sup>*

While Mads is discussing the attack on Al-Durrah Children’s Hospital which occurred on the 24th July he also mentions the bombing of a UN school in Beit Hanoun that was mercilessly shelled a few days later. The school was one of many shelters that the UN established to accommodate homeless or evacuated Palestinians. The statement which follows is one that drives the reader to utter disbelief that such evil could exist in the world.

*“The Israeli military leadership had been given the school’s precise coordinates by the UN through formal channels.”*

In spite of this the school was still mercilessly shelled killing 13 people, 5 of which were children and wounding 150 people, a further 55 of which were children. Many of the injured were rushed to Al-Shifa hospital and treated by Mads and the other members of staff. Mads provides more graphic and disturbing imagery of some of the patients and the wounds they suffered as a result of the attacks. It is clearly evident that these attacks can not be defended in any shape or form. They are in blatant opposition to Article 26 of the UDHR and are carried out with the sole purpose of destroying respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms - not strengthening them.

Whilst I could continue on in this report detailing the many other Articles of the UDHR that the state of Israel are depriving from the civilians of Gaza I feel that those highlighted above serve their purpose effectively. One could argue that Mads Gilbert’s work is that of propaganda against the state of Israel and the war in Gaza, as the Jerusalem Post has done, calling him *“a full-time propagandist from Norway who exploits medicine to promote hate”*<sup>2</sup>. I personally feel that it is impossible to argue with the imagery he provides to reinforce his accounts of the atrocities and hardships that the people of Gaza have experienced for decades at the merciless hands of the Israeli military.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Mads-Gilbert-and-the-theater-of-the-absurd-407051>