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Even repressive Israel spiteful of firing on unarmed stone pelters

By Iftikhar Gilani

JERUSALAM, August 4: Even the country perceived to be cracking hardest on street protesters and terrorism abhors the idea of firing live ammunition on unarmed stone throwers contrary to what streets of Kashmir are witnessing over past few months. Former advisor of Israeli prime ministers and defence forces Adv. Daniel Reisner says his forces used firing only as last resort for self-defence during first Palestine uprising Intifada-I between 1987-1993 that forced Tel Aviv to start secret talks with Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) leading to Oslo accord. He, however, made distinction between Israeli responses to Intifada-I and Intifada-II of 2000, which unlike the former was a militant uprising. Reisner who also served as a senior member of Israel's peace delegations with Jordan and the Palestinians said firing directly at unarmed stone throwers was spiteful and should be avoided at all costs. "During the 1987 intifada, we actually invented quite a bit of riot-control equipment. We invented a stone-throwing vehicle, and we invented a helicopter-dropped net," he said. Israel also sent groups of experts to tour every single country in the world which has such capabilities -- 26 different countries and military organisations. And there are no non-lethal weapons systems on this planet which are effective over 100 meters. "We developed new systems to meet the new threat, which means they were effective at longer ranges, to keep the people away and therefore also prevent them from coming near us into effective ranges of live-fire weapons," he told a group of Indian journalists, who wanted to know Israeli response to unarmed civilian protesters.

"We also used a device that emits penetrating bursts of sound that leaves targets reeling with dizziness and nausea," he said. Protesters covered their ears and grabbed their heads, overcome by dizziness and nausea, after the vehicle-mounted device began sending out bursts of audible, but not loud, sound at intervals of about 10 seconds. The device emits a special frequency that targets the inner ear. Exposure for several minutes at close range could cause auditory damage, but the noise is too intolerable for people to remain in the area for that long, he said.

He conceded that some non-lethal weapons like rubber-coated steel bullets have caused dozens of Palestinian fatalities. Israel forces had come out with tranquiliser bullets as well. But they were not approved as they would have proved fatal for children.

Further, again the Israeli law officer says, the forces were also advised to identify instigators and fire only on their feet. And if it was not possible, simply retreat unless mob becomes life threatening to lives. Agreeing that technology was a solution to control crowds, Reisner revealed induction of sticky pellets as well. He claims that Israel changed its anti-terrorism laws only after Intifada-II in 2000, when the forces had to confront suicide bombers, rocket, missile and sniper attacks.

STRIKING RESEMBLENCE: The current Kashmir uprising and first Palestine Intifada has striking resemblances. Palestinian civilians protested Israeli occupation in a loosely organised confrontation in which Palestinian youths burned automobiles and pelted Israeli troops with rocks. The uprising wrested an important political concession from a nation which had previously proven its military dominance of the region in a series of conventional conflicts. It also resulted in Egypt withdrawing claims on Gaza Strip and Jordan recognising West Bank as Palestine territory.

The Intifada was not initiated by any single individual or organisation, with the PLO, comprising Fatah, the Popular Front, the Democratic Front and the Palestine Communist Party having little control.

The intifada was not a military endeavor in either a conventional or guerrilla sense. The PLO - which had limited control of the situation - never expected the uprising to make any direct gains against the Israeli state, as it was a grassroots, mass movement and not their venture. However, the Intifada did produce a number of results the Palestinians considered positive.



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