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'Israeli firing on stone-throwing Palestinians only self defence'

** Former adviser of Israeli prime minister says firing directly at unarmed stone throwers spiteful, must be avoided*

By Iftikhar Gilani

JERUSALAM: Former adviser of Israeli prime ministers and defence forces, Daniel Reisner, on Tuesday said that Israeli forces resorted to firing on stone-throwing Palestinian protesters only as a means of "self defence" during the first Palestine uprising, Intifada-I, between 1987-1993.



He said the first Intifada forced Tel Aviv to start secret talks with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), leading to the Oslo Accord.

He, however, made distinction between Israeli responses to Intifada-I and Intifada-II of 2000, which he said was a "militant uprising".

Talking to a group of Indian journalists, who wanted to know Israeli response to unarmed civilian protesters, as in Indian-held Kashmir, Reisner said firing directly at unarmed stone throwers was spiteful and must be avoided at all costs.

Reisner also served as a senior member of Israel's peace delegations with Jordan and Palestine.

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"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 that had such capabilities – 26 different countries and military organisations. "We developed new systems to meet the new threat, which means they were effective at longer ranges, to keep the people away and prevent them coming near us into effective ranges of live-fire weapons," he said.

"We also used a device that emitted 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 had caused dozens of Palestinian fatalities. Israel forces had come out with tranquilliser bullets as well. "But they were not approved as they would have proved fatal for children," Reisner said.

Further, Israeli forces were advised to identify instigators and fire only at their feet, he said.

"And if it was not possible, orders were to simply retreat unless the mob became life threatening," he added.

He claimed that Israel changed its anti-terrorism laws only after Intifada-II in 2000, when the forces had to confront suicide bombers, rockets, missile and sniper attacks.

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The current IHK uprising and first Palestine Intifada have striking resemblances. Palestinian civilians protested Israeli occupation in loosely organised confrontations, in which Palestinian youths burned automobiles and pelted Israeli troops with rocks.

The uprising wrested an important political concession from a nation that had previously proven its military dominance of the region in a series of conventional conflicts.

It also resulted in Egypt withdrawing claims on the Gaza Strip and Jordan recognising the West Bank as a Palestinian territory.

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