

Date and Time: Friday, May 3, 2024 4:15:00PM EEST

Job Number: 223445927

Documents (100)

1. Israel warns of upgraded assault on Gaza

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

2. Is Israel justified in attacking Gaza? LETTERS

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

3. <u>'The people are really in a panic ... Gaza has no safe places' As thousands of Palestinians flee from Israel 's onslaught, Damien Henderson reports on an intensifying campaign Refugees rush to escape air attacks | Eyewitnesses tell of devastation | Rallies in UK | Political impact in Middle East | World leaders react to the crisis | Crucial history</u>

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

4. The Gaza massacre in perspective

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

5. Justified strike at heart of terror

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

6. 'All-out war' vow as carnage grows

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

7. THE OFFENSIVE Street battles break out in Gaza City

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

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Jan 14, 2009

8. Israeli troops mass on Gaza border as air strikes continue

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

9. <u>Troops gather as Israel prepares iron fist to deliver devastating blow There are splits in both leaderships as</u> the death toll rises to more than 900, Martin Fletcher and Sheera Frenkel report from Jerusalem

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

10. Push for ceasefire as Gaza toll soars



Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

11. Children paying price in Gaza fighting

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

12. Israel drops bombs, leaflets as it warns Gaza of a wider war

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

13. THE ISRAELI OFFENSIVE IN GAZA: PRO: Yes, free Gaza --- from terrorist tyranny

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

14. Israeli troops move on Gaza, five children killed

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

15. Combatants reject UN call

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

16. Israel on moral high ground battling ememy's dirty war

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

17. Call for a truce in Gaza rejected by the Israelis

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

18. Israel mulls ceasefire in Gaza Strip; Still ready for ground invasion

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

19. Israel tells Gazans to brace for escalation in war

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

20. Israel pounds Gaza City after warning of escalation

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

21. Foreigners flee battered Gaza Israel presses aerial bombardment fears of a ground invasion rising

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

22. Australian Jews protest against Israel 's action

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

23. WE'LL BURY GAZA ISRAEL INVASION THREAT AS TOLL HITS 290

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

24. Fears in Gaza of a ground attack Foreigners are allowed to leave as Israeli jets pound enclave for 7th day

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

25. Finger Pointing Over Israel and Gaza

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

26. Ordinary Joe's guide to Gaza

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

27. UN chief for Middle East as Israelis encircle Gaza

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

28. Rockets are fired from Lebanon into north Israel Possibility of second front in war seen

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jan 14, 2009

29. Hundreds killed in air assault on Gaza Strip

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

30. Ordinary people in an extraordinary environment In 2007, the Sunday Tribune's Mick McCaffrey visited the al-Fakhora school that was bombed by Israel last Tuesday

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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31. 'Never again,' says survivor

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

32. Israeli tanks expected in Gaza as foreigners are allowed to flee

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

33. Ground offensive expected as Israel allows foreigners to flee

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

34. Israel sends more troops to Gaza

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

35. Gazans Express Grief and Rage Over Deaths Outside U.N. School

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jan 14, 2009

36. Government line on Gaza suggests we have forgotten our own history

Client/Matter: -None-



Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jan 14, 2009

37. ISRAELIS IN GAZA GROUND ASSAULT

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

38. There are no moral equals in Gaza conflict

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

39. Israeli troops at Gaza border

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

40. The Mideast's Ground Zero

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

41. Joy is in short supply for Eid Gaza's blockade means that this is the hardest holiday its people can remember.

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

42. Leading article: Gaza ground assault: When victory is a hollow word

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

43. Touted as traitors

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

44. Children caught in the Gaza crossfire

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

45. Foreign residents flee as bombardment continues

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

46. Deadly attacks pound Gaza; More than 300 dead in worst Israeli assault in decades

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

47. What has to happen to end the battle over Gaza

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

48. Israel rejects ceasefire plea

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

49. GROUND ZERO THE MIDDLE EAST'S TROUBLES ARE BOILING OVER IN GAZA

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

50. Banned shells used in blitz, say medics

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

51. Escalation Feared as Israel, Continuing Bombing, Lets Foreigners Leave Gaza

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

52. Another 14 children are killed in Gaza nightmare

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

53. One of the bloodiest days in decades of Israeli - Palestinian fighting Israeli assault kills over 200

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jan 14, 2009

54. Yes, Israel has been sorely provoked. But there can only be one winner if it carries on like this

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

55. ISRAEL TIGHTENS NOOSE ON GAZA TANKS MASS ON BORDER AS BOMBARDMENT GOES ON

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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Jan 14, 2009

56. Prisoners flee as Israeli bombs smash jail

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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Jan 14, 2009

57. What would you do if rockets rained from the Hart?



Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

58. Secretary-General will promote truce on tour

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

59. Raising stakes, Israel sends ground forces to Gaza Territory split as troops seize key areas long fight

expected

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

60. FIGHTING RAGES NEAR GAZA CITY ISRAELIS DENY THERE'S HUMANITARIAN CRISIS; U.S. BLOCKS

U.N. CALL FOR CEASE-FIRE

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

61. Polls show Israeli public in no mood for compromise The view on the streets of Jerusalem shows strong

backing for military intervention

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

62. Reservists take over in northern Strip as infantry units push deeper into Gaza. IDF tightens grip on Gaza City. Soldier seriously wounded by friendly fire

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

63. Pray for Both Israelis and Arabs

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

64. Israel 's actions necessary so our citizens can live in peace

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

65. Honor and killings

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

66. <u>MADNESS IN GAZA ISRAEL ON BRINK OF DEADLY GAZA INVASION KIDS AMONG 280 KILLED BY</u> AIRSTRIKES WORLD PLEA FOR END TO BLOODSHED

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

67. Beddoes condemns Israeli action

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

68. Column: Military action in Gaza could backfire, lead to future radicalism

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

69. West weak while Palestinians pay

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

70. Israel sends reservists into Gaza battles; Officials say 900 killed and 3,800 wounded

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

71. Column: Israeli violence takes innocent lives

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

72. Israeli forces push deeper into Gaza City

Client/Matter: -None-



Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

73. CARNAGE 205 KILLED AS ISRAELI AIR STRIKES HIT GAZA

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

74. Gaza guns fall silent to bury dead

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jan 14, 2009

75. Daily struggle to find food and fuel in Gaza

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

76. UCLA students join Los Angeles protests over Gaza war

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jan 14, 2009

77. Chaos in Gaza as airstrikes continue

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

78. World - Gazan guerillas launch Qassam rockets

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jan 14, 2009

79. RATTLED PALESTINIANS BRACE FOR MORE

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jan 14, 2009

80. 40 killed in Gaza sanctuary Israeli mortar shells explode near UN school

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jan 14, 2009

81. Middle East violence deeper reality for some

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jan 14, 2009

82. Israeli offensive in Gaza

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jan 14, 2009

83. IDF likely to expand Gaza op before cease-fire is imposed. Army impatient for government to decide on next move. Commander of Izzadin Kassam's rocket division killed in strike. Gilad to Cairo tomorrow to seal Egyptian commitment to stop smuggling

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

News

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jan 14, 2009

84. An unusual war, everyone wins

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

85. Israel tightens its grip on Gaza Strip Dateline: Gaza January 12, 2009

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

86. Murder before your very eyes

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

87. Ceasefire plan fails to halt bloodshed; Israel contemplates expanded offensive in Gaza

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

88. Feature - View From Israel - Moral insanity and slaughter How Israel 's propaganda has conned its own

<u>leadership</u>

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

89. Israeli troops flood Gaza

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

90. Israeli forces set for Gaza ground assault

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

91. Grieving families fear new casualties Hospital morgues overflow, prisoners escape as rockets strike new

targets

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

92. Israel says no to truce but offers Gaza aid Parliament building among the targets in 6th day of air assault

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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Jan 14, 2009

93. Israel is confronting an enemy bent on destroying it

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

94. CIVILIAN DEATHS WILL BREED MORE VIOLENCE

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jan 14, 2009

95. BLOODIED GAZA SET FOR THE ENDGAME

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jan 14, 2009

96. Rockets fired from Lebanon hit northern Israel

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jan 14, 2009

97. Must Israel meekly put up with rocket attacks?

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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98. Lebanese rockets fire on Israel

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jan 14, 2009

99. Israel pushes on as cabinet meets

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to

Jan 14, 2009

100. <u>'War to the bitter end' Israel vows more attacks and, as death toll rises, residents in Gaza huddle in fear and darkness</u>

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to



Israel warns of upgraded assault on Gaza

The New Zealand Herald January 11, 2009 Sunday

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Section: NEWS; World

Length: 1365 words

Body

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip - Israel dropped bombs and leaflets on Gaza on Saturday (local time), pounding suspected rocket sites and tunnels used by <u>Hamas</u> militants and warning of a wider offensive despite frantic diplomacy to end the bloodshed.

Egypt hosted talks aimed at defusing the crisis, but war had the momentum on a bloody day on which more than 30 Palestinians, many of them non-combatants, were killed.

At hospitals, distraught relatives - men in jeans and jackets and <u>women</u> in black Islamic robes - sobbed and shrieked at the loss of family. Flames and smoke rose over Gaza City amid heavy fighting.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas predicted a " waterfall of blood" unless all parties adhere to a UN call for a cease- fire. But Israel has said the Security Council resolution passed on Thursday was unworkable, and <u>Hamas</u>, the Islamic group whose government controls Gaza but is not recognised internationally, was angry that it was not consulted.

A top *Hamas* leader said the Gaza war has killed the last chance for settlement and negotiations with Israel.

Damascus-based <u>Hamas</u> leader Khaled Mashaal condemned Israel's attack on the Gaza Strip as a "holocaust" in a fiery speech broadcast on the Arabic news channel Al-Jazeera. Still, <u>Hamas</u> teams were in Cairo to negotiate over an Egyptian-proposed cease-fire.

At least 814 Palestinians, roughly half of them civilians, have died since war broke out on Dec. 27, according to Palestinian medical officials. Thirteen Israelis, including 10 soldiers, have been killed.

Weary Palestinians watched from apartment windows as thousands of leaflets fluttered from aircraft with a blunt warning: Israeli forces will step up operations against Islamic militants who have unleashed a daily barrage of rocket fire on southern Israeli towns.

"The IDF (Israeli Defence Forces) is not working against the people of Gaza but against <u>Hamas</u> and the terrorists only," the leaflets said in Arabic. "Stay safe by following our orders."

The leaflets urged Gaza residents not to help <u>Hamas</u> and to stay away from its members. There was no immediate sign of an escalation, though earlier in the day, witnesses said Israeli troops moved to within one mile of Gaza City before pulling back slightly.

Israel warns of upgraded assault on Gaza

Israeli defence officials say they are prepared for a third stage of their offensive, in which ground troops would push further into Gaza, but are waiting for approval from the government. Early Sunday, Israeli tanks were heard moving near the central Gaza border as Israeli artillery pounded the area, indicating the possibility of a larger operation.

Palestinian witnesses said Israeli forces fired phosphorus shells at Khouza, a village near the border, setting a row of houses on fire. Hospital officials said a woman was killed and more than 50 injured, most suffering from gas inhalation and burns. The Israeli military said it did not know of such an incident.

Also, <u>Hamas</u> security officials said fierce battles were in progress early on Sunday in eastern Gaza City and northern Gaza.

The officials, speaking on condition of anonymity because they were discussing classified information, said the army also has a fourth stage planned that calls for a full reoccupation of Gaza and toppling of *Hamas*.

The leaflets reflected Israeli efforts to cast <u>Hamas</u> as the source of the conflict that has brought additional misery to Gaza's 1.4 million people, who live in poverty in the densely inhabited shard of land along the Mediterranean. Israel hopes the suffering will erode support for <u>Hamas</u>, which won 2006 elections and engineered a violent takeover of Gaza in June 2007, overrunning the forces of its Palestinian rival Fatah.

For now, though, the fury of the Israeli onslaught has deepened bitterness toward Israel among trapped Gaza residents. Traffic through border crossings with Egypt and Israel is heavily restricted, and many Gazans survive on international handouts or goods smuggled through tunnels that are also used by *Hamas* to bring in weapons.

Israel launched the offensive on Dec. 27 after years of Palestinian rocket attacks on Israel, and has attributed many civilian casualties in the past two weeks to <u>Hamas</u>'s alleged use of civilian areas as hiding places and staging grounds for attacks.

On Jan. 3, Israeli ground troops moved into Gaza, but they have largely avoided deployment in built-up areas where they would be more vulnerable to hit-and-run assaults. Israel holds elections in one month, and its leaders know staunch support for the military campaign could dwindle if the forces take heavy casualties.

<u>Hamas</u> fighters launched 15 rockets at southern Israel in a daily ritual that has severely disrupted life for hundreds of thousands of civilians. Three Israelis were injured in the city of Ashkelon.

The Israeli military said aircraft attacked more than 40 <u>Hamas</u> targets including 10 rocket-launching sites, weapons-storage facilities, smuggling tunnels, an anti-aircraft missile launcher and gunmen. At least 15 militants were killed, it said.

In the day's bloodiest incident, an Israeli tank shell killed nine people in a garden outside a home in the northern Gaza town of Jebaliya, said Adham el-Hakim, administrator of Kamal Adwan hospital. The nine were from the same clan and included two children and two *women*.

The Israeli military, however, said its forces did not carry out attacks in that area on Saturday.

Struggling to keep peace efforts alive, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and Abbas urged Israel and <u>Hamas</u> to agree to a truce.

After meeting Mubarak, Abbas warned there was no time to waste in ending the bloodshed in Gaza.

"If any party does not accept it (the truce), regrettably it will be the one bearing the responsibility. And if Israel doesn't want to accept, it will take the responsibility of perpetuating a waterfall of blood," Abbas said.

Hamas and Abbas's Fatah party, which dominates the West Bank, are fierce political rivals.

<u>Hamas</u> officials from both Gaza and Syria are also in Cairo for separate talks with Egyptian officials on a truce. Israeli officials were in Cairo earlier this week.

Israel warns of upgraded assault on Gaza

US President George W. Bush spoke by telephone to President Abdullah Gul of Turkey, which is involved in Mideast peace efforts, about the situation in Gaza, said a spokesman for the National Security Council in Washington.

"President Bush emphasised the importance of bringing an end to rocket fire against Israel and preventing arms smuggling into Gaza as the basis for a durable cease-fire," spokesman Gordon Johndroe said.

German Foreign Minister Frank- Walter Steinmeier, on a peace mission to the region, visited the Rafah border crossing between Gaza and Egypt and saw a fireball from a large detonation in Gaza. He felt the pressure from the blast, which caused windows to rattle.

"We are standing here while the fighting is still on back there," said Steinmeier, who later travelled to Israel. "It is right and correct to be concerned about the injured and the dead, but the European foreign ministers must do more so that words can be turned into deeds."

The United Nations estimates two-thirds of Gaza's 1.4 million people now lack electricity, and half don't have running water.

The Israeli military announced a three-hour halt to operations in Gaza on Saturday to let medics use the lull to rescue casualties and aid groups to rush through food distribution.

But for the second straight day, fighting continued even during the lull.

Israel has called for the three-hour breaks in fighting for the past four days. But aid groups say it isn't enough time to do their work.

All deliveries were coming from supplies already in Gaza. UN officials said a halt on aid shipments into Gaza through Israeli-controlled border crossings remained in effect.

The ban was imposed on Thursday after the UN said two of its contractors in a truck were shot and killed by Israel. The Israeli military said that its own investigation concluded that its soldiers were not involved.

Also Saturday, tens of thousands of people demonstrated in European cities and Lebanon, shouting protests against the Israeli offensive in Gaza.

- AP

Load-Date: January 11, 2009

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Is Israel justified in attacking Gaza?; LETTERS

Daily Mail (London)

January 13, 2009 Tuesday

1ST Edition

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Section: Pg. 61

Length: 376 words

Body

ONE bleak January day, a few years after World War II, I first put my boots to the ice-cold parade ground at Catterick Camp, Yorkshire, for my Army training.

At 5am, we paraded with cold, dripping noses — and if we as much as moved a finger to swipe away the discharge, the sergeant major reprimanded: 'Stop waving at me, you silly great excuse for a man!' That clinched it: I'd do my best to show my mettle — as did the whole squad. Times were hard thereafter, but we survived the drill and pressed on.

In all my time in the Army, I never heard mention of being told to view <u>women</u> or young children as our enemies, as has happened recently in Gaza. For that I'm glad, because if such an order had been issued, I hope I would have had the guts to go absent without leave because I believe this is no part of our writ on this earth.

The artificial state of Israel seems to have become a fanatical, bombastic entity, so embittered by past tragedies and ridden with deep introspective obsessions that it can't see its way in that divided part of the world. It has so ruminated on its past sense of injustice that it has brought it to the forefront of its corporate mind in dealing with the modern world.

MICHAEL McENHILL, Radlett, Herts.

I'M SICK of all the biased reporting about Israel. Of course I'm sorry that so many Palestinians are being killed in Gaza, but anyone with any intelligence knows that <u>Hamas</u> and Hezbollah are supported, armed and financed by Iran. <u>Hamas</u> has learned from Hezbollah that outrages such as the bombing of the UN school by Israel get <u>Hamas</u> the best possible publicity. <u>Hamas</u> has also learned that positioning its gunmen and missiles in civilian areas achieves the best public relations they can get. Do they care if a few hundred innocent civilians get caught in the cross-fire? Not one bit.

<u>Hamas</u> has been firing missiles into southern Israel during the whole of the so-called ceasefire. Israel has restrained itself for months, but when the one-sided ceasefire ended and <u>Hamas</u> declared it would intensify its aggression towards Israel, enough was enough. Israel doesn't target civilians on purpose. Can <u>Hamas</u> or Hezbollah say the same? One thing I can promise you: you'll never find an Israeli suicide bomber.

MARK CAPLAN, Bushey, Herts.

Load-Date: January 13, 2009

End of Document



'The people are really in a panic ... Gaza has no safe places' As thousands of Palestinians flee from Israel's onslaught, Damien Henderson reports on an intensifying campaign; Refugees rush to escape air attacks | Eyewitnesses tell of devastation | Rallies in UK | Political impact in Middle East | World leaders react to the crisis | Crucial history

The Herald (Glasgow)

December 29, 2008 Monday

Final Edition

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The Herald

Section: NEWS; Pg. 4 Length: 1809 words

Byline: Damien Henderson

Body

PALESTINIAN refugees streamed across the border with Egypt yesterday in a desperate bid to escape the sudden onslaught by Israeli forces which claimed nearly 300 lives in the first day of a major offensive.

In a second day of intense air strikes, Israel destroyed <u>Hamas</u>'s main Gaza security complex and prepared for a possible invasion of the territory.

Israel said the campaign that began on Saturday was a response to almost daily rocket and mortar fire that intensified after <u>Hamas</u>, an Islamist group in charge of the coastal enclave Israel quit in 2005, ended a sixmonth ceasefire a week ago.

Despite the air attacks, militants fired some 80 rockets into Israel, emergency services said. In one of the longest-reaching salvoes, two rockets struck near Ashdod, a main port 18 miles from Gaza, causing no casualties.

Israeli tanks deployed on the edge of the Gaza Strip, poised to enter the densely populated enclave of 1.5 million Palestinians. Prim e Minister Ehud Olmert's cabinet approved a callup of 6500 reservists, a government official said.

According to eyewitnesses yesterday, injured residents, including children, were being evacuated from buildings and schools in an effort to find secure places. Most people were ordered by authorities to remain indoors and people going to work were turned back.

Among the dead were seven teenage students at a UN-run school. They were killed in an air strike on Saturday while waiting for a bus, said Christopher Gunness, a spokesman for the UN Relief and Works Agency.

"Death is everywhere this morning, " he said.

Rushdi Abou Alouf, a correspondent for the BBC, said that mosques in Gaza were calling on citizens to go to their hospitals and donate blood, while doctors reported that operating rooms were full and morgues had no places to put dead bodies.

"There were Israeli aeroplanes everywhere, hitting everywhere. You could see smoke from north to south, from west to east. The people are really in a panic. The main object for the people now is to find a secure place to secure their family, "he said in a report for the BBC. "Gaza has no shelters, it has no safe places."

Amid the ongoing bombing, Palestinians breached the border fence with Egypt in several places and hundreds crossed the frontier, prompting Egyptian border guards to open fire, said officials and witnesses on both sides of the border.

An Egyptian security official said there were at least five breaches along the nine-mile border and hundreds of Palestinian residents were pouring in.

At least 300 Egyptian border guards have been rushed to the area to reseal the border, the official added on condition on anonymity.

A resident of the Gaza Strip side of the border, Fida Kishta, said that Egyptian border guards opened fire to drive back the Palestinians. Residents have also commandeered a bulldozer to open new breaches. Palestinians reported several people were wounded by the gunfire.

Israeli aircraft earlier bombed the border area in an apparent attempt to destroy cross-border tunnels used to supply the Gaza Strip.

Dr Abdel Qader Higazi, a representative of the Egyptian Doctor's Syndicate in Rafah, said Egyptian authorities closed the border crossing after allowing several trucks of medical supplies into Gaza.

"Israel will continue (the campaign) until we have a new security environment in the south, when the population there will no longer live in terror and in fear of constant rocket barrages, " said Mark Regev, a spokesman for Mr Olmert.

<u>Hamas</u> spokesman Fawzi Barhoum urged Palestinian groups to use "all available means, including martyrdom operations" - a reference to suicide bombings in Israel - to "protect the Palestinian people".

Keeping pressure on <u>Hamas</u> after bombing runs that turned Saturday into one of the bloodiest days for Palestinians in 60 years of conflict, Israeli aircraft flattened the group's main security compound in Gaza, killing at least four security men. A militant was also killed in an air strike on a car in the northern Gaza Strip.

The deaths raised to 287 the number of Palestinians killed since Saturday, when Israel launched what one Israeli newspaper columnist described as "shock and awe" air strikes against <u>Hamas</u> facilities. More than 700 Palestinians were wounded.

"Palestine has never seen an uglier massacre, " *Hamas* leader Ismail Haniyeh said.

One Israeli was killed on Saturday by a rocket fired from the Gaza Strip. Israeli military affairs commentators said the offensive did not appear to be aimed at retaking the Gaza Strip or destroying its <u>Hamas</u> government - ambitious goals that could prove difficult and politically risky before Israel's February 10 parliamentary election.

Instead, they said, Israel wanted to bolster its deterrence power and force <u>Hamas</u> into a new truce that would bring a long-term halt to cross-border rocket salvoes.

Violence spread to the occupied West Bank, where Israeli soldiers opened fire at rock-throwing Palestinian protesters. Medical officials said one Palestinian was killed.

In Hebron, also in the West Bank, Palestinian forces loyal to President Mahmoud Abbas of Fatah shot and wounded three people during a protest by Islamist groups in support of <u>Hamas</u>, a Reuters reporter at the scene said.

In the Gaza Strip, where normally bustling streets were largely empty of traffic, Palestinians stood outside their homes to chat with neighbours about dangers ahead as the roar of Israeli aircraft and thunder of explosions echoed in the distance.

"I kept my children at home. No need to study today, " one Palestinian parent said.

Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak ordered schools, due to reopen on Tuesday after the Jewish holiday of Hannukah, to remain shut in southern Israeli communities.

Along the Gaza border there were reports of Israeli soldiers cleaning the barrels of their tanks and taking cover under the armoured vehicles as Palestinian rockets flew overhead.

Mr Abbas, speaking in Cairo, blamed <u>Hamas</u>, which seized the Gaza Strip from Fatah in 2007, for triggering Israel's raids by not extending the ceasefire that Egypt brokered in June. President George W Bush's administration, in its final weeks in office, put the onus on **Hamas** to prevent more violence.

Aid groups said they feared a humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip. Hospitals said they were running out of supplies because of a long-standing Israeli-led blockade.

Palestinian officials said 10 truckloads of flour and medical supplies were transferred to the territory through an Israeli border terminal yesterday.

<u>Hamas</u>, which won a parliamentary election in 2006 but was shunned by the West over its refusal to renounce violence and recognise Israel, estimated at least 180 members of its security forces had been killed with at least 15 **women** and some children.

In a series of protests yesterday, Israeli flags were burned in the Jordanian capital Amman, where hundreds of people led by Islamist MPs gathered to demand the closure of the Israeli embassy.

With Egypt, Jordan is one of only two Arab governments to have signed peace treaties with Israel.

The demonstrators in Amman rallied outside the Egyptian embassy, angry at Cairo's refusal to open its border with Gaza to deliveries of basic supplies to the aid-dependent territory or to civilians wishing to flee.

In the Lebanon capital Beirut, the Egyptian embassy was attacked by stonethrowing demonstrators and police used tear-gas to disperse the crowd.

In Bahrain, more than 2000 people answered a call by Sunni Islamists to take to the streets.

Key events so far

- . An Israeli air strike destroys much of <u>Hamas</u>'s main security complex in the Gaza Strip, which holds hundreds of prisoners, killing at least four security guards.
- . Separate Israeli air strikes target a car travelling in the northern Gaza Strip and a *Hamas* security compound.
- . A Palestinian militant was killed in the first attack and at least three people, including two *Hamas* security men, were wounded in the second strike.
- . Israeli tanks are deployed in preparation for a possible ground invasion.
- . Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's cabinet approves a call-up of 6500 army reservists.

- . Israeli aircraft strike a shelter near the office of Ismail Haniyeh, who is the leader of *Hamas*'s government in the Gaza Strip. No casualties were reported.
- . <u>Hamas</u> fires more than 80 rockets, at least one of which hits the town of Gan Yavne, 30 km (18 miles) inside Israel from the Gaza border, causing no casualties.
- . An Israeli air strike destroys the headquarters of <u>Hamas</u>'s al Aqsa television station. The station continues broadcasting, but from an now-unknown location.
- . A series of Israeli air strikes, targeting vehicles, <u>Hamas</u> government buildings and a police station, kills three Palestinians and injures around 12 others.

History of a troubled region

1948 Egypt gains control of the Gaza Strip after Arab-Israeli War. Holds the territory "in trust" for Palestinian Arabs.

1956 Israel briefly gains control of Gaza during Sinai-Suez War, fought with Britain, France and Egypt, but withdraws over international pressure.

1967 Israel regains Gaza Strip during Six-Day War. UN Security Council Resolution 242 demands the country withdraws from the territory, but Israel retains control of Gaza Strip.

1982 Israel invades Lebanon to try and destroy the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), which calls for the creation of a Palestinian state.

1987 The first Palestinian intifada (uprising) starts at Jebalia refugee camp. It lasts for the next six years, with hundreds of deaths on each side.

1993 The Oslo Accord self-rule agreement is signed in Washington by Israel and the PLO, aimed at reconciling warring powers.

1994 Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty. Palestinians resume administrative control of Gaza Strip. Violence is reduced.

1995 Israel's prime minister, Yitzhak Rabin, is assassinated by Yigal Amir, an ultra-nationalist Israeli who is opposed to the Oslo Accord.

2000 The second armed Palestinian intifada begins, which is led largely by Islamic militant group <u>Hamas</u>. Suicide bombers become the preferred method of attack against Israel.

2003 So-called "quartet powers" EU, USA, Russia and the UN publicise the "road map" to Middle East peace talks.

2004 The Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, signatory to the Oslo Accords, dies. Mahmoud Abbas will later be elected as his successor. 2005 Ariel Sharon and Mahmoud Abbas declare a ceasefire. Israel pulls out of the Gaza Strip after 38 years. Sharon dies after a stroke and is then succeeded by Ehud Olmert.

2006 Israel's war with Hizbullah in Lebanon. The Islamist movement <u>Hamas</u> wins the Palestinian elections, but difficulties increase between rival factions <u>Hamas</u> and Fatah.

2007 *Hamas* takes over Gaza Strip. Annapolis peace talks are started in the US.

2008 Relations break down and Israel then launches rocket attacks against the buildings suspected to be connected with *Hamas* in the Gaza Strip.

Graphic

AFTERMATH: Palestinian workmen survey the destroyed remains of the headquarters of <u>Hamas</u>'s al Aqsa TV station following an Israeli rocket strike on the Gaza Strip yesterday. The death toll in the area has neared 300 after a series of attacks, including one on the central security headquarters and prison in the region, above. Pictures: Suhaib Salem/Reuters, Adel Hana/PA

Load-Date: December 29, 2008

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The Gaza massacre in perspective

New Straits Times (Malaysia)
January 3, 2009 Saturday

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Section: Pg. 25; LOCAL

Length: 1092 words

Byline: Chandra Muzaffar

Body

HONEST, accurate media presentation of context is vital for an in-depth understanding of conflict. In the case of the ongoing Israeli massacre of Palestinians in Gaza, the context has been distorted by much of the media. The impression given is that Israel had no choice but to retaliate against a constant barrage of rocket attacks launched by *Hamas* after the latter decided to end the *Hamas*-Israel truce on Dec 19.

While rocket attacks targeting civilians in the southern part of Israel are wrong from the point of view of international law, the media has failed to tell the public the whole truth about why <u>Hamas</u> ended the truce and how Israel is largely responsible for the underlying conflict between Israel and the Palestinians and other Arabs. There are at least five dimensions to the larger context shaping the conflict that have not been highlighted in the media.

One, even after the so-called Israeli "withdrawal" from Gaza in August 2005, the Israeli army has conducted numerous raids and air strikes in Gaza in the name of fighting "terrorism" which have killed hundreds of civilians including <u>women</u> and children. These assaults intensified after <u>Hamas</u> captured the Palestinian Legislative Council in a free and fair election in January 2006. When <u>Hamas</u> ousted its rival Fatah from Gaza in June 2007, Israel went all out to destroy <u>Hamas</u> through military and non-military means.

Two, in spite of Israeli attacks, <u>Hamas</u>, a few violations notwithstanding, observed its June 2008 truce with Israel. Not a single Israeli was killed by <u>Hamas</u> rocket fire during the six-month period of the truce.

The <u>Hamas</u> leadership even proposed a 10-year truce to Israel in April 2008. There was no response from Israel. It was because of continuous Israeli military strikes, the closure of border crossings and a suffocating blockade of Gaza, imposed by Israel, that **Hamas** was forced to end the truce on Dec 19.

Three, in juxtaposing <u>Hamas</u> rockets with the Israeli arsenal, the media seldom mentions the tremendous asymmetry in military power between the two sides. What are <u>Hamas</u>'s homemade rockets compared with the wide range of sophisticated lethal weaponry at the command of the world's fourth most powerful army? The death toll from the present assault tells the whole story: 375 Palestinians to five Israelis as of Dec 30 after four days of air bombardment.

Four, to grasp the significance of this asymmetry one has to place it in the context of the Israeli blockade of Gaza that began soon after <u>Hamas</u> won the 2006 election. By punishing the people of Gaza for voting for <u>Hamas</u> through the imposition of a blockade that has increased poverty and destitution and denies life-saving drugs to the critically ill, Israel has made the victims of its cruel and callous siege even angrier and more desperate. The media has made no attempt to link **Hamas**'s rocket attacks to the siege.

The Gaza massacre in perspective

Five, neither has the media explained to the people that at the root of this longstanding conflict that goes back to the beginning of the 20th century is the occupation and annexation of Palestine and the oppression of the Palestinians.

Within a year of the unjust partition of the land in 1948, 78 per cent of Palestine was in the hands of the Zionists. Gaza is part of the 22 per cent that was annexed in 1967. Since 1948, Israel, argues Israeli historian Illan Pappe, has embarked upon a policy of "ethnic cleansing" that seeks to eliminate the indigenous Palestinians from their land. None of these facts and opinions is given any ventilation in the mainstream international media.

It is not difficult to understand why this is so. Zionist influence over the US-Europe controlled international media is enormous. In the US, control over the media is part of what the American sociologist James Petras describes as the "Zionist power configuration" (ZPC) which extends to the principal arteries of the economy, political institutions and the intellectual and cultural life of the nation.

This is perhaps a propitious moment to challenge the ZPC. The US economy is facing its severest crisis ever which must impact adversely upon Zionist power both directly and indirectly. With its inevitable economic decline, US global hegemony which has been a critical factor in sustaining and perpetuating Israel's military dominance of the Middle East is also coming to an end. New patterns of global power are in the offing.

At a time like this, it is important that Americans themselves realise that blind, uncritical US support and protection for Israel is damaging to US interests.

It is significant that no less a statesman than George Washington had warned the American nation in his farewell address that "passionate attachment of one nation for another produces a variety of evils... facilitating the illusion of an imaginary common interest... betrays the former into a participation in the quarrels and wars of the latter... It leads also to concessions to the favourite nation of privileges denied to others..."

In the last few years, some Americans from the establishment have begun to see this. Jimmy Carter would be a case in point. Academics such as John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt have also criticised the incestuous relationship between Zionist lobbies and the US government. More individuals and groups should be encouraged to oppose the subordination of the US to Israeli interests in the Middle East.

The Palestinians and other Arabs who have to contend with Zionist power should also develop more effective strategies to pursue their struggle for justice. At this juncture many of them oscillate between violence and rhetoric. What is needed is strategic thinking and planning which will produce new forms of challenge and resistance to Zionist dominance. For instance, those who try to break Israel's Gaza blockade by transporting food and medicines through ships are not only providing much needed assistance but are also raising public consciousness about the inhumanity of the Israeli regime. Two <u>women</u> have been at the forefront of such initiatives: the Nobel laureate Mairead Maguire and former US congresswoman Cynthia McKinney.

Such initiatives, it is hoped, will accelerate the demise of Zionist power and US hegemony and create the conditions for the liberation of the Palestinians and other oppressed peoples.

Dr Chandra Muzaffar is Professor of Global Studies at Universiti Sains Malaysia and president of the International Movement for a Just World (JUST). In 2002, he was a member of the Internet World Court on Israel's War of Extermination Against Palestine.

Load-Date: January 4, 2009



Justified strike at heart of terror

The Sunday Mail (Queensland, Australia)

January 4, 2009 Sunday

2 - State - Main Country Edition

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Section: AGENDA; Pg. 73

Length: 911 words

Byline: Piers Akerman

Body

Its relentless campaign of rocket attacks upon Israeli civilians means *Hamas*'s existence can no longer be tolerated

One need not feel distressed by Rayan's demise. He repeatedly urged young people, and <u>women</u> in particular, to enlist as suicide bombers

ISRAEL'S continued demolition of the terrorist <u>Hamas</u> Government of Gaza highlights the impotence of the United Nations. In a small bonus, call it collateral damage, it has also flushed out some members of the fifth column in Australia's own Muslim community who are dedicated to the destruction of Western culture.

The politics of war in the Middle East are often too muddled for all but the cognoscenti to follow but the current situation is as clear as gin -- which may be why there remain a few in the alcophobic Islamic world who attempt to deny the realities.

Since 2001, <u>Hamas</u> and its allies have launched more than 6400 rockets, mortar bombs and other missiles at Israel. Not at specific military targets, not at strategic targets, just at the nation.

Fortunately, there were few casualties because the Israeli Government was able to provide its people with a warning system that gives the quarter of a million people in the most exposed areas exactly 15 seconds to take shelter.

Since mid-2008, a truce was nominally in effect but <u>Hamas</u> chose to stockpile weapons smuggled through a series of tunnels from Egypt into Gaza. Israel sought to extend the truce when it expired last month but <u>Hamas</u> rejected the offer, firing about 80 rockets a day into Israel between December 24 and December 27.

Obviously <u>Hamas</u>'s leaders were unfamiliar with Stanley Holloway's cautionary tale about Albert and the lion, in which young Albert Ramsbotham pokes his ``stick with an 'orse's 'ead 'andle" into the ear of Wallace the lion in the Liverpool zoo, and is eaten for his troubles.

Perhaps Sheikh Nizar Rayan -- one of the most prominent leaders of <u>Hamas</u> in Gaza, who was killed in the first air strike in the Gaza Strip -- should have been reading Holloway's instructional rhymes to the son he encouraged to become a suicide bomber, rather than applauding his decision to obliterate himself and two Israeli citizens.

Justified strike at heart of terror

The missiles that killed Rayan also killed nine other people, including his four wives and 10 of his children. <u>Hamas</u> said that a further 25 people were wounded when it issued a call for ``mass rallies of wrath".

Its call coincided with a rally organised in Lakemba, the centre of Sydney's Muslim ghetto, by the familiar figure of the Islamic Friendship Association of Australia's Keysar Trad, the faithful apologist for that old beneficiary of Labor politics, Sheik Taj al-Din al-Hilali, to protest against the retaliatory attacks on the *Hamas* leadership.

No record can be found of any rallies conducted by these prayerful representatives of Australia's Islamic friends in protest at *Hamas*'s prolonged rocket campaign against Israeli civilians. It should also be noted that the Israelis took the trouble to telephone Rayan, who was an advocate of the strict Wahabist line of Islamist extremism, and warn his family to evacuate their home because it was to be attacked.

Trusting in their underground shelter to protect them, they remained. Secondary explosions indicated that their shelter was used to store arms and ammunition.

One need not feel distressed by Rayan's demise. He repeatedly urged young people generally and young <u>women</u> in particular to enlist as suicide bombers. Two days before he was killed, he delivered a sermon at a Gaza mosque calling on Muslims everywhere to pray for the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, saying: "We do not need money or weapons, we only need your prayers. We can handle the enemy ourselves."

Rayan was fiercely opposed to the moderate Palestinian Authority and to the notion of a secular Gaza.

In June 2007, in an interview with the Palestinian Al-Ayyam newspaper, he promised to turn the headquarters of the National Security Force in Gaza into a huge mosque and to deliver sermons from the presidential headquarters.

As the moderates were defeated by the <u>Hamas</u> terrorists, he boasted: ``In a few hours, the secular era in Gaza will end without leaving a trace . . . Today, heresy ends. Today, the struggle is between Islam and the infidels, and it will end with the victory of the faith. (Once victorious), <u>Hamas</u> will open its arms to the members of the security forces, so that they will return to the faith, (for) Islam is generous with infidels (who repent). We hold the truth and they (represent) falsehood . . . How can we not fight against those who desecrate the sanctity of Allah, execute clerics and sell out the Palestinian cause -- those who blasphemed in houses of worship, burned mosques, Korans and (Islamic) education facilities and executed jihad fighters? We will hold dialogue with these (people) only through the barrels of our guns."

Today, even most Arab people in the street are tired of Rayan's chosen form of dialogue, and as Iran's income from oil declines and it cuts back its sponsorship of <u>Hamas</u> and other terror groups, militants like the late Rayan will find themselves further isolated.

In the clash of cultures, those who offer little more than death (and a promise of martyrdom) to followers, will find their currency doesn't hold its value against the hope of prosperous, fruitful lives.

Little wonder that free, democratic and genuinely progressive Israel's mere existence poses such a threat to its regressive, repressive Islamic neighbours.

Load-Date: January 3, 2009



'All-out war' vow as carnage grows

The Courier Mail (Australia)

December 30, 2008 Tuesday

7 - Late City Drop-in Edition

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Section: WORLD; Pg. 16

Length: 498 words

Body

JERUSALEM: Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak last night declared that Israel was in an ``all-out war against <u>Hamas</u>" as the Jewish state continued its massive bombardment of Islamist targets in Gaza.

"We have nothing against Gaza residents, but we are engaged in an all-out war against <u>Hamas</u> and its proxies," he said.

His comments came as Israeli jets bombed <u>Hamas</u> targets in Gaza for a third day, killing several children, while the Islamists fired deadly rockets to retaliate for the blitz that has left more than 300 dead.

As Israeli tanks massed on the Gaza border, the army declared the area a closed military zone -- a move that in the past has often been followed by ground operations in the Palestinian enclave.

Amid mounting international calls for a halt to the violence, Israel allowed the passage of humanitarian aid into the impoverished and overcrowded territory where most of the 1.5 million population depends on foreign aid.

<u>Hamas</u> militants remained defiant yesterday, firing some 20 rockets into Israel.

An Israeli Arab was killed and eight other people were wounded when one of the projectiles slammed into a construction site in the southern city of Ashkelon some 13km north of the Gaza border.

<u>Hamas</u>, the Islamist Palestinian movement branded a terrorist group by Israel and the West, lashed out at the world for not doing enough to end the blitz. Israel was ``committing a holocaust as the whole world watches and doesn't lift a finger to stop it", <u>Hamas</u> spokesman Fawzi Barhum told reporters.

The Islamist group "reserves the right to hit back at this aggression with martyr operations", meaning suicide bombings of the sort *Hamas* has not carried out inside Israel since January 2005, he said.

The Israeli blitz, unleashed on Saturday in retaliation for ongoing rocket and mortar fire from Gaza, has killed at least 312 Palestinians and wounded more than 1400 others, according to Gaza medics.

Among the dead are at least 51 civilians, according to the UN Palestinian refugee agency. "We have 51 confirmed civilian casualties including *women* and children," said UNRWA spokesman Christopher Gunness.

Among those reportedly killed in fresh raids overnight were five girls from the same family aged from one to 12.

'All-out war' vow as carnage grows

They died in an air raid in the northern town of Jabaliya that targeted a mosque near their home, while two boys were killed in a strike on the southern city of Rafah, medics said.

China and Japan joined the growing international chorus for a halt to the violence, which has also included Britain, France and Russia.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Abul Gheit arrived in Ankara yesterday for talks with Turkish leaders on the Israeli offensive.

Egypt had said on Sunday that it was trying to broker a ceasefire, although an Israeli official said the Jewish state was not interested in a truce.

In fact, the Israeli cabinet has given the green light to call up 6500 reserve soldiers.

Israel's main ally, the US, blamed *Hamas* ``thugs" for provoking the offensive.

Load-Date: December 29, 2008

End of Document



THE OFFENSIVE; Street battles break out in Gaza City

The Daily Telegraph (London)

January 6, 2009 Tuesday

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The Daily Telegraph

Section: NEWS; Gaza; Pg. 4

Length: 621 words

Byline: Damien McElroy in Jerusalem

Body

HEAVY fighting broke out in the centre of Gaza City last night as a new phase of Israel's war on <u>Hamas</u> began. Troops poured into the area and gun battles broke out at close quarters.

Israel continued to defy international calls for a ceasefire with ground forces moving to seize fresh positions within the city limits.

Explosions were heard in factory districts in the east of the city and refugee camps witnessed heavy fighting throughout the day.

The army said it had hit 40 targets in the Gaza Strip including several tunnels and the homes of a number of **Hamas** officials.

There were also reports that troops had pounded mosques that they claimed were being used as weapons stores. Six Israeli soldiers were wounded in the fighting.

Israeli army officials said dozens of <u>Hamas</u> fighters had been killed or rounded up. Ehud Barak, the defence minister, said the Islamic movement had been severely degraded, but it had not been critically damaged and the offensive would go on.

Israel dismissed calls for a ceasefire from the EU, President Nicolas Sarkozy of France and other world leaders, claiming it had not yet achieved its objectives.

President George W Bush reiterated his support for the operation and blamed *Hamas* for prolonging the conflict.

"Instead of caring about the people of Gaza, <u>Hamas</u> decided to use Gaza to use rockets to kill innocent Israelis," he said. "Israel's obviously decided to protect itself. Any ceasefire must have the condition that <u>Hamas</u> does not use Gaza as a place from which to launch rockets."

There was growing international anger over conditions in Gaza. Aid organisations said that people were running out of food and critical infrastructure, including hospitals, was close to collapse.

THE OFFENSIVE Street battles break out in Gaza City

The Red Cross said people were dying because military operations were preventing ambulances from working.

Palestinian officials said 541 people had been killed in the Gaza Strip over the 10 days of fighting and that 90 people - mostly civilians, including 26 children - had died since Israel's ground offensive began on Saturday night.

Recent victims were said to include 13 members of a Palestinian family in an Israeli strike on their home in the Beach refugee camp.

Antonio Guterres, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, called on Israel to open Gaza's borders. "Those who are compelled to flee the Gaza Strip should be able to do so and to find safety and security in other countries according to international law," he said. "I thus urge that all borders and access routes concerned should be kept open and safe, and Palestinians endeavouring to leave Gaza should not be prevented from doing so."

Dr Khamis al-Essi, an emergency doctor at Gaza's biggest hospital, al-Shifa, said they were struggling to cope with the numbers of casualties.

He said they had received "all sorts of casualties, from shattered bodies, beheaded individuals and patients with superficial cuts and lacerations".

"Most of the injuries affected civilians, especially women and children," he said.

Despite the onslaught, <u>Hamas</u> continued to fire rockets into Israel yesterday. More than 30 had been launched by dusk. Four Israeli civilians have been killed by rockets since the attack began and one soldier has also died. A <u>Hamas</u> delegation travelled to Egypt to discuss a ceasefire but its leaders promised to continue the rocket attacks and said fighters would resist Israel's assault "in every street, every alley and every house".

"We have prepared thousands of brave fighters who are waiting for you in each corner of the street and will welcome you with fire and iron," Abu Obeida, the spokesman for the Izzedine al-Qassam Brigades, the armed wing of *Hamas*. "Your defeat in the Gaza Strip is approaching with every hour."

Load-Date: January 6, 2009



Israeli troops mass on Gaza border as air strikes continue

The Irish Times

December 29, 2008 Monday

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Section: FRONT PAGE; Pg. 1

Length: 610 words

Byline: MARK WEISS in Jerusalem and MARY FITZGERALD, Foreign Affairs Correspondent

Body

ISRAEL CONTINUED its aerial bombardment of Gaza yesterday on the second day of the military campaign against *Hamas*, as troops massed on the border ahead of a possible ground incursion.

Among the targets hit yesterday was the main <u>Hamas</u> security compound in Gaza city, a <u>Hamas</u> television station, the Islamic University and a mosque, which, according to the Israeli military, was used by militants to store rockets.

In Ireland, Minister for Foreign Affairs Micheál Martin issued a statement condemning the violence and called for an immediate end to hostilities on both sides. "The only viable solution at this stage is the restoration of a genuine and fully honoured ceasefire throughout Gaza and southern Israel," he said.

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions denounced the air strikes as "totally disproportionate".

Some 40 tunnels, used to smuggle weapons from Egypt, were also destroyed. Egyptian guards opened fire to prevent Palestinians breaching the border following the bombing.

The Israeli onslaught, which began late on Saturday morning, followed warnings that Israel would hit back hard if the daily rocket attacks from Gaza continued.

Some 300 Palestinians have been killed in more than 300 air strikes. The casualty figures on Saturday marked the highest number of Palestinian fatalities on a single day since Israel was established in 1948.

Most of those killed were members of the <u>Hamas</u> security forces but the dead included <u>women</u> and children. The aerial pounding reduced to rubble almost all <u>Hamas</u> installations and bases across the Gaza Strip.

Despite the incessant bombing, militants still managed to fire a few dozen rockets into southern Israel yesterday. Two rockets landed close to the large port city of Ashdod, 40km north of Gaza - the longest-range projectiles fired so far by Gaza militants.

One Israeli has been killed in the rocket attacks since Saturday and a dozen wounded. The rocket fire was significantly lower than the predictions of Israeli security officials, who had issued warnings of 200 projectiles a day.

The Israeli cabinet has authorised the call-up of more than 6,000 army reservists. Infantry troops, tanks, armoured personnel carriers and artillery batteries massed on the Gaza border. Defence minister Ehud Barak said he would order "boots on the ground" if needed.

Israeli troops mass on Gaza border as air strikes continue

The UN security council expressed serious concern over the escalation and called on Israel and the Palestinians to immediately halt all violence and military activities. The UN statement called for a new ceasefire between Israel and <u>Hamas</u>, and for opening border crossings into Gaza.

Israeli defence minister Ehud Barak allowed limited supplies of fuel and medicine into Gaza.

Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert told ministers to be prepared for a long campaign, saying the operation would continue until civilians no longer lived in fear of rocket attacks.

Foreign minister Tzipi Livni denied that Israel aimed at reoccupying the Gaza Strip. She also denied that Israel aimed to topple *Hamas*, which seized control of the Strip last year following clashes with secular Fatah forces.

The <u>Hamas</u> spokesman in Gaza, Fawzi Barhoum, urged Palestinians to use all forms of resistance, including suicide attacks.

Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas blamed <u>Hamas</u> for provoking the Israeli attacks by refusing to renew the sixmonth Egyptian-brokered ceasefire which expired earlier this month.

Israeli parties suspended campaigning for the February 10th elections.

The outcome of the conflict will undoubtedly affect the elections. Mr Barak, who also heads the Labor Party, realises that military success may be his last chance to prevent Labor achieving its worst ever showing.

Load-Date: December 29, 2008



Troops gather as Israel prepares iron fist to deliver devastating blow; There are splits in both leaderships as the death toll rises to more than 900, Martin Fletcher and Sheera Frenkel report from Jerusalem

The Times (London)

January 13, 2009 Tuesday

Edition 2

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 32,33

Length: 780 words

Byline: Martin Fletcher; Sheera Frenkel

Body

Israel is preparing to wage war against <u>Hamas</u> in the very heart of Gaza's crowded population centres unless the Islamic militants accept ceasefire demands swiftly and stop firing rockets over the border.

As thousands of reservists pour into Gaza to bolster Israel's forces, the Cabinet is expected to approve imminently a devastating new "third phase" of its 18-day-old offensive unless there is a last-minute diplomatic breakthrough.

Ehud Olmert, the Israeli Prime Minister, pledged yesterday to hit <u>Hamas</u> with an "iron fist" if the rockets did not cease.

"We will continue for as much time as is necessary in order to remove this threat," he declared in a speech in Ashkelon, a town regularly hit by rockets. "We cannot be soft. It is us or them ... We will continue striking with all our might, with all our power, until there is quiet."

Mark Regev, the Israeli government spokesman, said that <u>Hamas</u> fighters were taking "serious punishment" and Israel was "advancing towards the endgame". A senior defence official said that Israel was laying the groundwork for a big increase in its offensive, and that the military was ready to move the moment the political leadership approved.

Another military official closely involved in the operation said that Israeli troops in Gaza had been ordered to engage with maximum force over the past 24 hours. That, and the deployment of the reservists to free regular troops by taking over territory already secured, was designed to increase the pressure on a <u>Hamas</u> leadership increasingly divided over whether to continue fighting.

The Israeli Government believes <u>Hamas</u> has been stunned by the ferocity of Operation Cast Lead, and that there are splits emerging between the political and military wings in Gaza, and between top <u>Hamas</u> members in Gaza and those in Damascus where Khaled Mashal, the group's exiled leader, lives. The Israeli media, however, also

Troops gather as Israel prepares iron fist to deliver devastating blow There are splits in both leaderships as the death toll rises to more than 900, Martin Fle....

reports splits in the Israeli leadership. Tzipi Livni, the Foreign Minister, and Ehud Barak, the Defence Minister, are reported to be more reluctant than Mr Olmert to approve an expansion that could result in many Israeli casualties. Ms Livni and Mr Barak face a general election next month while Mr Olmert is standing down.

In the past two days Israeli ground troops have engaged in some of the fiercest fighting so far on the outskirts of Gaza City. The death toll has risen past 900, with <u>women</u> and children accounting for nearly 400 of the dead. The UN Human Rights Council yesterday voted 33-1 - with 13 Western countries abstaining - for a resolution accusing Israel of grave human rights violations and urging a fact-finding mission.

Israeli analysts say a ground war fought in the narrow streets and alleys of Gaza City and other urban centres would make the conflict to date seem tame. "The Israel Defence Forces will enter, with great force, with tens of thousands of soldiers, into the heart of the Palestinian population in the Gaza Strip," the respected commentator Alex Fishman wrote in yesterday's Yedioth Ahronoth newspaper.

"There will no longer be strikes at the margins from the ground and destruction from the air. Now we are talking about armoured divisions that will not leave a single stone standing on their way into the refugee camps and into the heart of one of the most crowded cities on Earth."

Israel's minimum demands for accepting an Egyptian-brokered ceasefire are a permanent cessation of <u>Hamas</u> rocket attacks and internationally enforced mechanisms to guarantee that <u>Hamas</u> can no longer smuggle in weapons through Gaza's southern border with Egypt. <u>Hamas</u> wants an end to Israel's blockade of the Gaza Strip with the opening of its border crossings.

David Miliband, Britain's Foreign Secretary, told MPs after being briefed on the Cairo talks: "There are some people in <u>Hamas</u> who recognise that there needs to be a politically negotiated solution. However, the tragedy is they are not in the majority." Amos Gilad, Israel's top negotiator, postponed a visit to Cairo yesterday until <u>Hamas</u>'s position became clearer.

Tony Blair, the International Middle East envoy, said after talks with President Mubarak of Egypt that the elements of an agreement were in place. "I hope we can achieve it within the coming days."

Ismail Haniya, the head of the <u>Hamas</u> Government in the Gaza Strip, told his people in a televised address: "We are approaching victory ... The blood which has flowed will not have flowed in vain ... I tell you that after 17 days of this foolish war, Gaza has not been broken and Gaza will not fall."

today

Investigating a tragic misunderstanding James Hider, T2 Inside

Online

Watch our video reports from Gaza timesonline.co.uk/world

Graphic

Armed with binoculars and cameras, Orthodox Jews on Parash Hill watch F16 aircraft streak across the sky, trailing flares, before unleashing their missiles on one of the distant buildings

MOSHE SHAI / RAPPORT

Troops gather as Israel prepares iron fist to deliver devastating blow There are splits in both leaderships as the death toll rises to more than 900, Martin Fle....

Load-Date: January 13, 2009



Push for ceasefire as Gaza toll soars

The Age (Melbourne, Australia)

January 6, 2009 Tuesday

Third Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1

Length: 897 words

Byline: JASON KOUTSOUKIS, MIDDLE EAST CORRESPONDENT, GAZA-ISRAEL BORDER with AGENCIES

Body

INTERNATIONAL efforts to impose a ceasefire in Gaza were underway last night as Israeli forces advanced deeper into Gaza City and the Palestinian death toll from the offensive soared towards 550.

Hopes for a ceasefire rose after *Hamas*, which governs the Gaza Strip, announced it had accepted an invitation from Egypt to send a delegation to Cairo for negotiations.

Egypt was expected to pressure <u>Hamas</u> to accept a ceasefire deal that would involve European monitoring of Gaza's border with Egypt, Israeli Army radio reported late last night.

The monitoring would aim to stop the smuggling of weapons to <u>Hamas</u> through tunnels from Egypt. Israel has previously demanded such monitoring arrangements as a precondition to lifting its blockade of Gaza.

European Union foreign policy chief Javier Solana was quoted last night saying the EU would be happy to send a monitoring force to the border if asked.

Any hopes of an immediate truce were snuffed out by Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, who rejected such calls from the EU, saying Israel was aiming to change the "equation in this region".

French President Nicolas Sarkozy was due to meet Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert in Jerusalem overnight, Melbourne time, in a separate move to try to negotiate a halt to the fighting.

Mr Sarkozy was also to meet president of the Palestinian Authority Mahmoud Abbas in Ramallah and Egypt's Hosni Mubarak in Cairo, while an EU delegation was to hold talks with Ms Livni.

But as the diplomatic initiatives were stepped up, Israeli leaders continued to reject international demands for a ceasefire, saying they would press ahead until the goal of destroying <u>Hamas</u>' military capabilities had been achieved.

Defence Minister Ehud Barak said that while <u>Hamas</u> had sustained a "hard blow", the offensive in Gaza would continue. "We still haven't reached our objectives," he told Israeli MPs.

The main goals of Israel's ground operation in Gaza are to stop the launch of rockets into Israel, to destroy *Hamas*' ammunition stores and to apprehend or kill as many *Hamas* fighters as possible.

Push for ceasefire as Gaza toll soars

The United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs, which has a significant presence in Gaza, said 20 per cent of those killed and 40 per cent of the 2400 injured since the start of the operation 11 days ago were **women** and children.

<u>Hamas</u> fighters continued to launch rockets and mortar shells into Israel yesterday, hitting several populated areas but causing no further deaths. Another 14 Palestinians, including five children, were reported to have been killed in Israeli strikes yesterday.

With Gaza's dwindling fuel supplies almost at an end, the UN agency believes that almost all of the 1.5 million residents are now living without electricity, while 70 per cent have no access to running water.

The UN also fears that fighting in northern Gaza could lead to the city of Beit Lahiya being flooded by 3 million cubic metres of sewage if the main waste water pond is broken.

All hospitals in northern Gaza have been without mains electricity for 48 hours, and are now dependent on back-up generators, which hospital authorities warn are close to collapse. The loss of power means that Gaza's telephone network is also near collapse.

Israeli defence officials appear pleased with the progress of the operation, believing the large bombardment that accompanied the troops as they entered Gaza had severely diminished *Hamas*' ability to return fire.

A military official told The Age that the operation - the deepest Israeli thrust into Gaza since it withdrew from the coastal territory in 2005 - was progressing "cautiously and according to plan".

The official said the forces were moving slowly in order to minimise the chances of soldiers being kidnapped or killed in ambushes.

"This is a very dangerous type of warfare. Many of the buildings we have entered have various traps installed, so we must not be in a hurry," the official said. "*Hamas* is still putting up a fight."

According to reports in the Israeli media, the defence force was putting into practice painful lessons learned from Israel's 2006 war in Lebanon.

"The IDF has no intention of staying in one spot, but rather plans to keep in constant movement with manoeuvres around Jabaliya, Sajaiya, as well as the launching areas of Beit Hanoun and Beit Lahiya, without necessarily entering the built-up area as the terrorists want them to," one security source told the newspaper Maariv. "We will not make ourselves sitting ducks and we will continue hitting the terrorists."

According to the newspaper Ha'aretz, some deserted houses had been turned into fortresses.

"In one case, troops stormed a Palestinian house from where shots had been fired at them," the newspaper reported.

Military officials are also encouraged that they have not encountered sophisticated weaponry that <u>Hamas</u> was believed to have smuggled into Gaza, possibly indicating that its arms stockpiles had been severely reduced. But Mahmud Zahar, a senior <u>Hamas</u> leader in the Gaza Strip, vowed last night that the Islamists were heading to victory over Israel.

"Victory is coming, God willing," he said in an address on *Hamas*' Al-Aqsa television.

Israel's Director of Military Intelligence, Major-General Amos Yadlin, also warned that the Lebanese paramilitary force Hezbollah could open a second front against Israel, firing rockets into the country within days. -- With AGENCIES

Graphic

FOUR PHOTOS: A man carries his wounded child into a Gaza hospital as Israeli soldiers bear a comrade to his grave and others grieve. PICTURES: AFP, AP; The EU's Javier Solana.

Load-Date: January 5, 2009



Children paying price in Gaza fighting

Telegraph Herald (Dubuque, IA)

January 2, 2009 Friday

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Section: A; Pg. 5

Length: 321 words

Byline: The Associated Press

Body

BEIT HANOUN, Gaza Strip (AP) - Samar Hamdan ran weeping through the street, trying to touch the body of her dead 11-year-old brother during a funeral procession in this northern Gaza town. Just a day before, the 15-year-old girl's two sisters also were buried, victims of the same strike from an Israeli missile. As Israel steps up its attacks on the <u>Hamas</u> rulers of the Gaza Strip, one of the most densely populated spots on Earth, children are paying the price.

"In this crowded strip, everything is beside everything else," said Karen Abu Zayd, a top U.N. official in Gaza. Israel says it is only targeting <u>Hamas</u> militants and the rockets they send streaking into southern Israel. More than 400 Palestinians have been killed in the strikes, many of them members of the Islamic militant group's security forces. But at least 37 children and 17 <u>women</u> have died, according to the <u>Hamas</u>-run Health Ministry. The United Nations has said the death toll includes 34 children. With some 1.4 million Gazans crammed into a sliver of land 25 miles long and just 3 to 7 miles wide, military targets and civilians tend to exist side by side. But the broad range of Israel's targets - police compounds, fire stations, homes of militants, <u>Hamas</u>-run mosques and university buildings - means most shelling is occurring in residential areas. Israel's strike Thursday on the home of top <u>Hamas</u> leader Nizar Rayan was a typical case. The bomb flattened the house and killed Rayan - as well as 18 other people, including nine of his children, ages 2 to 19, and all four of his wives. Television footage showed medics clutching the bodies of children dug from the rubble of the house and neighboring buildings. <u>Hamas</u> officials said Rayan, who sent one of his own sons on a 2001 suicide bomb mission that killed two Israelis, refused to leave his home even though he knew he was a likely target - effectively putting at risk civilians living nearby.

Load-Date: January 2, 2009



Israel drops bombs, leaflets as it warns Gaza of a wider war

Deseret Morning News (Salt Lake City)

January 11, 2009 Sunday

Copyright 2009 The Deseret News Publishing Co.

Length: 1297 words

Byline: Ibrahim Barzak and Christopher Torchia Associated Press

Body

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip -- Israel dropped bombs and leaflets on Gaza on Saturday, pounding suspected rocket sites and tunnels used by <u>Hamas</u> militants and warning of a wider offensive despite frantic diplomacy to end the bloodshed.

Egypt hosted talks aimed at defusing the crisis, but war had the momentum on a bloody day on which more than 30 Palestinians, many of them noncombatants, were killed, according to Gaza medics. <u>Hamas</u> fighters launched 15 rockets at southern Israel, injuring three Israelis in the city of Ashkelon, the Israeli military said.

At hospitals, distraught relatives -- men in jeans and jackets and <u>women</u> in black Islamic robes -- sobbed and shrieked at the loss of family. Flames and smoke rose over Gaza City amid heavy fighting.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas predicted a "waterfall of blood" unless all parties adhere to a United Nations call for a cease-fire. But Israel has said the Security Council resolution passed Thursday was unworkable, and *Hamas*, the Islamic group whose government controls Gaza but is not recognized internationally, was angry that it was not consulted.

Damascus-based <u>Hamas</u> leader Khaled Mashaal made a fiery speech on Arab news channel Al-Jazeera, describing the Israeli assault as a "holocaust." Still, <u>Hamas</u> teams were in Cairo to discuss a cease-fire proposed by Egypt.

At least 814 Palestinians, roughly half of them civilians, have died since war broke out on Dec. 27, according to Palestinian medical officials. Thirteen Israelis, including 10 soldiers, have been killed.

Weary Palestinians watched from apartment windows as thousands of leaflets fluttered from aircraft with a blunt warning: Israeli forces will step up operations against Islamic militants who have unleashed a daily barrage of rocket fire on southern Israeli towns.

"The IDF (Israeli Defense Forces) is not working against the people of Gaza but against <u>Hamas</u> and the terrorists only," the leaflets said in Arabic. "Stay safe by following our orders."

The leaflets urged Gaza residents not to help <u>Hamas</u> and to stay away from its members. There was no immediate sign of an escalation, though earlier in the day, witnesses said Israeli troops moved to within one mile of Gaza City before pulling back slightly.

Israeli defense officials say they are prepared for a third stage of their offensive, in which ground troops would push further into Gaza but are waiting for approval from the government. Early on Sunday, Israeli tanks were heard

moving near the central Gaza border as Israeli artilley pounded the area, indicating the possibility of a larger operation.

Palestinian witnesses said Israeli forces fired phosphorus shells at Khouza, a village near the border, setting a row of houses on fire. Hospital official Dr. Yusuf Abu Rish said a woman was killed and more than 100 injured, most suffering from gas inhalation and burns. Israeli military spokesman Capt. Guy Spigelman categorically dened the claims.

The Israeli military said it did not know of such an incident. Also, <u>Hamas</u> security officials said fierce battles were in progress early Sunday in eastern Gaza City and northern Gaza.

The officials, speaking on condition of anonymity because they were discussing classified information, said the army also has a fourth stage planned that calls for a full reoccupation of Gaza and toppling of *Hamas*.

The leaflets reflected Israeli efforts to cast <u>Hamas</u> as the source of the conflict that has brought additional misery to Gaza's 1.4 million people, who live in poverty in the densely inhabited shard of land along the Mediterranean. Israel hopes the suffering will erode support for <u>Hamas</u>, which won 2006 elections and engineered a violent takeover of Gaza in June 2007, overrunning the forces of its Palestinian rival Fatah.

For now, though, the fury of the Israeli onslaught has deepened bitterness toward Israel among trapped Gaza residents. Traffic through border crossings with Egypt and Israel is heavily restricted, and many Gazans survive on international handouts or goods smuggled through tunnels that are also used by *Hamas* to bring in weapons.

Israel launched the offensive on Dec. 27 after years of Palestinian rocket attacks on Israel, and has attributed many civilian casualties in the past two weeks to <u>Hamas</u>'s alleged use of civilian areas as hiding places and staging grounds for attacks.

On Jan. 3, Israeli ground troops moved into Gaza, but they have largely avoided deployment in built-up areas where they would be more vulnerable to hit-and-run assaults. Israel holds elections in one month, and its leaders know staunch support for the military campaign could dwindle if the forces take heavy casualties.

The 15 rockets launched at southern Israel are part of a daily ritual that has severely disrupted life for hundreds of thousands of civilians. Three Israelis were injured in the city of Ashkelon.

The Israeli military said aircraft attacked more than 40 <u>Hamas</u> targets including 10 rocket-launching sites, weapons-storage facilities, smuggling tunnels, an anti-aircraft missile launcher and gunmen. At least 15 militants were killed, it said.

In the day's bloodiest incident, an Israeli tank shell killed nine people in a garden outside a home in the northern Gaza town of Jebaliya, said Adham el-Hakim, administrator of Kamal Adwan hospital. The nine were from the same clan and included two children and two *women*.

The Israeli military, however, said its forces did not carry out attacks in that area on Saturday.

Struggling to keep peace efforts alive, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and Abbas urged Israel and <u>Hamas</u> to agree to a truce.

After meeting Mubarak, Abbas warned there was no time to waste in ending the bloodshed in Gaza.

"If any party does not accept it (the truce), regrettably it will be the one bearing the responsibility. And if Israel doesn't want to accept, it will take the responsibility of perpetuating a waterfall of blood," Abbas said.

Hamas and Abbas's Fatah party, which dominates the West Bank, are fierce political rivals.

<u>Hamas</u> officials from both Gaza and Syria are also in Cairo for separate talks with Egyptian officials on a truce. Israeli officials were in Cairo earlier this week.

Israel drops bombs, leaflets as it warns Gaza of a wider war

U.S. President George W. Bush spoke by telephone to President Abdullah Gul of Turkey, which is involved in Mideast peace efforts, about the situation in Gaza, said a spokesman for the National Security Council in Washington.

"President Bush emphasized the importance of bringing an end to rocket fire against Israel and preventing arms smuggling into Gaza as the basis for a durable cease-fire," spokesman Gordon Johndroe said.

German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, on a peace mission to the region, visited the Rafah border crossing between Gaza and Egypt and saw a fireball from a large detonation in Gaza. He felt the pressure from the blast, which caused windows to rattle.

"We are standing here while the fighting is still on back there," said Steinmeier, who later traveled to Israel. "It is right and correct to be concerned about the injured and the dead, but the European foreign ministers must do more so that words can be turned into deeds."

The U.N. estimates two-thirds of Gaza's 1.4 million people now lack electricity, and half don't have running water.

The Israeli military announced a three-hour halt to operations in Gaza on Saturday to let medics use the lull to rescue casualties and aid groups to rush through food distribution. But for the second straight day, fighting continued even during the lull.

Israel has called for the three-hour breaks in fighting for the past four days. But aid groups say it isn't enough time to do their work.

Also on Saturday, tens of thousands of people demonstrated in European cities and Lebanon, shouting protests against the Israeli offensive in Gaza.

Load-Date: January 11, 2009



THE ISRAELI OFFENSIVE IN GAZA: PRO: Yes, free Gaza --- from terrorist tyranny

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

January 7, 2009 Wednesday

Main Edition

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The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Section: @ISSUE; Pg. 8A

Length: 577 words

Byline: REDA MANSOUR

For the Journal-Constitution

Body

Some of the Arab and Muslim demonstrators who recently came to our offices were holding signs that said "Free Gaza." Many Israelis would raise that same sign, me included, but for different reasons. People tend to forget that as of August 2005, Israel has not been in Gaza, and that the Gazans have been under <u>Hamas</u> control since June 2007. Indeed, Gaza needs to be freed from many different extremist forces.

Gaza should be freed from <u>Hamas</u>, a terrorist organization that seized the strip by force. Since the takeover, <u>Hamas</u> has run Gaza's economy into the ground and now nearly half of the work force is unemployed. <u>Hamas</u> has built a Taliban-style state in Gaza and introduced many of the Islamic Shari'a laws, institutionalizing the persecution of <u>women</u> and minorities.

<u>Hamas</u> has transformed Gaza from a free territory to a large bunker, a place where rockets are stored under families, schools and places of prayer. Unfortunately, Gazans not only live among this militarization, but are now a tool in <u>Hamas'</u> aggression. The terrorist organization has developed a strategy of using innocent civilians as human shields. When Israel warns that the houses of <u>Hamas</u> operatives and commanders will be targeted, the terrorists bring in innocent citizens, often by force, in an effort to increase the likelihood of civilian casualties. <u>Hamas'</u> leaders rely on the strict Israeli moral code, hoping to avoid being attacked or that a strike will allow them to score points in the media by sacrificing their own people, creating what looks like acts of Israeli military aggression.

Gaza should be freed from the intervention of Iran, a state that openly admits to financing <u>Hamas</u>. Iran is also helping Palestinian terror organizations with training, intelligence and equipment. Some of this "aid" is channeled through Hezbollah in Lebanon --- yet another Iranian proxy organization. Hezbollah and Iran use the Gazans to maintain regional political relevance in their empty agenda against Israel.

THE ISRAELI OFFENSIVE IN GAZA: PRO: Yes, free Gaza --- from terrorist tyranny

Gaza should be freed from some of the Arab satellite channels like Al-Jazeera. These television stations engage in the direct incitement of the Arab and Muslim world. Everything is acceptable in their eyes to raise their ratings: including long shots of bodies and injuries. Some of these channels do not dismiss any editing trick and consider propaganda as a normal part of their news reporting.

As far as Israel is concerned, Gaza is free and it is the decision of its inhabitants what the area's destiny will be. They can continue to buy into the self-defeating promises of terrorist organizations and extremist ideologies. Even worse, they can continue to let these organizations use them as human shields and demolish their hopes and futures.

Gazans can only truly be free by declaring Gaza a terror-free zone. The people of Gaza have many resources in their hands to achieve success. Gaza could use its beautiful Mediterranean coast to attract Israeli and Egyptian tourists. It can renew the flower and fruit exports to Europe that Israel left behind. The airport that was built there can be reopened. The seaport that is planned and even the natural gas fields in its waters could be built. The people of this region need to make the decision that Gaza will become a model of peace and stability and hopefully, the beginning of the two-state solution: Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace.

* Ambassador Reda Mansour is consul general of Israel to the Southeast.

Graphic

Photo: * Ambassador Reda Mansour is consul general of Israel to the Southeast./ImageData*

Load-Date: January 7, 2009



Israeli troops move on Gaza, five children killed

Sydney Morning Herald (Australia)

January 6, 2009 Tuesday

Fourth Edition

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Section: NEWS AND FEATURES; Pg. 1

Length: 815 words

Byline: Jason Koutsoukis Herald Correspondent on the Gaza-Israel border

Body

ISRAELI forces inched closer to central Gaza City yesterday as <u>Hamas</u> fighters tried to lure them into a dangerous urban conflict where they would be more exposed to ambush raids.

As the number of Palestinians killed since the start of Operation Cast Lead 10 days ago rose towards 550, including five children yesterday, Israeli leaders continued to reject international demands for a ceasefire.

"Gaza City is partially surrounded," Israel's Defence Minister, Ehud Barak, told his parliament's foreign affairs and defence committee. "We have hit <u>Hamas</u> hard, but we have not yet reached all the goals that we have set for ourselves and the operation continues."

A <u>Hamas</u> leader in the Gaza Strip, Mahmoud Zahhar, urged <u>Hamas</u> fighters "to crush your enemy" in a speech aired on *Hamas*-run al-Aqsa TV.

Egypt was expected last night to pressure <u>Hamas</u> into accepting a ceasefire deal that would involve EU monitoring of Gaza's border with Egypt and preventing weapons smuggling - It is believed Israel would accept such a deal.

against Gaza for 18 months on a model of the main city built at a desert army base.

"Our soldiers know all the back streets where their targets are," a military spokesman, Avi Benayahou, told Israeli TV.

The army was putting into practice the painful lessons learned from Israel's 2006 war in Lebanon. "The IDF has no intention of staying in one spot, but rather plans to keep in constant movement with manoeuvres around Jabaliya, Sajaiya as well as the launching areas of Beit Hanoun and Beit Lahiya, without necessarily entering the built-up area as the terrorists want them to," one security source told the newspaper Maariv.

Another 14 Palestinians were killed yesterday, including five children killed in two separate Israeli strikes around Gaza City, Palestinian medics said.

Three children were killed by a tank shell in Zeitun and two were killed in Shati by a naval strike, according to the head of Gaza medical emergency services Moawiya Hassanein. Nine other people, the identities of whom were not immediately available, were killed near Beit Hanoun and Beit Lahiya.

Israel was reported to be using white phosphorous shells to cover the advance of its troops. The munitions are not illegal, but their use has been heavily criticised for causing terrible burns.

Foreign journalists are still barred from entering Gaza, but there were reports of <u>Hamas</u> fighters firing mortar bombs at the invading Israeli forces, but few direct clashes.

Military officials said they had not yet encountered some of the more sophisticated weaponry that <u>Hamas</u> was believed to have smuggled into Gaza, perhaps indicating that <u>Hamas</u>'s arms stockpiles had been severely reduced by seven days of aerial and naval bombing.

One Israeli soldier was killed on Sunday, another was seriously wounded and more than 30 others had moderate injuries.

<u>Hamas</u> fighters continued to launch Qassam rockets and mortar shells into Israel yesterday, hitting several populated areas but causing no fatalities.

All hospitals in northern Gaza have been without mains electricity for the past 48 hours, and were dependent on back-up generators which hospital authorities warn are close to collapse.

The loss of power has left Gaza's telephone network also near collapse.

Israel allowed a convoy of 80 trucks transporting medicine and food aid to enter Gaza on Monday through the Kerem Shalom crossing in the south, a military spokesman said, while 200,000 litres of fuel for Gaza's electricity station and 120 tonnes of cooking gas was transported through the Nahal Oz terminal in the north.

The Erez crossing was opened to allow 200 Palestinian holders of foreign passports to leave.

The United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs, which has a significant presence in Gaza, reported that 20 per cent of the people killed and 40 per cent of the 2400 people injured since the start of the operation have been **women** and children.

With fuel supplies almost at an end, the UN agency believes that almost the whole of Gaza's 1.5 million residents are living without any electricity, while 70 per cent of the population has no access to running water.

The UN also has fears heavy fighting in northern Gaza could lead to Beit Lahiya being flooded by about 3 million cubic metres of raw sewage.

Israeli defence officials appeared pleased with their progress, believing the bombardment that accompanied the troops as they entered Gaza had severely diminished *Hamas*'s ability to return fire.

One military official said the Israeli Army was moving slowly to minimise the chances of its soldiers being kidnapped or killed in ambushes.

"This is a very dangerous type of warfare. Many of the buildings we have entered have various traps installed, so we must not be in a hurry," the official said. "*Hamas* is still putting up a fight."

According to reports in the Israeli media, the army had trained for its ground attack

Graphic

Load-Date: January 5, 2009



Combatants reject UN call

Windsor Star (Ontario)

January 10, 2009 Saturday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. B7

Length: 508 words

Byline: Matthew Fisher, Canwest News Service

Dateline: SDEROT, Israel

Body

A major new Israeli ground offensive in Gaza was still being contemplated on Friday after Israel and <u>Hamas</u> both rejected a ceasefire call by the United Nations Security Council and continued shooting at each other.

After his war cabinet dismissed the non-binding UN resolution, which passed 14-0 in New York on Thursday with the U.S. abstaining, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said in a statement that his army, air force and navy "would continue operations" against the Palestinian territory.

It was not made public after the cabinet meeting whether Olmert's war cabinet had voted on or approved a plan to broaden the war by sending more ground troops into Gaza. Thousands of reservists were placed on alert in case such an escalation gets the green light.

Referring to more than 30 rockets and mortars that were fired into southern Israel from the narrow coastal strip Friday, Olmert said this "proves" the UN motion was "not practical and will not be honoured ... by the Palestinian murder organizations."

For its part <u>Hamas</u>, which has ruled Gaza since staging a bloody coup against the Fatah Movement in 2007, also announced through three mid-ranking officials that it would ignore the move by the Security Council.

As Raafat Morra, <u>Hamas</u>'s spokes-man in Lebanon, told Agence France-Presse the resolution "does not suit us because it is not in the best interest of the Palestinian people."

Israel has demanded an end to rocket attacks from Gaza. <u>Hamas</u> has, in turn, insisted that all Israeli forces quit the territory and that all its border crossings be reopened.

The UN resolution envisaged a ceasefire that would result in the full withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza and an unhindered flow of humanitarian aid shipments to the Palestinians, as demanded by <u>Hamas</u> and an end to all rocket attacks and to the smuggling of arms and ammunition into the territory from Egypt.

As night fell Friday, Israel pressed its offensive, firing salvos of phosphorous shells into Gaza. This created hazy conditions that may make it easier for its ground forces to operate safely.

TANK ATTACK

Combatants reject UN call

After meetings in Tel Aviv Friday, the UN announced it would reopen humanitarian corridors in Gaza in the near future after receiving fresh assurances of safe passage from Israel for its workers and vehicles. Humanitarian aid deliveries had been suspended on Thursday after two truck drivers were killed by what the UN said was an Israeli tank attack.

Against most expectations, demonstrations against the Israeli offensive in the West Bank had been fairly muted until Friday when thousands of worshippers left Friday prayers across the larger and more prosperous of the two Palestinian territories. However, the protests were marred by clashes between supporters of <u>Hamas</u> and Fatah, which runs the West Bank.

The death toll in Gaza since fighting began on Dec. 27 surpassed 784 Friday, with <u>women</u> and children making up about 40 per cent of the dead, according to Reuters, which cited health officials in the enclave. Thirteen Israelis have died, including 10 soldiers.

Graphic

Photo: David Silverman, Getty Images; NO RESPITE: A large explosion rocks the northern Gaza Strip Friday during an Israeli air force attack against the Palestinian town of Beit Hanoun. Both the militant Islamic movement <u>Hamas</u> and Israel have rejected a UN Security Council call for an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, following Israel's 14-day offensive on the <u>Hamas</u>-ruled coastal territory.;

Load-Date: January 10, 2009



Israel on moral high ground battling ememy's dirty war

The Calgary Herald (Alberta)

January 4, 2009 Sunday

Final Edition

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Section: THE EDITORIAL PAGE; Pg. A8; Lorne Gunter

Length: 847 words

Byline: Lorne Gunter, Edmonton Journal

Body

Among the many civilians injured during this past week's war between <u>Hamas</u> and Israel, 12 were wounded beyond the ability of Gazan doctors and hospitals to treat them.

Where were these victims sent for the specialized care they needed to save their lives? To Cairo? Beirut? Riyadh or Dubai?

No, they were sent to (and willingly received at) hospitals in Tel Aviv.

Indeed, Israel is the default destination for Palestinians on the West Bank and Gaza when-ever one of them is hurt beyond the capacity of local hospitals to heal them. Many Jewish charities around the world raise hundreds of millions of dollars annually to operate hospitals where all are treated, Jew or Palestinian, for free.

If Israel truly were a heartless oppressor, would its hospitals, doctors and medical staffs so willingly treat members of an "enemy" community?

It may be true--may be --that since Israel began Operation Cast Lead against the <u>Hamas</u> government of Gaza last Saturday, 400 Gazans have died. And it may also be true, according to the United Nations, that a quarter of these --approximately 100--have been civilians.

There is good reason to doubt the casualty claims of any terror organization battling Israel. Each knows full well that most western news agencies will uncritically report any death toll they announce, so most pad the numbers. Some even go to elaborate lengths to make their inflated claims appear accurate.

For instance, during the siege of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem in the spring of 2002, Palestinian sources insisted upwards of 60 Palestinians, mostly civilians, had been lost. Bodies were brought from the morgue of a nearby hospital and placed around the inside of the church and in its yard, so that when the siege finally lifted and photographers and TV cameramen were permitted in, there were plenty of corpses to film.

In fact, just eight died during the siege, most of them Palestinian fighters.

Something similar happened at Qana in the summer of 2006, when Israel was battling Hezbollah in southern Lebanon. There, Israeli jets accidentally bombed an apartment building --they believed it housed a missile launching site that was actually the building next door.

Israel on moral high ground battling ememy's dirty war

Hezbollah claimed 57 were killed, many of them <u>women</u> and children. Reporters and emergency crews were kept from the site for more than an hour, though, and when they arrived, they found bodies already decomposing, a sign perhaps that fresh graves had been hastily dug up and the corpses in them removed to the apartment rubble for media benefit.

In fact, around 20 were killed. At Jenin, Hebron and elsewhere, time after time, Palestinians and others seeking Israel's destruction have overstated their losses, especially the civilian ones.

There is plenty of reason to doubt the 400-killed number, then. But let's for a minute assume it is true. Can there be any doubt that were the roles reversed and <u>Hamas</u> had the modern jets and helicopter gunships and 1,000-kilogram bombs that only 400 Israelis would have been killed and of those only 100 civilians?

Four hundred dead in these attacks (versus four dead Israelis in <u>Hamas</u>'s rocket attacks in the past week) seems disproportionate, even if this is not a numbers game. But would <u>Hamas</u> go to similar pains to kill only combatants and to kill civilians only when they are being used as shields to hide behind by <u>Hamas</u> officials and fighters?

It is unlikely <u>Hamas</u> would be Israel's greatest source of humanitarian aid once bombing began, too. Nevertheless, Israel has been Gaza's.

According to Israel government statistics (which you are welcome to take with a grain of salt), in the first six days of the conflict, nearly 200 trucks carrying more than 6,000 tonnes of supplies, "basic food commodities, medication, medical supplies . . . and blood units" have entered Gaza from Israel. Not a single truck has passed in from Egypt (Gaza's only Arab neighbour) nor have ships laden with supplies from Saudi Arabia or Iran docked.

Iran has threatened to send suicide bombers into the region, but no rations or bandages. No doubt Iran and other governments have provided <u>Hamas</u> with weapons since fighting began last weekend, but they have shown little enthusiasm for aid.

Israel has not been entirely saintly in this fight. The killing New Year's Day of *Hamas* leader Nizar Rayan, along with his four wives and 11 of his children, seems a particularly brutal act, especially when Israel's army has shown itself capable time and again of targeting only the terrorists it wants to kill and leaving nearby civilians unscathed.

Still, the deaths in the past week, civilian or otherwise, would have been avoided if <u>Hamas</u> and its allied Islamic radicals had not provoked Israel by lobbing more than 7,000 rockets and mortars into Israel since 2001 (nearly 2,800 in '08 alone), killing a total of 28 civilians.

<u>Hamas</u> has time and again shown itself incapable of honouring its peace agreements with Israel. So I cannot see how Israel can stop this fight before **Hamas** is incapacitated.

Lorne Gunter is a columnist with the Edmonton Journal and the National Post.

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Load-Date: March 20, 2009



Call for a truce in Gaza rejected by the Israelis

The Daily Telegraph (London)

January 1, 2009 Thursday

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The Daily Telegraph

Section: NEWS; Pg. 13

Length: 440 words

Byline: Tim Butcher in Jerusalem

Body

ISRAEL'S attacks on Gaza looked certain to continue last night after international demands for a 48-hour ceasefire were dismissed.

The offensive entered its fifth day after the Israeli government said conditions were not right to stop the bombardment.

It came as the White House gave its backing to the hard-line approach, saying <u>Hamas</u> must stop firing rockets before any ceasefire could be agreed. President George W Bush expressed support for Israel's stance when he telephoned Ehud Olmert, the prime minister.

Gordon Johndroe, a White House spokesman, said: "President Bush got an assurance from Prime Minister Olmert that Israel is only targeting <u>Hamas</u> and that terrorist organisation. President Bush thinks <u>Hamas</u> needs to stop firing rockets, and that is what will be the first steps in a ceasefire."

Washington's position contrasted with that of the United Nations and the European Union, which called for an end to operations from both sides because of the dire conditions facing Gaza's population of 1.5 million.

Gordon Brown said the people of Gaza were enduring a "humanitarian crisis" and said it was "vital that moderation must now prevail".

Most Gazans have been confined to their homes since Israel began Operation Cast Lead and are without power, running water or access to food supplies. Hospitals are overrun.

Israel has barred international media from reaching Gaza but local sources said 390 Palestinians had died since Israel began its attacks on Saturday. About a quarter were **women**, children and other non-combatants.

Israel rejected a proposal for a 48-hour ceasefire to allow humanitarian supplies into Gaza on the grounds that it would give *Hamas* the chance to regroup.

Call for a truce in Gaza rejected by the Israelis

There was no sign of *Hamas* stopping its rocket attacks, which have killed four Israelis. The town of Beersheba, 25 miles from Gaza, was hit yesterday.

Spokesmen for <u>Hamas</u> in Gaza gave contradictory signals about whether the movement would consider a ceasefire.

Ayman Taha, a police spokesman, said: "If such a proposition is made to us, we will examine it as we are favourable to any initiative that will put an end to the aggression and totally lift the blockade."

But Fawzi Barhum, a government spokesman, said: "The current efforts aimed at ending the combat and installing a ceasefire put the executioner and the victim on equal footing.

"Efforts must focus on ending this aggression, opening the border crossings and rebuilding Gaza."

Israeli jets continued to attack Gaza yesterday, hitting at least one mosque, which Israel claimed to be a weapons store used by *Hamas*.

A government spokesman said Israel was allowing humanitarian aid into Gaza.

Load-Date: January 1, 2009



Israel mulls ceasefire in Gaza Strip; Still ready for ground invasion

The Vancouver Province (British Columbia)

December 31, 2008 Wednesday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A15

Length: 596 words

Byline: Agence France-Presse

Dateline: GAZA CITY

Body

GAZA CITY -- Israel yesterday mulled a proposed 48-hour truce as world leaders stepped up calls for an end to the violence and warplanes pummelled *Hamas* targets in the battered Gaza Strip for a fourth day.

Defence Minister Ehud Barak was looking favourably at the proposal for a brief ceasefire, his spokesman said, stressing that this would not prevent Israel from preparing for a possible ground offensive.

Israeli officials warned that the onslaught, which has killed at least 373 Palestinians, could continue for weeks, while *Hamas* militants fired more deadly rockets and threatened to step up their attacks on Israel.

"We tell the leaders of the enemy -- if you continue with your assault, we will hit with our rockets farther than the cities we have hit so far," a masked spokesman for the Ezzedine al-Qassam Brigades, the <u>Hamas</u> armed wing, said in televised comments.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert last night discussed with his foreign and defence ministers the French proposal for a 48-hour truce.

U.S. President George W. Bush spoke with Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas about a "sustainable ceasefire."

"They agreed that for any ceasefire to be effective, it must be respected, particularly by <u>Hamas</u>," White House spokesman Gordon Johndroe told reporters in Crawford, Texas.

The European Union also called for a "permanent" ceasefire in and around the Gaza Strip, while the Middle East Quartet called for "an immediate ceasefire that would be fully respected."

But throughout the day, Israeli officials insisted the armed forces would press on with the offensive, which has sparked Muslim outrage and protests worldwide.

"What we want is not a ceasefire but a stop to terrorism," said President Shimon Peres.

Infrastructure Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer warned a ceasefire would allow <u>Hamas</u> "to regain strength, recover from the shock and prepare an even stronger attack against Israel."

"There is no reason that we would accept a ceasefire at this stage," he said.

With armoured vehicles and troops massed on the Gaza border, the Israeli military said ground forces are ready to join what politicians have warned would be a prolonged offensive.

Olmert said the bombardment so far was "the first of several stages approved by the security cabinet," while Deputy Defence Minister Matan Vilnai warned the offensive -- one of Israel's deadliest against Gaza -- could turn into "weeks of combat."

World leaders have expressed serious concern about the humanitarian situation in Gaza, a tiny, aid-dependent territory of 1.5 million which Israel has virtually sealed off since *Hamas* seized power in June last year.

Israel opened one of its crossings into Gaza for a third consecutive day yesterday, the Defence Ministry said, adding that a total of 179 truckloads of humanitarian supplies and 10 ambulances were delivered since the start of the military offensive.

Meanwhile, warplanes blew up dozens of tunnels along Gaza's border with Egypt, which <u>Hamas</u> used to smuggle weapons and bring in "terror activists," a military spokesman said. "These tunnels play a major role in supplying **Hamas** with the means of strengthening its ability to carry out terror."

The spokesman said 30 more targets were attacked yesterday, including rocket launchers, weapons manufacturing facilities and "armed terror operatives."

Since the massive aerial attack was unleashed on Saturday, at least 373 Palestinians, including 39 children, have been killed and 1,720 wounded. Palestinian militants have also fired more than 250 rockets and mortar shells, killing four people inside Israel and wounding 24. --

Graphic

Colour Photo: Agence France-Presse; A veiled <u>female</u> member of the Ezzedine al-Qassam Brigades, the military wing of <u>Hamas</u>, attends a protest yesterday.;

Load-Date: December 31, 2008



<u>Israel tells Gazans to brace for escalation in war</u>

Charleston Gazette (West Virginia)

January 11, 2009, Sunday

Copyright 2009 Charleston Newspapers

Section: NEWS; Pg. P10A

Length: 1323 words

Byline: Ibrahim Barzak and Christopher Torchia, The Associated Press

Body

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip - Israel dropped bombs and leaflets on Gaza on Saturday, pounding suspected rocket sites and tunnels used by <u>Hamas</u> militants and warning of a wider offensive despite frantic diplomacy to end the bloodshed.

Egypt hosted talks aimed at defusing the crisis, but war had the momentum on a bloody day on which more than 30 Palestinians, many of them noncombatants, were killed, according to Gaza medics. <u>Hamas</u> fighters launched 15 rockets at southern Israel, injuring three Israelis in the city of Ashkelon, the Israeli military said.

At hospitals, distraught relatives - men in jeans and jackets and <u>women</u> in black Islamic robes - sobbed and shrieked at the loss of family. Flames and smoke rose over Gaza City amid heavy fighting.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas predicted a "waterfall of blood" unless all parties adhere to a United Nations call for a cease-fire. But Israel has said the Security Council resolution passed Thursday was unworkable and *Hamas*, the Islamic group whose government controls Gaza but is not recognized internationally, was angry that it was not consulted.

Damascus-based <u>Hamas</u> leader Khaled Mashaal made a fiery speech on Arab news channel Al-Jazeera, describing the Israeli assault as a "holocaust." Still, <u>Hamas</u> teams were in Cairo to discuss a cease-fire proposed by Egypt.

At least 814 Palestinians, roughly half of them civilians, have died since war broke out on Dec. 27, according to Palestinian medical officials. Thirteen Israelis, including 10 soldiers, have been killed.

Weary Palestinians watched from apartment windows as thousands of leaflets fluttered from aircraft with a blunt warning: Israeli forces will step up operations against Islamic militants who have unleashed a daily barrage of rocket fire on southern Israeli towns.

"The IDF [Israeli Defense Forces] is not working against the people of Gaza but against <u>Hamas</u> and the terrorists only," the leaflets said in Arabic. "Stay safe by following our orders."

The leaflets urged Gaza residents not to help <u>Hamas</u> and to stay away from its members. There was no immediate sign of an escalation, though earlier in the day, witnesses said Israeli troops moved to within one mile of Gaza City before pulling back slightly.

Israel tells Gazans to brace for escalation in war

Israeli defense officials say they are prepared for a third stage of their offensive, in which ground troops would push further into Gaza, but are waiting for approval from the government. Early on Sunday, Israeli tanks were heard moving near the central Gaza border as Israeli artillery pounded the area, indicating the possibility of a larger operation.

Palestinian witnesses said Israeli forces fired phosphorus shells at Khouza, a village near the border, setting a row of houses on fire. Hospital official Dr. Yusuf Abu Rish said a woman was killed and more than 100 injured, most suffering from gas inhalation and burns. Israeli military spokesman Capt. Guy Spigelman categorically denied the claims.

The Israeli military said it did not know of such an incident. Also, <u>Hamas</u> security officials said fierce battles were in progress early today in eastern Gaza City and northern Gaza.

The officials, speaking on condition of anonymity because they were discussing classified information, said the army also has a fourth stage planned that calls for a full reoccupation of Gaza and toppling of *Hamas*.

The leaflets reflected Israeli efforts to cast <u>Hamas</u> as the source of the conflict that has brought additional misery to Gaza's 1.4 million people, who live in poverty in the densely inhabited shard of land along the Mediterranean. Israel hopes the suffering will erode support for <u>Hamas</u>, which won 2006 elections and engineered a violent takeover of Gaza in June 2007, overrunning the forces of its Palestinian rival Fatah.

For now, though, the fury of the Israeli onslaught has deepened bitterness toward Israel among trapped Gaza residents. Traffic through border crossings with Egypt and Israel is heavily restricted, and many Gazans survive on international handouts or goods smuggled through tunnels that are also used by *Hamas* to bring in weapons.

Israel launched the offensive on Dec. 27 after years of Palestinian rocket attacks on Israel, and has attributed many civilian casualties in the past two weeks to <u>Hamas</u>'s alleged use of civilian areas as hiding places and staging grounds for attacks.

On Jan. 3, Israeli ground troops moved into Gaza, but they have largely avoided deployment in built-up areas where they would be more vulnerable to hit-and-run assaults. Israel holds elections in one month, and its leaders know staunch support for the military campaign could dwindle if the forces take heavy casualties.

The 15 rockets launched at southern Israel are part of a daily ritual that has severely disrupted life for hundreds of thousands of civilians. Three Israelis were injured in the city of Ashkelon.

The Israeli military said aircraft attacked more than 40 <u>Hamas</u> targets including 10 rocket-launching sites, weapons-storage facilities, smuggling tunnels, an anti-aircraft missile launcher and gunmen. At least 15 militants were killed, it said.

In the day's bloodiest incident, an Israeli tank shell killed nine people in a garden outside a home in the northern Gaza town of Jebaliya, said Adham el-Hakim, administrator of Kamal Adwan hospital. The nine were from the same clan and included two children and two **women**.

The Israeli military, however, said its forces did not carry out attacks in that area on Saturday.

Struggling to keep peace efforts alive, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and Abbas urged Israel and <u>Hamas</u> to agree to a truce.

After meeting Mubarak, Abbas warned there was no time to waste in ending the bloodshed in Gaza.

"If any party does not accept it [the truce], regrettably it will be the one bearing the responsibility. And if Israel doesn't want to accept, it will take the responsibility of perpetuating a waterfall of blood," Abbas said.

Hamas and Abbas's Fatah party, which dominates the West Bank, are fierce political rivals.

Israel tells Gazans to brace for escalation in war

<u>Hamas</u> officials from both Gaza and Syria are also in Cairo for separate talks with Egyptian officials on a truce. Israeli officials were in Cairo earlier this week.

U.S. President George W. Bush spoke by telephone to President Abdullah Gul of Turkey, which is involved in Mideast peace efforts, about the situation in Gaza, said a spokesman for the National Security Council in Washington.

"President Bush emphasized the importance of bringing an end to rocket fire against Israel and preventing arms smuggling into Gaza as the basis for a durable cease-fire," spokesman Gordon Johndroe said.

German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, on a peace mission to the region, visited the Rafah border crossing between Gaza and Egypt and saw a fireball from a large detonation in Gaza. He felt the pressure from the blast, which caused windows to rattle.

"We are standing here while the fighting is still on back there," said Steinmeier, who later traveled to Israel. "It is right and correct to be concerned about the injured and the dead, but the European foreign ministers must do more so that words can be turned into deeds."

The U.N. estimates two-thirds of Gaza's 1.4 million people now lack electricity, and half don't have running water.

The Israeli military announced a three-hour halt to operations in Gaza on Saturday to let medics use the lull to rescue casualties and aid groups to rush through food distribution. But for the second straight day, fighting continued even during the lull.

Israel has called for the three-hour breaks in fighting for the past four days. But aid groups say it isn't enough time to do their work.

Also on Saturday, tens of thousands of people demonstrated in European cities and Lebanon, shouting protests against the Israeli offensive in Gaza.

Barzak reported from Gaza City and Torchia from Jerusalem. Associated Press writer Frieder Reimold contributed to this report from Rafah at the Gaza-Egyptian border.

Load-Date: January 12, 2009



Israel pounds Gaza City after warning of escalation

The Balochistan Times (AsiaNet)
January 11, 2009 Sunday

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Length: 580 words

Body

GAZA CITY - Tanks and warplanes pounded the outskirts of Gaza City before dawn on Sunday after Israel warned it would escalate its war on *Hamas* targets, as the death toll in the 16-day-old conflict passed 850.

With the body count spiralling, <u>Hamas</u> remained defiant in the face of Egyptian-led efforts to broker a cease fire, vowing it would not negotiate a truce "under fire."

And medics said three Palestinians were killed and dozens wounded by heavy Israeli tank fire and air strikes, some according to doctors by banned white phosphorous shells that Israel denied using.

As dawn approached, an AFP correspondent reported increasing tank fire on the Al Sheikh Ajlin and Zeitun neighbourhoods of Gaza City, as well as on Sudaniyah, near the Mediterranean Sea in northwestern Gaza. <u>Hamas</u> and Islamic Jihad said several people had been hurt during clashes between Palestinian gunmen and Israeli tanks on the edge of Al Sheikh Ajlin.

They said militants were placing roadside bombs to impede the advance of the tanks, believed to be attempting their first incursion into the neighbourhood.

An Israeli military spokeswoman confirmed the army had forces in the area, saying they were part of the ongoing operation, but would not say whether their attacks were intensifying or were the beginning of a new push. Israeli planes on Saturday dropped leaflets over Gaza warning the Jewish state was about to escalate its campaign against the embattled territory's *Hamas* rulers in a bid to stop rocket fire into Israel.

Dr Yusef Abu Rish at Gaza City's Nasser hospital told that at least 55 people were injured early Sunday by white phosphorous shells, banned under international law for use against civilians, but permitted for creating smokescreens. "These people were burned over their bodies in a way that can only be caused by white phosphorous," said Abu Rish. A military spokeswoman denied the claims. "There is no use of white phosphorous. Everything we use is according to international law," she said.

A closed-door briefing was told on Saturday that Israeli troops had killed more than 550 Palestinian fighters since the operation began, a senior military official told .Army spokesman Jacob Dallal declined to confirm the number but said "several hundred" fighters, most of them from <u>Hamas</u>, had been killed since Israel launched its offensive on December 27. "There is no question that the military ability of <u>Hamas</u> has been diminished," he said.

But <u>Hamas</u> supremo Khaled Meshaal, speaking from exile in Syria, said Israel was making no headway. "I can say with full confidence that on the military level the enemy has totally failed; it has not achieved anything," Meshaal said in pre-recorded remarks broadcast on Arabic satellite television.

Israel pounds Gaza City after warning of escalation

"Has it stopped the rockets?" he asked of Israel's declared aim in launching the offensive.

Meshaal added that <u>Hamas</u> would not accept any truce without the withdrawal of all Israeli forces and the lifting of the blockade slapped on the territory when the Islamists seized power in 18 months ago. "With an open mind we will work with any initiative or any resolution but only based on these demands. We will not accept negotiations on a truce under fire," he said.

Since the Israeli offensive began on December 27, at least 854 people have been killed, including 270 children, 93 **women**, and 12 paramedics, according to Palestinian medics. Another 3,490 people have been wounded, overwhelming Gaza's beleaguered medical facilities.

Load-Date: January 16, 2009



Foreigners flee battered Gaza; Israel presses aerial bombardment; fears of a ground invasion rising

The International Herald Tribune January 3, 2009 Saturday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1

Length: 1014 words

Byline: Taghreed El-Khodary and Isabel Kershner - The New York Times Media Group

Dateline: GAZA

Body

Taghreed El-Khodary reported from Gaza and Isabel Kershner reported from Jerusalem. Reporting was contributed by Reem Makhoul-Farrell in Jerusalem, Khaled Abu Aker in Ramallah and Alan Cowell in London.

*

Israeli warplanes pounded targets in Gaza on Friday for a seventh day and Israel allowed hundreds of foreigners, many of them married to Palestinians, to leave the enclave, raising fears here that Israel was planning to escalate its campaign.

Tensions spread to the West Bank and East Jerusalem, where Palestinian anger at the reports from Gaza of civilian casualties seemed to be translating into at least a temporary increase in popular sympathy for *Hamas*.

Israel has vowed to press its offensive until there is no more rocket fire out of Gaza. Its troops and tanks remained along the border, poised for a possible ground invasion. But Palestinian militants continued to launch rockets at southern Israel, with several hitting the coastal city of Ashkelon.

Israeli air and naval forces struck more bases of <u>Hamas</u>, the Islamic group that controls Gaza. The military said it had hit the houses of several militants that it asserted served as weapons stores. It also hit rocket launchers, launching sites and tunnels used for weapons smuggling.

Warplanes also bombed a mosque in Jabaliya, in northern Gaza. The military said <u>Hamas</u> was using the mosque as a base and was storing rockets there. It was the mosque where Nizar Rayyan, the senior <u>Hamas</u> militant leader who was killed in an Israeli strike Thursday, used to preach. Rayyan's four wives, at least nine of his children and several neighbors also were killed when his home was bombed.

About 2,000 Gazans turned out for the funeral rally in Jabaliya on Friday. Speakers called for revenge as fighter jets swooped threateningly overhead.

Residents went out to pray at mosques and to shop for essentials, but did not linger. Many families were evacuating buildings near *Hamas* compounds.

Foreigners flee battered Gaza Israel presses aerial bombardment fears of a ground invasion rising

Health officials in Gaza said that 430 Palestinians have been killed and about 2,200 have been wounded so far since the Israeli assault began Dec. 27. The casualty figures include many <u>Hamas</u> security personnel, but the United Nations estimates that a quarter of those killed were civilians.

Three Israeli civilians and one soldier have been killed in rocket attacks, as <u>Hamas</u> deployed its more advanced, longer-range projectiles capable of hitting Israeli cities more than 30 kilometers away, or 20 miles.

Hundreds of spouses of Palestinians, including <u>women</u> from Romania, Russia, Ukraine and nations in Western Europe, left Gaza on Friday with the help of diplomats from their countries.

Alla Semaks, 34, a Ukrainian married to a Palestinian, and her four children were among about 300 people who came in buses to the Erez checkpoint in northern Gaza to cross into Israel. Her husband, Mohammed Atawneh, 36, was not leaving because he had only Palestinian identity papers, she said in a telephone interview. "I want to come back when the situation allows it," she said. "I have nothing in Ukraine. My children are very afraid for their father. We fear there will be an Israeli ground offensive."

After the killing of the Rayyans on Thursday, *Hamas* called on Palestinians in the West Bank and East Jerusalem to mark Friday as a "day of wrath."

Both Israel and the Western-backed Palestinian Authority have been working assiduously to subdue <u>Hamas</u> in the West Bank since the Islamic group took over Gaza in 2007. But the attack on Gaza and the gruesome images broadcast by Arab television networks are stirring strong emotions among Palestinians in the West Bank, and anger against Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

The Palestinian Authority security forces had been instructed to prevent any popular displays of support for <u>Hamas</u> or clashes with Israeli forces, by keeping protesters away from Israeli Army checkpoints and other flashpoints, leading some Palestinians to accuse the authority of colluding with Israel.

In the southern West Bank city of Hebron, demonstrators clashed with Palestinian police officers who tried to block them from marching as they exited a mosque after Friday noon prayers. The protesters threw stones and the police beat them with clubs and fired in the air, wounding at least 10 people.

A few thousand Palestinians protested in Ramallah, the administrative headquarters of the authority in the West Bank. Some chanted slogans in favor of national unity, others for more rocket fire and revenge. A few were arrested for raising the green flag of *Hamas*.

In Israeli-controlled East Jerusalem, the police came out in force to prevent disturbances after noon prayers. Entry to the revered Al Aqsa Mosque in the Old City was restricted to Arab Israelis and Palestinian residents over the age of 50. A blimp hovered overhead.

Small riots broke out in some Arab neighborhoods around the city, but most were quickly dispersed.

Muneer al-Zughair, a spokesman in Jerusalem for the families of Palestinian prisoners, said that <u>Hamas</u> was much stronger after what he called "the massacre" in Gaza. "People feel that they are the only ones who are doing something for the Palestinian people," he said.

At the entrance to the Shuafat refugee camp on the edge of Jerusalem, Palestinian youths burned tires and threw stones at an Israeli checkpoint where soldiers stood in full riot gear.

A man from the camp who identified himself only as Qassem said: "Everyone is against what is happening in Gaza. The Israeli Army are the terrorists."

Many decried the bombing of mosques and the deaths of civilians.

"Let them go in on the ground and take <u>Hamas</u>, but spare the children," said a taxi driver from the camp who identified himself by his first name, Yasir. The missiles from the air, he added, "do not differentiate."

Foreigners flee battered Gaza Israel presses aerial bombardment fears of a ground invasion rising

At a news briefing at the White House on Friday, the deputy press secretary, Gordon Johndroe, said that Israel had a right to defend itself from the rocket attacks out of Gaza. But he added that Israel also needed to "avoid unnecessary civilian casualties" and to continue the flow into Gaza of humanitarian goods.

Load-Date: January 13, 2009



Australian Jews protest against Israel's action

Sydney Morning Herald (Australia)

January 6, 2009 Tuesday

First Edition

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Section: NEWS AND FEATURES; International News; Pg. 9

Length: 597 words

Byline: Andrew West and Jonathan Pearlman

Body

MORE than 100 Australian Jews, including two award-winning novelists and a former federal cabinet minister, have signed a statement condemning Israel's siege of Gaza, heightening tensions within the local Jewish community over the violence.

The Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, meanwhile called yesterday for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza but refused to criticise the Israeli offensive.

Authors Linda Jaivin and Sara Dowse, the environment minister in the Whitlam government, Moss Cass, and the NSW Greens leader, Ian Cohen, are among 120 Australian Jews to accuse the Israeli Government of a "grossly disproportionate military assault on Gaza because it was Israel that violated the fragile truce on November 4, 2008".

Their statement has provoked a backlash from leaders of Australia's main Jewish groups, who argue that Israel is acting in self-defence.

The statement was co-ordinated, but not endorsed, by the group Independent Australian Jewish Voices. It is part an international outcry from dissident Jewish groups, including J Street in the US and Gush Shalom in Israel.

The signatories agree that Israel has a right to defend itself but say "the assault on the population of Gaza will only inflame hatred of Jews, and of the state of Israel, while doing nothing to protect the lives of Israelis".

They argue that "crude home-made rockets" fired by the <u>Hamas</u>-led government in Gaza have caused relatively few Israeli casualties. "By contrast, Israeli bombardment has caused around 400 deaths and 2000 casualties, including a large proportion of <u>women</u> and children."

Other signatories include the controversial anti-Zionist writer Antony Loewenstein, the literary critic Andrew Riemer, and academics Andrew Benjamin, Gavin Kitching, David Goodman and Michele Grossman.

"This is a solid minority of leading Jewish figures who are sick and tired of being told what Jews should think about Israel and are appalled by Israel's crimes in Gaza," Mr Loewenstein said.

But the executive director of the Australia/Israel and Jewish Affairs Council, Colin Rubenstein, accused the signatories of being "indifferent to Israel's suffering" from repeated rocket attacks from <u>Hamas</u>.

Australian Jews protest against Israel 's action

Dr Rubenstein said: "The comments are grossly ill informed, almost stunning in their ignorance, on the history of the ceasefire and its subsequent breakdown, <u>Hamas</u>'s demands, <u>Hamas</u>'s constitution, <u>Hamas</u>'s willingness to negotiate and other matters.

"They propose that the population of southern Israel must continue to live under constant rocket bombardment, opposing all practical efforts to actually invoke the right to self-defence the signatories say they recognise."

The head of the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies, Vic Alhadeff, declined to comment directly on the dissenters' statement but also blamed the crisis in Gaza on <u>Hamas</u>, saying it had fired more than 8000 rockets and mortars into Israel since 2001.

"All the civilian casualties are a tragedy. They stem from the fact that <u>Hamas</u> cynically locates its weapons and fighters in the midst of the Palestinian civilian population," he said.

In his first comments on the conflict after a 10-day holiday, Mr Rudd appealed for a diplomatic solution that would bring an end to <u>Hamas</u> rocket fire and the Israeli blockade of the territory.

"All Australians are concerned about the humanitarian implications of this conflict.

"And it is critical therefore for Israel to meet its humanitarian obligations under international humanitarian law towards the people of Gaza, in ensuring that they have access to basic goods, food and humanitarian assistance and medical supplies,"he said.

Load-Date: January 5, 2009



WE'LL BURY GAZA; ISRAEL INVASION THREAT AS TOLL HITS 290

Daily Record

December 29, 2008, Monday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 2

Length: 486 words

Byline: By Paul Byrne

Body

ISRAEL yesterday prepared for a full-scale invasion of Gaza after calling up 6500 reservists.

Tanks and troops were gathering on the border last night after a second day of bombing raids on Palestinian militant targets.

At least 290 people have been killed and more than 800 injured.

And Egyptian guards opened fire on Palestinians who breached the border to escape the assault.

A security official said there were at least five breaches along the nine-mile border and hundreds of Palestinian residents were pouring in.

Israel has warned it is prepared to crush *Hamas*, who it blames for more than 300 rocket attacks on Israeli towns in the past week.

As the United Nations called for a ceasefire, Israel's defence minister Ehud Barak issued a stark warning, saying: "The time has come to fight".

And military spokeswoman Major Avital Leibovich said: "Israel has had enough. We have to do whatever we can to protect ourselves."

Exiled <u>Hamas</u> leader Khaled Meshaal called for a new intifada, or uprising, against Israel.

UN secretary general Ban Ki-moon, Middle East envoy Tony Blair and the French EU presidency all called for a ceasefire. The air raids came eight days after the end of a six-month truce between Israel and <u>Hamas</u> - the elected government in Gaza.

Israel claims more than 300 shells have been fired at it in the past week. In response, F-16 fighters attacked <u>Hamas</u> bases.

Yesterday, missiles hit one of <u>Hamas</u>'s main security compounds in Gaza City, killing four and injuring 25. Bombs also destroyed a mosque outside the main hospital in Gaza City.

Gaza health official Dr Moaiya Hassanain said at least 290 people were killed, including 183 members of <u>Hamas</u> security forces.

WE'LL BURY GAZA ISRAEL INVASION THREAT AS TOLL HITS 290

Civilian casualties in the coastal strip included a 15-year-old boy. Late last night, Israeli aircraft attacked a building in the ebaliya refugee camp next to Gaza City, killing a 14-month-old baby, a man and two <u>women</u>, Dr Hassanain said.

Warplanes also struck dozens of smuggling tunnels under the Gaza-Egypt border, cutting off a lifeline that had supplied *Hamas* with weapons and Gaza with commercial goods.

The goods helped *Hamas* defy an 18-month blockade of Gaza by Israel.

More than a dozen rockets were fired into Israel from Gaza yesterday despite the bombings.

Prime Minister Gordon Brown called for restraint. He said: "I am deeply concerned by continuing missile strikes from Gaza on Israel and by Israel's response."

And Pope Benedict said: "I implore an end to that violence, which must be condemned in all its manifestations, and the restoration of the truce in the Gaza Strip."

A candlelit vigil was held in Glasgow's George Square yesterday for the Gaza victims.

In London, 10 protesters were arrested during clashes with police outside the Israeli embassy.

Demonstrators said further rallies would continue today.

Iran's Red Crescent Society have sent planes with 50 tons of medicine, food and clothing to Egypt to be sent on to Gaza.

Graphic

HORRIFIC: An injured Palestinian prisoner in the rubble of a jail in Gaza City after it was hit in an Israeli missile strike. Inset, bombs hit the north Gaza Strip AP/GETTY IMAGES

Load-Date: December 29, 2008



<u>Fears in Gaza of a ground attack; Foreigners are allowed to leave as Israeli</u> jets pound enclave for 7th day

The International Herald Tribune
January 3, 2009 Saturday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1

Length: 1005 words

Byline: Isabel Kershner and Taghreed El-Khodary - The New York Times Media Group

Dateline: JERUSALEM

Body

Taghreed El-Khodary reported from Gaza. Rina Castelnuovo contributed from Ashdod, Israel. Alison Smale contributed from Paris and Alan Cowell contributed from London.

*

Israeli warplanes bombed Gaza for a seventh day Friday and the military allowed foreigners, many of them married to Palestinians, to leave the beleaguered enclave, raising fears of a ground offensive.

After an Israeli bomb killed a senior leader of the Islamic group <u>Hamas</u> on Thursday, warplanes pounded Gaza overnight and early Friday, hitting some targets, like government offices, that had already been smashed in previous bombardments.

Israeli troops and tanks remained massed along the border with Gaza.

Israel says the campaign is designed to destroy the ability of militants to fire rockets into southern Israel, where three civilians and a soldier have been killed in rocket attacks in the last week. Since the Israeli offensive began Dec. 27, <u>Hamas</u> has deployed longer-range rockets capable of hitting Israeli cities more than 30 kilometers away, or about 20 miles. <u>Hamas</u> officials said that more missiles were fired Friday, but no Israeli casualties were reported.

As of Thursday, medical officials in Gaza said the number of Palestinians killed in the Israeli bombardment had topped 400.

At least several hundred spouses of Palestinians, including <u>women</u> from Romania, Russia, Ukraine and nations in Western Europe, began leaving Gaza early Friday with the help of diplomats from their countries.

Alla Semaks, 34, a Ukrainian married to a Palestinian, said in a telephone interview that she and her four children were among about 300 people in buses at the Erez checkpoint with Israel waiting to leave northern Gaza. Her husband, Mohammed Atawneh, 36, was not leaving because he had only Palestinian identity papers, she said.

"I want to come back when the situation allows it," she said. "I have nothing in Ukraine. My children are very afraid for their father. We fear there will be an Israeli ground offensive."

Fears in Gaza of a ground attack Foreigners are allowed to leave as Israeli jets pound enclave for 7th day

The <u>Hamas</u> leader killed Thursday was Nizar Rayyan. Also killed when the Israeli Air Force bombed his house were his four wives and nine of his children, four of them under the age of 18, Palestinian hospital officials said.

An Israeli military spokeswoman, Major Avital Leibovich, described Rayyan as one of the "most extreme" figures of *Hamas*. The military has asserted that he helped plan a suicide bombing in Israel in 2004, sent his own son on a suicide mission against Jewish settlers in Gaza in 2001 and was advocating renewed suicide missions against Israel in retaliation for the current offensive. His funeral was planned for Friday.

Rayyan was known in Gaza as an influential figure with strong links to the military wing of *Hamas*, particularly in northern Gaza, where he lived, and as a popular *Hamas* preacher who championed the idea of martyrdom.

The Israeli military said in a statement that there were secondary explosions after the air attack that killed him, "proving that the house was used for storing weaponry." The military also claimed that the house was used as a communications center and that a tunnel had been dug under it for use by *Hamas* operatives.

Most <u>Hamas</u> leaders in Gaza have been in hiding since the Israeli operation began, but Rayyan was said to have refused to leave his home on ideological grounds. In the past, he had been known to gather supporters to stand on the rooftops of houses in Gaza that Israel threatened to strike.

While hundreds of thousands of Gazans have received Israeli warnings in the form of phone messages or fliers that their buildings were targets, Leibovich, the Israeli military spokeswoman, said she could not say whether Rayyan's family had been warned.

<u>Hamas</u> called on Palestinians in the West Bank and in East Jerusalem to mark Friday as a "day of wrath" by holding marches after noon prayers.

<u>Hamas</u> has responded to the military assault by firing yet more rockets deeper into Israel. On Thursday, a rocket fired from Gaza struck an apartment building in the port of Ashdod, about 30 kilometers north of the Palestinian territory, causing extensive damage but no serious injuries.

The Israeli foreign minister, Tzipi Livni, made a brief visit to Paris on Thursday, meeting with French leaders who were seeking ways to promote a cease-fire. Before she left for France, Livni suggested that Israel was seeking more time for its military operation.

She met with President Nicolas Sarkozy and Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner for "an exchange of opinions and ideas" and to share information about Israel's intentions and plans, an Israeli official said.

In Paris, Livni rejected Kouchner's proposal for a 48-hour truce for humanitarian purposes. "There is no humanitarian crisis" in Gaza, she said, "and therefore there is no need for a humanitarian truce."

The European Union issued a statement calling for an "immediate and permanent cease-fire," including an "unconditional halt to rocket attacks by *Hamas* on Israel and an end to Israeli military action."

While Israeli officials have said their goal is to halt the rocket fire from Gaza, they have been less clear about whether they hope to topple <u>Hamas</u>, which won Palestinian parliamentary elections in 2006 and then took full control of Gaza in June 2007 after routing forces loyal to the Palestinian Authority.

But by including symbols of the government among its targets, Israel seemed to be blurring the lines. On Thursday, Israeli warplanes and naval forces bombed the legislative building - a Gaza landmark - and the Ministry of Justice, the Israeli military said.

Israeli human rights groups have appealed to Defense Minister Ehud Barak, demanding that Israel restore fuel supplies to Gaza to ensure the proper functioning of hospitals, water wells and other vital humanitarian institutions.

Sari Bashi, director of one of the groups, Gisha, which advocates the free movement of Palestinians, said that while food and medicine were coming into Gaza, the supply of fuel had been "extremely minimal" for two months.

Fears in Gaza of a ground attack Foreigners are allowed to leave as Israeli jets pound enclave for 7th day

Load-Date: January 13, 2009



Finger Pointing Over Israel and Gaza

The New York Times
January 9, 2009 Friday
Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section A; Column 0; Editorial Desk; Pg. 26; LETTERS

Length: 962 words

Body

To the Editor:

The Jan. 8 Op-Ed column and articles about the Gaza conflict by Nicholas D. Kristof, Rashid Khalidi and Gideon Lichfield all create a false picture of the situation Israel faces with regard to *Hamas*. The notion, espoused in these articles, that Israeli military action is the source of the problems and counterproductive because it brings *Hamas* more support misses the crux of the problem.

<u>Hamas</u> took over in Gaza not in response to Israeli military actions but after Israel unilaterally left Gaza in 2005, a moment that offered hope for a new life for Palestinians. Rather than being taken as a building block to peace, the Palestinians backed a group committed to Israel's destruction. In other words, Israeli concessions led to greater Palestinian extremism.

Therefore, to blame Israel's military for the problems of the Palestinians in Gaza is absurd and provides no solace for Israelis living under years of rocket attacks out of Gaza.

Any solution to the problems created by *Hamas* rejectionist positions that relies solely on Israeli action without true partners in the region and beyond places an onus on Israel that is simply not sustainable.

Abraham H. Foxman National Director Anti-Defamation League New York, Jan. 8, 2009

To the Editor:

Re "What You Don't Know About Gaza" (Op-Ed, Jan. 8):

Here's what many readers already knew before Rashid Khalidi condescendingly tried to correct them:

It is true that the residents of Gaza live in an untenable situation, but it is a situation that can be resolved only by political settlement. If all children of refugees decide to take up arms because they did not choose to be where they have found themselves, most of the world would be at war.

The citizens of Gaza knowingly elected a gang of extremist thugs that opts for war at every turn and puts its own civilians on the front lines. With freedom comes responsibility. When the people elect war, they get war. The Israelis have been very clear that they would continue to maintain a blockade until <u>Hamas</u> recognizes the Jewish state's right to exist.

Finger Pointing Over Israel and Gaza

Again, if Gaza elects rejectionism and belligerency, complaints against the logical consequences ring hollow.

<u>Hamas</u> deliberately provoked an Israeli military response with relentless attacks aimed specifically at a civilian population. The numbers do indeed speak for themselves, but only when considered fairly and accurately in the proper context. Let us lay responsibility where it belongs.

Julien Gorbach Santa Fe, N.M., Jan. 8, 2009

To the Editor:

Thank you for publishing Rashid Khalidi's excellent Op-Ed article.

His concise, coherent and articulate article goes a long way in helping to explain not only the current situation in Gaza but also what led to this crisis.

I am in full agreement with Professor Khalidi that if Israel had fulfilled the terms of the June cease-fire and lifted the stifling blockade of Gaza, the catastrophe that we are witnessing could in all probability have been avoided.

Karen Russo Arlington, Vt., Jan. 8, 2009

To the Editor:

Re "Fighting to Preserve a Myth," by Gideon Lichfield (Op-Ed, Jan. 8):

As Mr. Lichfield and others point out, trying to weaken Palestinian support for <u>Hamas</u> by killing hundreds of Gazans isn't working. Instead, how about closing some West Bank settlements now, even as the military and diplomatic actions to stop the Qassam rockets continue?

Many settlements will have to be dismantled anyway in an ultimate peace agreement, and as the much stronger party, Israel won't weaken its negotiating position by closing some now. There will be significant settler opposition, but the Gaza campaign has renewed the Israeli government's political capital.

By rewarding the nonbelligerent Palestinian Authority even as it punishes *Hamas*, Israel can demonstrate that it really has a vision for a better Middle East, and not just a blind lust for retaliation.

Kevin Johnson Boston, Jan. 8, 2009

The writer was chief of mission, National Democratic Institute West Bank and Gaza, 1995-96.

To the Editor:

Nicholas D. Kristof ("Gaza Boomerang," column, Jan. 8) claims that Israel's ground invasion of Gaza is not justified because it has killed more than 660 people as opposed to the 20 Israelis killed by *Hamas* rockets.

Perhaps the fact that Israel looks to protect its citizens with sirens and bomb shelters while <u>Hamas</u>, in turn, shelters itself by hiding among innocent civilians has more to do with the resulting death tolls than the actual force used.

While Israel goes out of its way to minimize loss of innocent life, it seems that <u>Hamas</u> values its own citizens less than the Israelis do.

Shayna Goldberg Bergenfield, N.J., Jan. 8, 2009

To the Editor:

Re "The Mideast's Ground Zero," by Thomas L. Friedman (column, Jan. 7):

Finger Pointing Over Israel and Gaza

The portrayal of <u>Hamas</u> as a dangerous, terrorist, fundamentalist Islamic entity is exactly right, and it should be treated as such by the international community, including the United Nations.

There are very few things that are black and white regarding the Middle East, but here are two facts that the international community should base its actions on:

First, if <u>Hamas</u> were not lobbing rockets into Israel, there would be no war and no civilian casualties on either side; and second, the way to peace is not by espousing the avowed destruction of Israel.

Alan Schoffman Teaneck, N.J., Jan. 7, 2009

To the Editor:

David Brooks, in "The Confidence War" (column, Jan. 6), misses the most important psychological effect of the Israeli incursion into Gaza. The images of dead <u>women</u> and children are sure to radicalize not only the most moderate of Palestinians, but also the populations of the entire Muslim world.

Hanan Watson New York, Jan. 6, 2009

http://www.nytimes.com

Graphic

DRAWING (DRAWING BY JORDAN AWAN)

Load-Date: January 9, 2009



Ordinary Joe's guide to Gaza

Sunday Mail (South Australia)

January 11, 2009 Sunday

1 - State Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 23

Length: 705 words

Byline: Lainie Anderson

Body

AN American website is sending Joe the Plumber - of US election fame - to report on the Gaza conflict. Joe's a Christian who believes he will be ``pretty well protected by God".

And his take on the situation is this: ``It's tragic, I mean it really is. I don't say that in any little way. It's very tragic, but at the same time what are the Israeli people supposed to do?"

I dunno, Joe. Maybe stop killing hundreds of <u>women</u> and children? Just like the Israelis want <u>Hamas</u> to stop killing innocent civilians?

It's easy to dumb this war down to a simple fact: <u>Hamas</u> fired 6000-odd rockets into Israel over the past decade (killing 20 Israelis), so **Hamas** had it coming.

But while black and white views of the world might be convenient for people like Joe, the rest of us owe it to ourselves to consider the shades of grey.

The heart of hatred

IN Australia, it's inconceivable that the government could also be a terrorist organisation dedicated to the destruction of another country. <u>Hamas</u> militants should be reviled for firing rockets into civilian populations, but Palestinian hatred for Israel didn't drop out of the sky.

Most of the 1.4 million people crammed into the 360 sq km Gaza Strip were forcibly relocated from outlying regions when Israel was created in 1948.

Moreover, <u>Hamas</u> is more than a bunch of terrorists with home-made rockets: it has become part of the social fabric, the public provider and protector of a people long overlooked by the Western world.

Clayton's occupation

DESPITE ``withdrawing" from Gaza in 2005, Israel controls airspace, the coast, imports and exports, and the movement of people. In 2006 *Hamas* was elected to rule in Gaza, and Israel, rightly alarmed by the smuggling of Iranian arms, tightened its grip.

Ordinary Joe's guide to Gaza

But the blockade of arms to militants also strangled civilians: as Rashid Khalidi wrote in the New York Times, ``the blockade has subjected many to unemployment, penury and malnutrition". Analysts claim thousands have died because of the Israeli blockade.

The chicken or the egg

ISRAEL and its most staunch supporter, the US, say Israel was forced to act because <u>Hamas</u> refused to accept key terms of a ceasefire brokered last June. (Indeed, Israel's major reason for refusing to stop the current action is that <u>Hamas</u> won't honour a ceasefire.)

But respected British journalist Robert Fisk says on this occasion, Israel broke the ceasefire with two bomb attacks (killing 10) last November. Fisk, however, acknowledges these are simply the most recent of attacks, counter-attacks and counter-counter-attacks that have been going on for more than half a century.

Protection or politics

ISRAEL goes to the polls in February and even some Israelis believe this is the primary motive for the assault.

Defence Minister Ehud Barak and Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni are up against Benjamin Netanyahu, the hawkish Opposition leader. According to Professor Reuven Hazan of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, ``(Barak and Livni) couldn't run an election campaign from late December to early February and just be restrained, letting *Hamas* end the truce and target the Israeli civilian population.

"This would have handed the election to Netanyahu." And it's working - support for Operation Cast Lead is overwhelming.

Do unto others

SITTING in the Adelaide Hills, I find Middle East politics complex, confusing and confronting.

I try to imagine what it would be like to live with the threat of <u>Hamas</u> rockets randomly falling from the sky. Then I try to imagine 1948 - and having my family forced from our home by strangers, ordered to live in one of the most destitute places on Earth. Which is now under assault from F-16s and Merkava tanks.

For what it's worth, I think Israel's response has been disproportionate. The refusal of leaders to call a ceasefire and allow adequate aid into Gaza borders on criminal. And how can this aggression do anything but incite greater hatred and intolerance?

``Defenceless populations are always the ones who pay," said the Vatican's Cardinal Renato Martino. ``Look at the conditions in Gaza: more and more, it resembles a big concentration camp."

Joe the Plumber will be reporting back to America's ``Average Joes". Let's hope he opens their eyes to both sides of this conflict.

Load-Date: January 11, 2009



UN chief for Middle East as Israelis encircle Gaza

RTT News (United States)
January 13, 2009 Tuesday

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Length: 758 words

Body

(RTTNews) - Israel's war to end <u>Hamas</u> rocket attacks from the Gaza Strip intensified Tuesday, with its forces encircling the Gaza city facing resistance from <u>Hamas</u>, reports said.

A combined attack by Israeli air force helicopter gunships, naval gunboats and ground forces in the southern and eastern suburbs of Gaza City came hours after Prime Minister Ehud Olmert warned <u>Hamas</u> militants they would face an "iron fist" unless they agreed to Israel's terms to end the fighting.

With no signs of let-up from Israel and the Gaza militants in the 18-day-old intense fighting, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon is beginning a weeklong trip to the Middle East Tuesday to strengthen the joint diplomatic efforts aimed at ending the crisis.

Despite international diplomatic activity for effecting a cease-fire, the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) made it clear that they have "many more objectives to achieve." The IDF said they destroyed 70% of the tunnels along the Philadelphi Corridor, but there are still more targets to be hit.

<u>Hamas</u>' armed wing, the Ezzedine al-Qassam Brigade, claimed to have destroyed two Israeli tanks in the Gaza City neighborhood of Zeitun, and that they killed many soldiers in the village of Khuzaa, near the Israeli border. The Israeli army refuted these claims.

Reports, quoting witnesses, said Israeli Special Forces advanced into the southern neighborhood of Tal al Hawa after midnight.

Tanks opened fire, backed by aerial bombing, to shatter resistance by Palestinian fighters.

One Palestinian was reported killed and three others wounded in the encounter.

The IDF's incessant attacks deep in the Gaza heartland draw inspiration from Olmert's statement Monday that "We will continue to strike with full strength, with full force until there is quiet and rearmament stops."

In all, Israeli planes Tuesday attacked more than 60 targets in Gaza.

The number of Palestinian casualties has crossed 900 as the Israeli "Operation Cast Lead" aimed at trouncing Gaza militants entered the 18th day. Less than half of those killed are <u>women</u> and children, according to UN humanitarian agency and Gaza medics.

Israel has suffered 13 casualties; ten of them soldiers.

UN chief for Middle East as Israelis encircle Gaza

<u>Hamas</u> members continued to fire rockets Tuesday morning at southern Israel, seven of which hit the Eshkol and Sha'ar Hanegev regions.

Reports said a reduced rate in cross-border rocket barrage and <u>Hamas</u> signaling its willingness to accept a cease-fire with Israel show that the militants are on the defensive.

Ismail Haniyeh, the Prime Minister of the <u>Hamas</u>-ruled Gaza, said in a televised speech that his group would cooperate with any initiative to stop the offensive and reopen the border- crossings to the Gaza Strip.

Haniyeh has been in hiding since the offensive began December 27.

During his Middle East tour, the UN Secretary General will discuss the issue with leaders of Israel, the Palestinian Territory, Egypt, Jordan, the Lebanon, Syria, Turkey and Kuwait.

Both Israelis and <u>Hamas</u> ignored last week's Security Council resolution calling for an immediate, durable and fully honored ceasefire.

The UN chief's tour is mainly intended to press for the implementation of the resolution.

Announcing this at a press conference Monday, Ban urged both Israel and <u>Hamas</u> to immediately stop the fighting, saying "too many people have died."

He said he wanted his visit to be an expression of solidarity with the 10,000 UN staff in the occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel, who work under the most difficult and dangerous circumstances.

He also wants to demonstrate his "deep concern and empathy for the innocents caught in these terrible circumstances, both in Israel and the Occupied Territory."

Ban will start the mission by meeting with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in Cairo Wednesday.

Thursday, he will be in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, scheduled to meet with Israeli leaders. Later, he will travel across the border to visit Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas in Ramallah.

However, UN officials say Ban will not meet with representatives of *Hamas*, a party to the conflict.

Also Tuesday, gunshots were fired upon an Israeli army patrol along its southern border with Jordan, reports quoting Israeli military said.

It is not clear who opened fire Tuesday morning near the Arava border-crossing north of Eilat.

Israeli forces returned the fire. No casualties have been reported.

For comments and feedback: contact editorial@rttnews.com

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Load-Date: April 16, 2010



Rockets are fired from Lebanon into north Israel; Possibility of second front in war seen

The International Herald Tribune
January 9, 2009 Friday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1

Length: 1338 words

Byline: Steven Erlanger - The New York Times Media Group

Dateline: JERUSALEM

Body

Thanassis Cambanis contributed reporting from Beirut.

*

Israel's conflict with <u>Hamas</u> in Gaza threatened to broaden Thursday as several rockets were fired into the north of Israel from Lebanon.

The rockets, presumably launched in support of <u>Hamas</u>, could presage the opening of a second front. The Israeli Army, in a brief statement, said it had "responded with fire against the source of the rockets," which landed near the town of Nahariya. Two Israelis were slightly wounded, the police said.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility. A spokeswoman for the militant group Hezbollah, which triggered a war with Israel in 2006 by firing rockets into northern Israel from Lebanon, said an investigation was under way. "We are still looking for information about it," she said.

Prime Minister Fouad Siniora of Lebanon immediately condemned the attack, which involved at least three rockets.

In 2006, after the kidnapping of an Israeli soldier just outside Gaza, a large Israeli operation there was overshadowed by Israel's massive response to an attack in the north by Hezbollah, which turned into what is known as the Second Lebanon War.

On Thursday, Israel sent senior officials to talk with Egypt about halting the conflict in Gaza, but there were no signs of a diplomatic breakthrough. International pressure for a negotiated cease-fire intensified after Israeli shells killed some 40 people at a United Nations school in Gaza on Tuesday. Israel said <u>Hamas</u> militants had fired mortar shells from the school compound prior to the Israeli shelling.

On Wednesday, Israel suspended its military operations in Gaza for three hours to allow humanitarian aid and fuel for power generation to reach Gazans, who used the afternoon break to shop.

But fighting resumed soon afterward and continued into a 13th day Thursday. For the second successive day, Israel said it paused its offensive for three hours to permit Gaza residents to seek medical and food supplies.

Rockets are fired from Lebanon into north Israel Possibility of second front in war seen

On Wednesday evening, the Israeli Army dropped leaflets warning the residents of Rafah, next to the border with Egypt, to leave their homes. Israel has been bombing the tunnel networks through which arms and consumer goods are smuggled from Egypt into Gaza.

The rockets fired Thursday from Lebanon fell in residential areas. Shimon Koren, head of the northern district police, instructed residents of Nahariya and Kabri to enter bomb shelters, and he instructed residents in nearby localities to open their shelters. School was canceled in Nahariya and nearby Shlomi.

The Israeli government said it welcomed the efforts of France and Egypt to work out a durable cease-fire. It said it would end its assault if <u>Hamas</u> stopped firing rockets into Israel and ended the smuggling of weapons from Egypt. It added that if a durable cease-fire took hold, it would reopen border crossings into Gaza for goods and people.

But Israeli and <u>Hamas</u> officials both denied an assertion by the French president, Nicolas Sarkozy, that a cease-fire had been agreed upon.

"There is an agreement on general principles, that <u>Hamas</u> should stop rocket fire and mustn't rearm," a senior Israeli official said Wednesday evening. "But that's like agreeing that motherhood is a good thing. We have to transform those agreed principles into working procedures on the ground, and that's barely begun."

The Israeli government spokesman, Mark Regev, said that "the challenge now is to get the details to match the principles."

A senior French official in Paris said that Sarkozy's comment was misunderstood: "The plan is not a cease-fire; the plan is a road map toward a cease-fire."

There were early signs that a formal diplomatic negotiation could begin after days of fighting. The Egyptian chief of intelligence, Omar Suleiman, was expected to serve as a go-between for Israel and *Hamas*. Two Israeli officials - a senior aide to Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, Shalom Turgeman, and a senior defense official, Amos Gilad - arrived in Egypt on Thursday to begin discussions, Israeli officials said.

The United States has been involved behind the scenes, senior Israeli and French officials said, with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice "constantly on the phone" with Olmert, according to one Israeli official.

In Washington, the White House spokeswoman, Dana Perino, said of talks about a cease-fire: "As I understand, the Israelis are open to the concept, but they want to learn more about the details; so do we."

At the United Nations, several Arab delegates said Wednesday night that they thought they had enough votes to approve a Security Council resolution calling for an immediate cease-fire. That could put the United States and other Western powers, which oppose a binding resolution, in the awkward position of having to veto a cease-fire.

One crucial aspect of any deal is how to prevent new smuggling tunnels from being built under the Egyptian border with Gaza.

The senior Israeli official raised the possibility of reaching "tacit agreements" with <u>Hamas</u> to end rocket fire while also persuading Egypt to allow American and perhaps European army engineers to help seal its border with Gaza above and below ground.

<u>Hamas</u> is insisting that any new arrangement include the reopening of border crossings for trade with Israel and the reopening of the Rafah crossing into Egypt for people.

President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt has said that a 2005 agreement on the Rafah crossing, reached with Israel and the Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas of Fatah, must be respected. That agreement called for a Palestinian Authority presence at the crossing, supervision by European Union monitors and Israeli video surveillance of who entered and left.

Hamas wants to control the crossing itself and is not eager to cooperate with Fatah, its rival.

Rockets are fired from Lebanon into north Israel Possibility of second front in war seen

In Washington, the U.S. president-elect, Barack Obama, said Wednesday that upon taking office he would "engage immediately" in the Middle East crisis and that he was "deeply concerned" about the loss of life on both sides.

"I am doing everything that we have to do to make sure that the day I take office we are prepared to engage immediately in trying to deal with the situation there," he said at a news conference. "Not only the short-term situation but building a process whereby we can achieve a more lasting peace in the region."

In Gaza, John Ging, director of Gazan operations for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, visited the school in the Jabaliya refugee camp where Israeli shells fell Tuesday. He denied that <u>Hamas</u> militants had fired mortar shells from within the school compound and called for an international investigation into the attack, which he said had killed 40 people.

Israeli officials said they were continuing to investigate, but they reiterated that <u>Hamas</u> had been using the school as a base. Gilad, the defense official, told Israeli Army radio: "This school served as a base for <u>Hamas</u> men whose identity we know. They fired from inside the school compound, and the army fired back at the source. The time was after school hours, and this school is an example of the cynical and cruel use <u>Hamas</u> does with civilian facilities."

Casualty figures are hard to verify, but officials at Shifa Hospital in Gaza and the Gazan Ministry of Health said that 683 Palestinians had died since the conflict began Dec. 27, including 218 children and 90 <u>women</u>. They said 3,085 had been wounded. The Palestinian Center for Human Rights in Gaza said 130 children age 16 or younger had died. The United Nations estimated a few days ago that a quarter of the dead were civilians.

But Palestinian residents and Israeli officials say that <u>Hamas</u> is tending its own wounded in separate medical centers, not in public hospitals, and that it is difficult to know the number of dead <u>Hamas</u> fighters, many of whom were not wearing uniforms.

Israel says it has killed at least 130 <u>Hamas</u> fighters. Ten Israelis have been killed during the offensive, including three civilians. Most of the seven dead Israeli soldiers were killed in so-called friendly fire.

Load-Date: February 3, 2009



Hundreds killed in air assault on Gaza Strip

The New Zealand Herald December 28, 2008 Sunday

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Section: NEWS; World Length: 1041 words

Body

JERUSALEM - Israeli warplanes sent more than 100 tons of bombs crashing down on key security installations in <u>Hamas</u>-ruled Gaza on Saturday, launching an open-ended campaign mean to stop rocket and mortar attacks that have traumatised southern Israel.

At least 225 Palestinians, most of them militants, were killed and more than 400 wounded in one of the bloodiest days in decades of Israeli-Palestinian fighting. One Israeli was also killed, and six Israelis were wounded.

The unprecedented assault sparked protests and condemnations throughout the Arab world, and many of Israel's Western allies urged restraint, though the US blamed *Hamas* for the fighting.

But there was no end in sight. Israel obliquely threatened to go after <u>Hamas</u>' leaders, and militants kept pelting Israel with rockets. Hundreds of Israeli infantry and armoured corps troops headed for the Gaza border in preparation for a possible ground invasion, military officials said, speaking on condition of anonymity under army guidelines.

The Israeli airstrikes caused widespread panic and confusion, and black plumes of smoke billowed above the territory, ruled by the Islamic militant *Hamas* for the past 18 months.

Some of the Israeli missiles struck in densely populated areas as students were leaving school, and <u>women</u> rushed into the streets frantically looking for their children. At least 15 civilians were killed, officials said.

"My son is gone, my son is gone," wailed Said Masri, a 57-year-old shopkeeper, as he sat in the middle of a Gaza City street, slapping his face and covering his head with dust from a bombed-out security compound nearby.

He said he had sent his 9-year-old son out to purchase cigarettes minutes before the airstrikes began and could not find him.

"May I burn like the cigarettes, may Israel burn," Masri moaned.

The offensive began eight days after a six-month truce between Israel and the militants expired. The Israeli army says Palestinian militants have fired some 300 rockets and mortars at Israeli targets over the past week, and 10 times that number over the past year.

"There is a time for calm and there is a time for fighting, and now is the time for fighting," said Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak, vowing to expand the operation if necessary.

In Gaza City's main security compound, bodies of more than a dozen uniformed *Hamas* police lay on the ground.

Hundreds killed in air assault on Gaza Strip

Civilians rushed wounded people in cars and vans to hospitals because there weren't enough ambulances to transport all the dead and wounded.

"There are heads without bodies ... There's blood in the corridors. People are weeping, <u>women</u> are crying, doctors are shouting, " said nurse Ahmed Abdel Salaam from Shifa Hospital, Gaza's main treatment centre.

Military officials said aircraft released more than 100 tons of bombs in the first nine hours of fighting, focusing initially on militant training camps, rocket-manufacturing facilities and weapons warehouses that had been identified in advance.

A second wave was directed at squads who fired about 180 rockets and mortars at Israeli border communities.

Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni said *Hamas*' political leaders could soon be targeted.

""Hamas is a terrorist organisation and nobody is immune," she declared.

The campaign was launched six weeks before national elections. Livni and Barak hope to succeed Ehud Olmert as prime minister, and the outgoing government has faced pressure to take tough action.

Gaza's political leaders, who have been targeted in the past, went into hiding earlier this week. In a speech broadcast on local Gaza television, <u>Hamas'</u> prime minister, Ismail Haniyeh, declared his movement would not be cowed.

"We are stronger, and more determined, and have more will, and we will hold onto our rights even more than before," Haniyeh said. It was not clear where he spoke.

In Damascus, Syria, Hamas' top leader, Khaled Mashaal, called on Palestinians to rekindle their fight against Israel.

"This is the time for a third uprising," he said.

Israel withdrew its troops and settlers in 2005 after crushing the second Palestinian uprising, but it has maintained control over the territory's border crossings.

Despite the overwhelming show of force, it was not clear the offensive would halt the rocket fire. Past operations have never achieved that goal.

Late Saturday, Gaza health official Dr Moaiya Hassanain said 225 Palestinians were killed and more than 400 were wounded.

The lone fatality in Israel was in the town of Netivot, where a rocket killed an Israeli man. Six other people were wounded, rescue services said.

Netivot only recently become a target, and dozens of stunned residents, some weeping, gathered at the house that took the deadly rocket hit. A hole gaped in one of the walls, which was pocked with shrapnel marks.

"We need to finish this once and for all and strike back hard," said next-door neighbour Avraham Chen-Chatam, 57.

Streets were nearly empty in Sderot, the Israeli border town pummelled hardest by rockets. But dozens of people congregated on a hilltop to watch the Israeli aerial attacks.

The TV images of dead and wounded Gazans inflamed Arab public opinion, and protests erupted in Arab Israeli villages, the West Bank and elsewhere in the Arab world.

The campaign embarrassed moderate Arab regimes that have encouraged Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking and weakened <u>Hamas</u>' rival, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, who has ruled only the West Bank since <u>Hamas</u> violently seized control of Gaza in June 2007.

Hundreds killed in air assault on Gaza Strip

Abbas condemned the attacks, but fearing violence could spiral out of control, his forces also broke up protests in the West Bank.

The offensive also risked opening new fronts, including unrest that could destabilize the West Bank and ignite possible rocket attacks by Lebanese Hezbollah guerrillas on northern Israel.

Britain, the EU, the Vatican, the UN secretary-general and special Mideast envoy Tony Blair all called for an immediate restoration of calm. The Arab League scheduled an emergency meeting Sunday to discuss the situation.

But the US, Israel's closest ally, blamed *Hamas*.

"These people are nothing but thugs, so Israel is going to defend its people against terrorists like <u>Hamas</u> that indiscriminately kill their own people," White House spokesman Gordon Johndroe said.

- AP

Load-Date: December 28, 2008



Ordinary people in an extraordinary environment; In 2007, the Sunday Tribune's Mick McCaffrey visited the al-Fakhora school that was bombed by Israel last Tuesday

Sunday Tribune (Ireland)

January 11, 2009

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Section: NEWS; Pg. N18

Length: 684 words

Body

In July 2007, Sunday Tribune photographer Mark Condren and I travelled to Gaza to report on the kidnapping of BBC journalist Alan Johnston.

Three weeks before our arrival vicious fighting raged between <u>Hamas</u> and the more moderate Fatah, with the latter's fighters and supporters driven out of Gaza.

Because the international community did not recognise <u>Hamas</u>, which is regarded as a Muslim fundamentalist group, Gaza was effectively left without a government, and because the area was considered too dangerous for westerners we were the only two journalists there.

We were escorted around the territory by staff of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA). UNRWA had stepped in to fill the political void and was - and still is - the de facto government of Gaza.

The agency is headed by Offaly native John Ging, who controls a budget of \$360 million and is in charge of 21,000 workers. So popular is Ging in Gaza that one senior UN worker told me that if he were to run for president he would win a landslide victory.

As part of our three-day trip to the most populous area on the planet, we visited the Jabalya refugee camp which houses 120,000 people in conditions that can most kindly be described as primitive.

UNRWA aims to educate the children of Gaza so they will not grow up to be the next generation of suicide bombers. One of the agency's greatest achievements has been establishing a network of schools throughout Gaza.

We visited the al-Fakhora school in the Jebaliya camp and were greeted by dozens of smiling youngsters who wanted to hug us, play football, have their pictures taken and generally mess around and behave like children.

The welcome we received by the innocent kids will live long on my memory and one little girl gave me a picture she drew of a Palestinian flag alongside an Irish tricolour.

After a two hour visit we left the school and the children ran after us and made us promise to come back soon.

Last Tuesday the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) bombed al-Fakhora school, despite UNRWA repeatedly telling the Israeli authorities that the building was a UN educational facility. Forty-two people, including <u>women</u> and 14 children, were killed.

Ordinary people in an extraordinary environment In 2007, the Sunday Tribune's Mick McCaffrey visited the al-Fakhora school that was bombed by Israel last Tuesda....

Israel claimed that <u>Hamas</u> fighters were launching mortar attacks from the building. UNRWA denies this and the IDF has not produced evidence. The 400 people sheltering in the school were hoping the UN flag would guarantee their safety.

<u>Hamas</u> is regarded as one of the biggest terror groups in the world by both the US and the EU. On our visit we were provided with armed bodyguards by UNRWA but nobody - UNRWA included - can operate in Gaza without the permission of <u>Hamas</u>.

<u>Hamas</u> provided us with six armed fighters for protection. They travelled everywhere with us in a pick-up, except when we went to see the Bedouin people in the desert. <u>Hamas</u> told us that if Israeli spy cameras saw them in an exposed area a fighter jet would be sent to kill them.

Our six bodyguards were all in their late 20s, like Mark and me. We bought them Coca-Cola and sat at the side of the road chatting about Manchester United and the English Premier league while their automatic weapons lay on the ground. They did not seem like terrorists but ordinary men in an extraordinary environment.

Ordinary <u>Hamas</u> soldiers like this are among the more than 700 Palestinians who have died in the offensive. The vast majority of the dead were civilians. The past two weeks have shown that Israel does not care about international opinion. It will stay in Gaza until <u>Hamas</u> is destroyed and the bodies of the innocent will continue to pile up.

In July 2007, after the <u>Hamas</u>-Fatah conflict, Ging told me about the future of Gaza. "There will be more violence, despair, misery and poverty. It is an entrenched political problem that's not going to go away any time soon. There is no simple solution but it has to be through a political process and not violence. Most Palestinians want to go to Tel Aviv not to blow people up but to work for Israel. People have an image of Gaza: they think it is hopeless and a write-off. It's not true - but it will be true."

Load-Date: January 13, 2009



'Never again,' says survivor

The Toronto Star

January 13, 2009 Tuesday

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Section: LETTER; Pg. AA07

Length: 266 words

Body

Not all Jews support Israel,

Comment Jan. 11

I am a Jew and proud of it. I feel the pain, anguish and agony of dead or wounded Arab children, <u>women</u>, and yes, <u>Hamas</u> guerrillas, as much as a dead or wounded Israelis. I feel deep agonizing pain at all the gut-wrenching images on TV and in newspapers.

However, Israel did not invite <u>Hamas</u> to rain 6,000 rockets indiscriminately on its cities. <u>Hamas</u> knew there would be massive retaliations. Israel's response was not just retaliation. <u>Hamas</u> missiles had increased their range from 20 to 40 kilometres and this started to threaten the Ben Gurion International Airport and the critical and vital Dimona installations. If those targets came under <u>Hamas</u> rocket fire, Israel's very existence would be at stake.

Israel must and will exist. Should another Hitler rise, Israel would be the only sanctuary for the Jews. So I say to all those so-called Jews, "Don't forget your 6 million brothers and sisters who were shot, burned, gassed, hanged and buried alive by the Hitler's Nazis." I know, I was there. I am a Holocaust survivor, and I say: Never, never again.

David Cuperfain, Toronto

There is an understandable tendency among Jews to be overly defensive over criticism of Israel. It's a "my country, right or wrong" attitude I experienced while living in the U.S. I lived in Israel for 18 years and learned that it behaves like others: no better, no worse. I cannot, however, excuse the ferocity of its attacks on Gaza, retaliating at a rate of over 100 Palestinian lives to one Israeli. Does not a Palestinian life have the same value?

Jerry Berman, Toronto

Load-Date: January 13, 2009



Israeli tanks expected in Gaza as foreigners are allowed to flee

The Times (London)

January 3, 2009 Saturday

Edition 1

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 3

Length: 697 words

Byline: James Hider; Sheera Frenkel

Body

Israel was poised last night for a big ground offensive in the Gaza Strip after allowing hundreds of foreigners to leave the devastated territory.

The Times understands that by this morning Israeli troops and tanks could be operating inside the area as part of large-scale operation to prevent *Hamas* from firing rockets into southern Israel.

One of the main thrusts of the attack could be the so-called Philadelphi Road that runs along Gaza's border with Egypt, under which *Hamas* has smuggled arms, missiles and men through a network of tunnels. Israel controlled the border until its army withdrew from the Gaza Strip in 2005.

A week of airstrikes has killed at least 430 Palestinians and left scores of buildings as rubble, despite diplomatic efforts to secure a ceasefire.

Hamas rocket attacks have killed four Israelis since the fighting began.

Despite the looming onslaught, the rocket squads fired yet more projectiles into southern Israel yesterday.

<u>Hamas</u> vowed that its barrage, which has lasted for years and which finally provoked the Israeli campaign, would not stop. "I call on the resistance to continue pounding Jewish settlements and cities," said Sheikh Abdelrahman al-Jamal at the funeral of Nizar Rayyan, a <u>Hamas</u> political leader killed, together with his four wives and 11 children, in an Israeli airstrike on his home. "We will remain on the path of jihad until the end of days." The funeral was held outdoors because an earlier air raid had smashed the mosque where the service had been due to take place.

Israel said that the building had been used to stockpile weapons.

Among the mounting Palestinian death toll yesterday were three young brothers, aged 7 to 10, who were killed in one of the 30 or so strikes carried out by Israeli warplanes. All along the border, Israeli tanks and troops have turned fields into muddy, makeshift camps from which to launch their offensive.

The Government has already mobilised more than 6,000 reserve troops and has given the green light to call up almost 3,000 more. Artillery barrages were also fired into the strip, while aircraft bombed the open ground that the hundreds of troops will need to cross, and where <u>Hamas</u> has placed mines and dug tunnels to outflank the invaders.

Support for Operation Cast Lead remains high in Israel, with polls showing that almost 85 per cent of the public back the campaign.

<u>Hamas</u> has an estimated 15,000 fighters who have used the 18 months that they have controlled the Gaza Strip to hone their skills in anticipation of open combat with Israel.

The onslaught has provoked large anti-Israeli demonstrations around the world, with protests yesterday in India, Indonesia, Turkey and Australia.

But <u>Hamas</u>'s calls for a "day of wrath" in the Palestinian territories produced only a lukewarm response in the face of clampdowns by Israeli security forces. Several thousand protesters marched through the West Bank city of Ramallah and youths in east Jerusalem threw stones at Israeli security forces and 50 <u>women</u> demonstrated outside the Friday prayers at the al-Aqsa mosque. The protesters directed their anger at their own Palestinian leaders, and heads of Arab countries whom they felt had not done enough to stop Israel's incursion.

"[President] Abbas is with the Jews, not with the Arabs. If he really was supporting and working in favour of our Arab brothers in Gaza, this would not have happened," Um-Mahr, a 66-year-old resident of east Jerusalem said. Akram Jwaeibis, 58, said that Arab leaders were afraid to do more than voice criticism of the Israeli Government.

"That is why we are waiting for [the Hezbollah leader Hassan] Nasrallah.

Or [the <u>Hamas</u> leader Ismail] Haniya to do something more." Diplomatic efforts to contain the crisis were growing after Israel's surprise offensive. "We are working towards a ceasefire that would not allow a reestablishment of the status quo ante where <u>Hamas</u> can continue to launch rockets," Condoleezza Rice, the outgoing US Secretary of State, said.

A high-level European delegation is due in the region this weekend, as are President Sarkozy of France and Tony Blair, the international community's envoy to the Middle East.

Letters, page 19

Graphic

Israeli soldiers and their armour just outside northern Gaza

Sheera Frenkel

Load-Date: January 3, 2009



Ground offensive expected as Israel allows foreigners to flee

The Times (London)

January 3, 2009 Saturday

Edition 2

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 3

Length: 711 words

Byline: James Hider; Sheera Frenkel

Body

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We will remain on the path of jihad until the end of days." The funeral was held outdoors because an earlier air raid had smashed the mosque where the service had been due to take place. Israel said that the building had been used to stockpile weapons.

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Letters, page 19

Online

Pictures: the victims, protests and devastation timesonline.co.uk/ mideast

Graphic

Israeli soldiers and their armour just outside northern Gaza

RONEN ZVULUN / REUTERS

Load-Date: January 3, 2009



Israel sends more troops to Gaza

Deseret Morning News (Salt Lake City)

January 1, 2009 Thursday

Copyright 2009 The Deseret News Publishing Co.

Length: 1471 words

Byline: Ibrahim Barzak And Jason KeyserAssociated Press

Body

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip -- Israel sent more troops to the Gaza border Wednesday, rapidly moving forward with preparations for a possible ground offensive as the next stage of its military assault on the coastal territory's *Hamas* rulers.

Israel rebuffed calls by world leaders for a truce, and *Hamas* also was cold to a cease-fire.

Instead, both intensified their fire. Israel bombed a mosque that it said was used to store rockets as well as vital smuggling tunnels along the Egyptian border, and the Islamic militants hammered southern Israeli cities with about 60 rockets.

Israeli troops trudged between dozens of tanks in muddy, rain-sodden fields outside Gaza, assembling equipment, cleaning weapons and scrubbing out tank barrels. Their commanders moved forward with preparations for a ground operation, said an Israeli defense official who spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitive nature of the information.

The U.N. Security Council, meeting for emergency consultations Wednesday night, rejected an Arab request for a legally binding resolution that would condemn Israel and halt its attacks. A draft resolution was immediately rejected by the United States as "unbalanced" because it makes no mention of halting the *Hamas* rockets.

Diplomatic efforts by U.S., European and Middle Eastern leaders appeared to be having little effect. A French proposal for a 48-hour cease-fire to allow humanitarian supplies into Gaza failed to gain traction. Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said the time was not yet ripe to consider it.

A separate proposal by Turkey and Egypt, two of Israel's few allies in the Muslim world, also seemed to be attracting little serious study in Israel or Gaza, where <u>Hamas</u> leaders dismissed talk of a truce.

With a shrinking number of targets to hit from the air and top <u>Hamas</u> leaders deep in hiding, a ground operation seemed all the more likely. In five days of raids, Israeli warplanes carried out about 500 sorties against <u>Hamas</u> targets and helicopters flew hundreds more combat missions, a senior Israeli military officer said, speaking on condition of anonymity in line with military regulations.

The government has approved the call-up of more than 9,000 reserve soldiers. Heavy rain clouds that could hinder ground forces were expected to lift Thursday.

Israel sends more troops to Gaza

U.N. humanitarian chief John Holmes said the death toll was estimated at 320-390 and the number of injured at 1,500-1,900. Between 20 percent and 25 percent of the dead are either <u>women</u> or children, said Karen Abu Zayd, U.N. Relief and Works Agency commissioner.

<u>Hamas</u> says some 200 uniformed members of its security forces have been killed, and the U.N. says at least 60 Palestinian civilians have died.

In Israel, three civilians and a soldier have been killed by rocket fire, which has reached deeper into Israel than ever. The sites of the missile hits have drawn curious crowds.

In the Negev desert city of Beersheba, people visited a school where a rocket made a direct hit Tuesday evening, slamming through the ceiling and showering debris on students' desks. A visitor illuminated by a shaft of light through the hole in the roof said with some astonishment, "This is my daughter's seat."

In Gaza, the sites of airstrikes have also attracted the curious and the defiant, including a Palestinian man who planted a green <u>Hamas</u> flag atop a mound of debris at a mosque flattened in the attacks, its minaret still thrusting toward a stormy sky.

The Israeli military, which leveled the mosque Wednesday, said that it was being used as a missile storage site and that the bombs dropped on it set off secondary explosions. It was the fifth mosque hit in the campaign.

The chief of Israel's internal security services, Yuval Diskin, told a government meeting that <u>Hamas</u> members had hidden inside mosques, believing they would be safe from airstrikes and using them as command centers, according to an Israeli security official who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not allowed to share the information.

Other militants were hiding in hospitals, some disguised as doctors and nurses, Diskin said, according to the official.

Early Thursday, huge explosions shook Gaza City as Israeli planes bombed three government buildings and the parliament. Hospital officials said 25 wounded were evacuated from nearby houses.

Echoing Israel's cool response to truce proposals, a senior <u>Hamas</u> leader with ties to its military wing said that now was not the right time to call off the fight. <u>Hamas</u> was unhappy with the six-month truce that ended just before the fighting began because it didn't result in an easing of Israel's crippling economic blockade of Gaza.

<u>Hamas</u> spokesman Taher Nunu said that although <u>Hamas</u> leaders had been driven underground, the Gaza government was functioning and had met in the past few days.

"What our people want is clear: an immediate stop to all kinds of aggression, the end of the siege by all means, the opening of all border crossings, and international guarantees that the occupation will not renew this terrorist war again," Nunu said.

Israel's latest airstrikes concentrated on crushing the many smuggling tunnels under Gaza's southern border with Egypt. They provide a crucial lifeline, not just for <u>Hamas</u> rulers, but also for bringing in food and fuel for Gaza's people.

Holmes, the U.N. humanitarian chief, expressed concern about the fighting's impact on civilians. He said hospitals were struggling to cope with casualties and the lack of fuel deliveries had forced Gaza's power plant to shut down Tuesday.

But U.N. officials said the major need was grain and other food. Holmes said the Kerem Shalom crossing remained open and 55 trucks got through Tuesday and about 60 on Wednesday, mainly carrying food. He said Israel had been "cooperative in principle about these supplies, but we need to see more results."

White House spokesman Gordon Johndroe said U.S. officials were seeing "a good flow" of medical and food supplies into Gaza.

Israel sends more troops to Gaza

Israel and Egypt blockaded Gaza after <u>Hamas</u> fighters violently seized control of the territory in 2007 and the two nations have opened their borders only to let in limited humanitarian aid.

On Wednesday, several wounded Palestinians were taken across the Israeli and Egyptian borders for treatment, including a child bundled in blankets.

Gaza's southern smuggling zone was hit again Wednesday morning and evening in airstrikes that left vast craters over the collapsed underground passages. Hospital officials said two people were killed and 42 wounded in the bombing.

Diskin, the Israeli security chief, told a Cabinet meeting that the tunnel network had been badly damaged. Israel said more than 80 tunnels were destroyed. Several hundred tunnels ran under the border before Israeli warplanes began striking.

<u>Hamas</u> was trying to smuggle some of its activists to Egypt through still-passable tunnels, Diskin said.

Israel fears that opening border crossings would allow <u>Hamas</u> -- which remains officially committed to Israel's destruction -- to further strengthen its hold on the territory.

Moderate Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, a <u>Hamas</u> rival who controls only the West Bank, suggested he would not continue peace talks with Israel at any price. He said on Palestinian TV that the stalled talks had become useless and were not reaching any of the goals -- namely the creation of a Palestinian state.

"Negotiation is not a goal by itself; it's a tool," Abbas said. "Unless it is a tool to achieve peace ... there is no need for it to continue."

Gaza's militants fired dozens of rockets into Israel on Wednesday evening, including one in the city of Ashkelon that was caught on video. It showed a man on a sidewalk ducking for cover along a wall as the missile exploded in a cloud of smoke a few steps behind him.

The city of 120,000 people 11 miles north of Gaza has been a frequent target.

Israel's rescue service said it had responded to 250 rocket attack scenes since Saturday and treated 48 wounded, most of whom had light injuries.

School was canceled in much of Israel's south because of the rocket threat. The 18,000 students at Ben-Gurion University in Beersheba, southern Israel's only university, were also told to stay home.

Beersheba, 19 miles from Gaza, had never before been within range of Gaza rockets, reflecting the increasing sophistication of what started out as homemade weaponry.

Now militants are firing weapons made in China and Iran that have dramatically expanded their range and put more than one-tenth of Israel's population in their sights, defense officials said.

In Gaza, two Palestinian medics were killed and two others were wounded when an Israeli missile hit next to their ambulance east of Gaza City, Palestinians said. The Israeli military said it did not know of the incident.

S.L. DEMONSTRATION

130 gather to protest Israeli airstrikes.

B1

Load-Date: January 1, 2009



Gazans Express Grief and Rage Over Deaths Outside U.N. School

The New York Times

January 8, 2009 Thursday

Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section A; Column 0; Foreign Desk; Pg. 12

Length: 1063 words

Byline: By TAGHREED EL-KHODARY; Steven Erlanger contributed reporting from Jerusalem.

Dateline: JABALIYA, Gaza

Body

The bodies of the children who died outside the United Nations school here were laid out in a long row on the ground. Some were wrapped in the vivid green flag of *Hamas*, some were in white shrouds, and some were in the yellow flag of Fatah, which is rarely seen these days in *Hamas*-run Gaza.

Hundreds of Gazans crowded around, staring at the little faces, some of them with dark eyes still open, but dulled.

Abdel Minaim Hasan, 37, knelt, weeping, next to the body of his eldest daughter, Lina, 11, who was wrapped in a <u>Hamas</u> flag. "From now on I am <u>Hamas</u>!" he cried. "I choose resistance!" But then he cursed Arab nations for ignoring the plight of the Gazans. "The Arabs are doing nothing to protect us!" he shouted.

The streets were crowded Tuesday evening when the mortar shells struck, Mr. Hasan said. "We were in a United Nations school, we were so far from the tanks." There were many children around, and he gave Lina a shekel to run to a nearby grocery store. She was hit by shrapnel and died.

Some 280 families -- 1,674 people -- had been seeking shelter inside the school, Al Fakhura, according to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, which helps Palestinian refugees and their descendants and which runs the school. Most came from farther north in Gaza, near Beit Lahiya, where the fighting has been intense, an hour's walk away. Israeli forces ordered them to evacuate their homes for their own safety.

But Al Fakhura, set in the northern part of the densely packed Jabaliya refugee camp north of Gaza City, is in a crowded neighborhood full of <u>Hamas</u> fighters. Israel said that a preliminary investigation showed that mortar fire from the school compound prompted Israeli forces to return fire. The Israeli mortar rounds killed as many as 40 people outside the school; Palestinian hospital officials said Tuesday that 10 of the dead were children and 5 were <u>women</u>.

Residents of the neighborhood said two brothers who were <u>Hamas</u> fighters were in the area at the time of the attack. The military identified them as Imad Abu Asker and Hassan Abu Asker, and said they had been killed. But the residents also said the mortar fire had not come from the school compound, but from elsewhere in the neighborhood.

Gazans Express Grief and Rage Over Deaths Outside U.N. School

The director of the United Nations relief agency in Gaza, John Ging, who was not at the school when it was attacked, denied that <u>Hamas</u> fighters had been taking shelter in the school or using its premises. "There are no military people inside the school; it is fully controlled," he said.

Mr. Ging put the death toll at 40 and said 15 more people were critically wounded and 40 others less seriously wounded. He called for an international investigation. "Those who died or were injured deserve accountability," he said.

Mr. Ging spoke at the school during a three-hour lull in the fighting on Wednesday. Israel's Foreign Ministry announced that a lull would take place every other day to allow humanitarian organizations to deliver supplies and Gazans to emerge from their houses and shelters to shop.

But while there is food, Gazans are running out of cash to buy it, with banks shut and A.T.M.'s empty and nonfunctional because of a lack of electricity.

The lull was also used for funerals, and a senior <u>Hamas</u> official, Mushir al-Masri, emerged from hiding to congratulate those he called martyrs. Some parents shook his hand; some stared at him coldly. On a loudspeaker, a man praised the dead and said: "What Israel is doing is bringing us unity again! We are all together!"

That idea appeared to explain the willingness of *Hamas* to have Fatah flags in such evidence.

Halfway along the row of bodies -- uncountable in the press of the mourning crowd -- Huda Deed was weeping. She lost nine members of her extended family, ages 3 to 25. "Look, they've lined them up like a ruler!" she said, inconsolable. But when asked for an interview by Al Aksa television, the *Hamas* channel, she refused.

Israel blames <u>Hamas</u> for civilian casualties, saying it knowingly endangers civilians by operating among them. Asked later about the presence of <u>Hamas</u> fighters in the streets around the school, Ms. Deed avoided a direct answer, but implied that her heart was not with <u>Hamas</u>. "We want to live like everyone else in the world," she said.

Inside the school, Shaaban Hasouni, 47, said he came from Beit Lahiya on Sunday with eight members of his family, ages 2 to 29 years old. The Israelis had told them to evacuate, first in calls to their cellphones and then with leaflets and loudspeakers, he said. They were supposed to hold up white sheets as they evacuated. But he said he and his family left their home only when Israeli forces fired some sort of gas into it. "I couldn't see, I didn't know what it was, but we escaped," he said.

Mr. Hasouni was able to make a quick trip home on Wednesday morning and came back with mattresses and blankets, saying that it was so cold, even with 40 people in every classroom, that his children could not stand it.

Asked about fighters, he said: "Of course we don't want them around us. But we don't know who they are, we don't know their faces. And they wear normal clothes."

Mahmoud al-Sous, 39, arrived on a donkey cart with blankets, mattresses, water and clothes. "My children were dying from the cold," he said. "After two days I couldn't stand it, so I risked going back to bring these things."

Atif Suboh, 25, here with six members of his family, was not so lucky. Three of his cousins, ages 6, 8 and 12, he said, went back to Beit Lahiya on Wednesday morning to get blankets. They died from the shelling, he said. Asked how he could have let them go, he started to wail. "They didn't tell us they were leaving," he said.

If he had known that fighters would be around the school, he said, "I would never be there."

Samira Shakoura, 40, lives in the neighborhood. "It was terrifying," she said. "We hid in the house."

She was defiant about the presence of <u>Hamas</u>. "Listen, I will always open my house to protect the fighters," she said. "We have to be patient. We are dead anyway like this. And when <u>Hamas</u> runs in the elections, I'll vote for them; they have Islam."

Gazans Express Grief and Rage Over Deaths Outside U.N. School

Nearby, while funerals went on, people surged toward a shop 200 yards away. There were at least as many people at the shop as at the funerals. A shipment of flour had arrived.

http://www.nytimes.com

Graphic

PHOTO: Palestinians in Jabaliya on Wednesday mourned those killed by Israeli shelling. The man at left had lost two children and his wife.(PHOTOGRAPH BY ABID KATIB/GETTY IMAGES) MAP: The school is in Jabaliya, a densely populated area. Map details area of Jabaliya.

Load-Date: January 8, 2009



Government line on Gaza suggests we have forgotten our own history

Irish Examiner

January 7, 2009 Wednesday

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Section: OPINION
Length: 1184 words

Body

Tragic because it is causing physical and emotional injury to innocent Palestinian civilians as well as the terrorists. Tragic because like every war it creates intolerable human hardship and heartbreaking suffering.

That all this was unavoidable is the greatest tragedy of all. When Israel pulled out of Gaza in 2005, destroying all the Israeli settlements there, the Palestinians blew an historic opportunity, just as they blew an opportunity to have their own state way back in Bill Clinton's day. The Palestinians' need to destroy Israel is still stronger, it seems, than their need to build Palestine.

The Israeli response was, as the Egyptian foreign minister confirms, utterly predictable. It had been, as he put it, "written in the sky for months". But the fact that Palestinian rockets rained (and rain) down on southern Israel poses questions for both sides.

What sort of organisation is <u>Hamas</u> that it practically invites retaliation which - according to its own narrative and by its own design - bears down on <u>women</u> and children most of all? And what precisely are Israel's aims if they are not - as we keep being told - to end all the rocket attacks, let alone to eliminate the <u>Hamas</u> regime?

If Operation Cast Lead was no surprise in the region, it has upset European policymakers - and not just because their Christmas break was disrupted.

For three solid years Israel bit its lip and acted with restraint. After all, hadn't Jerusalem been saying that Iranian nuclear threat and the on-off possibility of an accord with Syria were its top priorities?

At the same time, foreign diplomats have little cause for complaint. Why is Israel the only country in the world which is supposed to accept meekly for an extended period of time a situation in which its people are bombarded from outside? Israelis, it is true, had treated Gaza like an unpleasant illness that, if ignored, would eventually go away on its own. It didn't. The mounting fear was that the rockets would improve in terms of their accuracy and range and that Jerusalem and Tel Aviv would have been imperilled, hence the response we have seen over recent days.

This was not a war or campaign that Israel sought. In a sense it cannot win, at least in the short-term. Will <u>Hamas</u> simply rise out of the ruins, shake off the dust and declare, as Hezbollah did in 2006, that it succeeded in surviving against the strongest army in the Middle East?

Government line on Gaza suggests we have forgotten our own history

Alternatively, without a ground offensive, would the Palestinians again be able to tell themselves that the Israelis are avoiding confrontation and making do with dropping bombs from 30,000 feet up? The assassination of senior <u>Hamas</u> officials, the partial destruction of tunnels used to smuggle weapons into Gaza from Egypt and the bombing of buildings used by the <u>Hamas</u> leadership have not prompted the Islamists to announce a policy change yet. On the contrary, worryingly for Israelis, <u>Hamas</u>'s credibility has only grown since Christmas.

Nowhere is that more true than in Ireland, of course. Flag-burning demonstrators are scarcely unique to this country. What is different is that the motley crew of far-leftists and Arab immigrants are practically egged on by the Government. That <u>Hamas</u> is regarded by the EU as a terrorist organisation appears to have been completely forgotten in Iveagh House.

Why doesn't the Government just say it: "Israel, stop defending your citizens"? Instead, a steady stream of statements issue from the departments of the Taoiseach and Foreign Affairs condemning Israel in the strongest terms and calling for an immediate ceasefire and talks as soon as possible. There is no hint of sympathy for Israel's plight.

Rather, Government statements suggest Ireland has a unique insight to bear from the experience of Northern Ireland: "We have seen in our country that it is only through dialogue that one can make political progress and find accommodation," as the Taoiseach put it on RT .

Well, yes and no, Mr Cowen. One day, presumably, Israel will get around a table with <u>Hamas</u>: I don't believe in purely military solutions either. But let's not pretend that Israel is dealing with an opponent with Scandinavian levels of reasonableness.

Besides, have we forgotten our own history? The difference between the situation today in Gaza/Israel and in the 1990s in relation to the IRA should be blindingly obvious. The republican movement was looking for a way out of its self-destructive and counterproductive violence; *Hamas* believes it's on a roll towards its ultimate aim of a Jew-free Palestine on the whole territory of Israel.

One of Jerusalem's key objectives in Gaza - supported quietly by Arab governments - is to inject some realism into *Hamas*, just as the British and Irish security forces did to the IRA. We should recall it was not a short process: it took years, decades in fact. And even then, the IRA had to observe a unilateral ceasefire before they could join talks: the RUC, gardaí, British army and the Irish defence forces were scarcely confined to barracks.

Not just that, but everyone had to sign up to Senator George Mitchell's principles: no violence, verifiable disarmament and an end to the mutilations that passed for 'punishment beatings'. Actually, *Hamas* commanders tend to prefer a bullet to the side of the head than to the side of the kneecap.

Again then, why must Israel settle for anything less in its own search for peace? We set preconditions; so will they.

Which is not to say Israel shouldn't tactically offer talks, precisely because they are the last thing <u>Hamas</u> actually wants.

And that is why the Israeli public is nervous. There is both determination and dread as thousands of Israel's reservist army are called to the front.

YES, Israel has proved it can hit hard. But are its politicians as clever as its army is strong? The mainstream PLO returning to Gaza atop an IDF tank is an unlikely prospect. Even if the Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, agreed, how would Israel be able to respond to rocket fire with a friendly PLO/Fatah government in power instead of <u>Hamas</u>?

A more likely alternative is a balance of threats, what pro-Palestinian activists call 'Gaza as an open prison'; in other words, keeping Gaza as calm as possible via a combination of military and economic pressure and continued close cooperation with Egypt. Gaza would continue to be an unrecognised *Hamas* state until a long-term process of change and moderation comes to fruition. Effectively, that would be an arrangement akin to that which Israel has with Hezbollah in the north.

Government line on Gaza suggests we have forgotten our own history

A better approach if <u>Hamas</u> isn't interested in talks leading to a two-state solution - Israel and Palestine side by side - might be complete Israeli disengagement, sealing the border and letting the Gazans and their Egyptian Arab neighbours get on with it.

At present, Israel has responsibilities towards Gaza - having to feed the killers, in effect - but little real leverage. The Arab world won't like having to take on Gaza one bit but it can scarcely object.

One way or another, once the fighting is over, a new strategy towards Gaza needs to be devised. The sooner the better.

Load-Date: January 7, 2009



ISRAELIS IN GAZA GROUND ASSAULT

Sunday Life
January 4, 2009
Main Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 2 Length: 503 words

Body

ISRAELI ground forces last night marched into Gaza in a major expansion of the Jewish state's week-old offensive against *Hamas*.

Israeli TV channels broadcast images of troops marching into Gaza after nightfall. Channel 10 TV reported heavy firefights as troops entered the strip.

Heavy artillery fire in the early evening was intended to detonate <u>Hamas</u> explosive devices and mines planted along the border area before troops marched in.

Israel's military confirmed a ground operation was under way to attack sites they say are being used to launch rockets.

Defence officials said around 10,000 soldiers have massed along the border in recent days.

It came hours after Israeli warplanes and gunboats blasted more than two dozen <u>Hamas</u> positions yesterday, targeting weapons storage facilities, training centres and homes of leaders.

The ground assault came as international ceasefire efforts were also gaining momentum.

French President Nicolas Sarkozy is visiting the region this week, and US President George Bush and UN chief Ban Ki-moon both spoke in favour of an internationally monitored truce.

Israel launched the offensive on December 27 in response to intensifying rocket fire by <u>Hamas</u>. The operation has killed more than 430 Palestinians, including dozens of civilians, according to Palestinian and UN counts. Four Israelis have also been killed and rocket attacks on southern Israel persist.

In the latest attacks the army struck the homes of two <u>Hamas</u> operatives, saying the buildings were used to store weapons and plan attacks. <u>Hamas</u> outposts, training camps and rocket launching sites also were targeted, it said.

ISRAELIS IN GAZA GROUND ASSAULT

Early yesterday it dropped leaflets in downtown Gaza City ordering people off the streets.

Later in the day several airstrikes struck the city, killing a night watchman at a school. Four people, including a midlevel *Hamas* commander, died of wounds sustained earlier, Gaza health officials said.

Palestinian militants fired three rockets into southern Israel, causing no injuries.

The Israeli airstrikes have badly damaged Gaza's infrastructure, knocking out power and water in many areas and raising concerns of a looming humanitarian disaster.

Israel briefly opened its border on Friday to allow nearly 300 Palestinians with foreign passports to flee the besieged area. The evacuees told of crippling shortages of water, electricity and medicine.

Maxwell Gaylard, UN humanitarian co-ordinator for the Palestinians Territories, said some 2,000 people have been wounded in the past week and a "significant number" of the dead were <u>women</u> and children. "There is a critical emergency right now in the Gaza Strip," he said.

Israel denies there is a humanitarian crisis in Gaza and has increased its shipments of goods into Gaza. It says it has confined its attacks to militants while trying to prevent civilian casualties.

While ground troops were last night entering Gaza, Israel also has left the door open to a diplomatic solution, saying it would accept a cease-fire if it is enforced by international monitors.

Load-Date: January 4, 2009



There are no moral equals in Gaza conflict

The Telegraph-Journal (New Brunswick)

January 8, 2009 Thursday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. A5

Length: 866 words

Body

For crying out loud, just stop firing rockets into Israel and end this madness!

"This is not a fight that Israel sought. It's a fight we sought to avoid. But it was forced upon us and we are responding," Israeli government spokesperson Mark Regev told Canada AM last week, adding "they have to learn if they shoot at Israeli civilians they will pay a price, and hopefully in the future they will be a bit more careful about what they do."

A lucid and sensible assessment of the situation, which Former Israeli Prime Minister and current candidate for the job Benjamin Netanyahu sized-up accurately, comparing it to having an Iranian-financed al Quaeda establishment operating a few miles outside New York City. How would Canadian lefties clamouring in support of <u>Hamas</u> feel if a terrorist enclave sworn to Canada's destruction was embedded just outside Toronto firing rockets into the city?

No less than Barack Obama observed, in a July interview with The New York Times that he didn't think "any country would find it acceptable to have missiles raining down on the heads of their citizens" and "If somebody was sending rockets into my house where my two daughters sleep at night, I'm going to do everything in my power to stop that, and I would expect Israelis to do the same thing."

As for what retired United States Army Lieutenant Colonel, novelist and essayist Ralph Peters calls "international pro-terror propaganda," an awful lot of it masquerades as news reportage (how many times has CTV news run the same clip of injured children?), along with mealy-mouthed diplomatic demands from the morally derelict and worse-then-useless UN and various governments, including Canada's, for "both sides" to cease hostilities a priori.

That could have happened immediately with no re-occupation had <u>Hamas</u> ceased its provocation and quit with the rocket barrage - nearly 300 missiles plus countless mortar rounds lobbed across the border between Dec. 19, when <u>Hamas</u> snubbed Egypt's urging for moderation and broke a six-month truce, and Dec. 27, when Israel began "Operation Cast Lead."

An argument often heard in the West that all the Palestinians want is a self- governing homeland with secure borders. Horsefeathers! Israel has advocated and promoted those objectives, and moreover accommodated Arab citizens of Israel to a degree that would be unheard of with Jewish minorities in any Islamic republic-cumtheocracy.

<u>Hamas</u>'s 1988 founding charter declares: "Israel will exist and will continue to exist until Islam will obliterate it, just as it obliterated others before it.... There is no solution for the Palestinian question, except through Jihad. Initiatives, proposals and international conferences are all a waste of time...."

There are no moral equals in Gaza conflict

There's no reasoning with people like that. The two-state solution backed by Israel and most sensible third-parties falls well short of *Hamas*'s aspirations. The only arguments they understand come through gun barrels and aircraft bomb bays. Israelis know this all too well.

<u>Hamas</u> has no intention of disarming, and cynically provoked this hideous escalation calculatedly and deliberately, Israel's response being entirely predictable. <u>Hamas</u>'s strategy is to entice the bigger guns of Iran and Syria into the fray to further their objective of erasing the state of Israel from the map and replacing it with an Islamic Republic of Palestine.

Reality check. Israel is there to stay. They have the whip hand militarily, and will continue to with support from the U.S. If ever there was danger of Israel losing control of the situation, America would be obliged to step in with whatever degree of force necessary as guarantor of Israel's right to exist. Without America, *Hamas* and its fellow-travelers would without hesitation launch a program of anti-Jewish genocide, with most the rest of the world being counted on to stand by and dither diplomatically, too gutless or ideologically addled to intervene.

Under the circumstances, the Israeli retaliation to <u>Hamas</u>'s rocket barrage has been admirably and commendably ordered and restrained.

Notwithstanding relentless video clips and biased, editorialized commentary that appear calculated to foster the impression that hundreds of innocent <u>women</u> and children are being killed in Gaza, Of the estimated 500 or so Palestinians killed so far in this flare-up, reports indicate maybe 10 per cent have been civilians. If that's accurate, then the Israeli action has been remarkably "surgical" given the sardine-can population density in Gaza and <u>Hamas</u>'s charming policy of locating rocket launchers in residential neighborhoods.

Israel is a democracy - the only functional one in the region.

That's the horse any fair-minded advocates of freedom, decency and democracy should be backing - not terrorist fanatics bent on genocide. *Hamas* is a terrorist organization (notwithstanding its current technical status as elected government of Gaza's dysfunctional democracy). There's no honour or integrity in assuming a neutral policy between terrorism and self-defense; in fact, the opposite.

Charles W. Moore is a Nova Scotia based freelance writer and editor. He can be reached by e-mail at cwmoore@gmx.net His column appears each Thursday.

Load-Date: January 8, 2009



Israeli troops at Gaza border

Chicago Daily Herald

January 1, 2009 Thursday

L2 Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 2 Length: 1398 words

Byline: Associated Press

Body

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip — Israel sent more troops to the Gaza border Wednesday, moving forward with preparations for a possible ground offensive as the next stage of its military assault on the coastal territory's *Hamas* rulers.

Israel rebuffed calls by world leaders for a truce, and *Hamas* also was cold to a cease-fire.

Instead, both intensified their fire. Israel bombed a mosque it said was used to store rockets as well as vital smuggling tunnels along the Egyptian border, and the Islamic militants hammered southern Israeli cities with about 60 rockets.

The U.N. Security Council, meeting for emergency consultations Wednesday night, rejected an Arab request for a legally binding resolution that would condemn Israel and halt its attacks. A draft resolution was immediately rejected by the U.S. as "unbalanced" because it makes no mention of halting the *Hamas* rockets.

Diplomatic efforts by U.S., European and Middle Eastern leaders appeared to be having little effect. A French proposal for a 48-hour cease-fire to allow humanitarian supplies into Gaza failed to gain traction. Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said the time was not ripe to consider it.

From his ranch in Crawford, Texas, President George W. Bush called Israeli Olmert for the first time since the conflict escalated between Israel and *Hamas*, which controls the Gaza Strip.

"I think President Bush thinks that <u>Hamas</u> needs to stop firing rockets and that is what will be the first step in a cease-fire," White House deputy press secretary Gordon Johndroe told reporters.

He said <u>Hamas</u> also needs to stop smuggling weapons into Gaza, a move that would show they don't intend to continue to target Israel. "So I think they're certainly on the same page on that," Johndroe said of Bush and Olmert.

Israel's government has approved the call-up of more than 9,000 reserve soldiers. Heavy rain clouds cover that could hinder ground forces were expected to lift today.

U.N. humanitarian chief John Holmes said the Palestinian death toll was estimated at 320-390 and the number of injured at 1,500-1,900. Between 20 percent and 25 percent of the dead are either <u>women</u> or children, said Karen Abu Zayd, U.N. Relief and Works Agency commissioner.

Israeli troops at Gaza border

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In Israel, three civilians and a soldier have been killed by rocket fire, which has reached deeper into Israel than ever. The sites of the missile hits have drawn curious crowds.

In the Negev desert city of Beersheba, people visited a school where a rocket made a direct hit Tuesday evening, slamming through the ceiling and showering debris on students' desks. A visitor illuminated by a shaft of light through the hole in the roof said with some astonishment, "This is my daughter's seat."

In Gaza, the sites of airstrikes have also attracted the curious and the defiant, including a Palestinian man who planted a green <u>Hamas</u> flag atop a mound of debris at a flattened mosque, its minaret still thrusting toward a stormy sky.

The Israeli military, which leveled the mosque Wednesday, said that it was being used as a missile storage site and that the bombs dropped on it set off secondary explosions. It was the fifth mosque hit in the campaign.

The chief of Israel's internal security services, Yuval Diskin, told a government meeting that <u>Hamas</u> members had hidden inside mosques, believing they would be safe from airstrikes and using them as command centers, according to an Israeli security official who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not allowed to share the information.

Other militants were hiding in hospitals, some disguised as doctors and nurses, Diskin said, according to the official.

Echoing Israel's cool response to truce proposals, a senior <u>Hamas</u> leader with ties to its military wing said that now was not the right time to call off the fight. <u>Hamas</u> was unhappy with the six-month truce that ended just before the fighting began because it didn't result in an easing of Israel's crippling economic blockade of Gaza.

<u>Hamas</u> spokesman Taher Nunu said that although <u>Hamas</u> leaders had been driven underground, the Gaza government was functioning and had met in the past few days.

"What our people want is clear: an immediate stop to all kinds of aggression, the end of the siege by all means, the opening of all border crossings, and international guarantees that the occupation will not renew this terrorist war again," Nunu said.

Israel's latest airstrikes concentrated on crushing the many smuggling tunnels under Gaza's southern border with Egypt. They provide a crucial lifeline, not just for <u>Hamas</u> rulers, but also for bringing in food and fuel for Gaza's people.

Holmes, the U.N. humanitarian chief, expressed concern about the fighting's impact on civilians. He said hospitals were struggling to cope with casualties and the lack of fuel deliveries had forced Gaza's power plant to shut down Tuesday.

But U.N. officials said the major need was grain and other food. Holmes said the Kerem Shalom crossing remained open and 55 trucks got through Tuesday and about 60 on Wednesday, mainly carrying food. He said Israel had been "cooperative in principle about these supplies, but we need to see more results."

White House spokesman Gordon Johndroe said U.S. officials were seeing "a good flow" of medical and food supplies into Gaza.

Israel and Egypt blockaded Gaza after <u>Hamas</u> fighters violently seized control of the territory in 2007 and the two nations have opened their borders only to let in limited humanitarian aid.

On Wednesday, several wounded Palestinians were taken across the Israeli and Egyptian borders for treatment, including a child bundled in blankets.

Israeli troops at Gaza border

Gaza's southern smuggling zone was hit again Wednesday morning and evening in airstrikes that left vast craters over the collapsed underground passages. Hospital officials said two people were killed and 42 wounded in the bombing.

Diskin, the Israeli security chief, told a Cabinet meeting that the tunnel network had been badly damaged. Israel said more than 80 tunnels were destroyed. Several hundred tunnels ran under the border before Israeli warplanes began striking.

<u>Hamas</u> was trying to smuggle some of its activists to Egypt through still-passable tunnels, Diskin said.

Israel fears that opening border crossings would allow <u>Hamas</u> — which remains officially committed to Israel's destruction — to further strengthen its hold on the territory.

Moderate Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, a <u>Hamas</u> rival who controls only the West Bank, suggested he would not continue peace talks with Israel at any price. He said on Palestinian TV that the stalled talks had become useless and were not reaching any of the goals — namely the creation of a Palestinian state.

"Negotiation is not a goal by itself; it's a tool," Abbas said. "Unless it is a tool to achieve peace ... there is no need for it to continue."

Gaza's militants fired dozens of rockets into Israel on Wednesday evening, including one in the city of Ashkelon that was caught on video. It showed a man on a sidewalk ducking for cover along a wall as the missile exploded in a cloud of smoke a few steps behind him.

The city of 120,000 people 11 miles north of Gaza has been a frequent target.

Israel's rescue service said it had responded to 250 rocket attack scenes since Saturday and treated 48 wounded, most of whom had light injuries.

School was canceled in much of Israel's south because of the rocket threat. The 18,000 students at Ben-Gurion University in Beersheba, southern Israel's only university, were also told to stay home.

Beersheba, 19 miles from Gaza, had never before been within range of Gaza rockets, reflecting the increasing sophistication of what started out as homemade weaponry.

Now militants are firing weapons made in China and Iran that have dramatically expanded their range and put more than one-tenth of Israel's population in their sights, defense officials said.

In Gaza, two Palestinian medics were killed and two others were wounded when an Israeli missile hit next to their ambulance east of Gaza City, Palestinians said. The Israeli military said it did not know of the incident.

Associated Press writers Ibrahim Barzak reported this story from Gaza City and Jayson Keyser from Jerusalem. AP writer Edith M. Lederer at the United Nations contributed to this report.

Load-Date: January 1, 2009



The Mideast's Ground Zero

The International Herald Tribune
January 8, 2009 Thursday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 6

Length: 830 words

Byline: Thomas L. Friedman - The New York Times Media Group

Body

The fighting, death and destruction in Gaza is painful to watch.

But it's all too familiar. It's the latest version of the longest-running play in the modern Middle East, which, if I were to give it a title, would be called: "Who owns this hotel? Can the Jews have a room? And shouldn't we blow up the bar and replace it with a mosque?"

That is, Gaza is a mini-version of three great struggles that have been playing out since 1948: 1) Who is going to be the regional superpower - Egypt? Saudi Arabia? Iran? 2) Should there be a Jewish state in the Middle East and, if so, on what Palestinian terms? And 3) Who is going to dominate Arab society - Islamists who are intolerant of other faiths and want to choke off modernity, or modernists who want to embrace the future, with an Arab-Muslim face?

Let's look at each.

Who Owns This Hotel? The struggle for hegemony over the modern Arab world is as old as Nasser's Egypt. But what is new today is that non-Arab Iran is now making a bid for primacy - challenging Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Iran has deftly used military aid to both <u>Hamas</u> and Hezbollah to create a rocket-armed force on Israel's northern and western borders. This enables Tehran to stop and start the Israeli-Palestinian conflict at will and to paint itself as the true protector of the Palestinians, as opposed to the weak Arab regimes.

"The Gaza that Israel left in 2005 was bordering Egypt. The Gaza that Israel just came back to is now bordering Iran," said Mamoun Fandy, director of Middle East programs at the International Institute of Strategic Studies. "Iran has become the ultimate confrontation state. I am not sure we can talk just about 'Arab-Israeli peace' or the 'Arab peace initiative' anymore. We may be looking at an 'Iranian initiative." In short, the whole notion of Arab-Israeli peacemaking likely will have to change.

Can The Jews Have a Room Here? <u>Hamas</u> rejects any recognition of Israel. By contrast, the Fatah-led Palestinian Authority, which controls the West Bank, has recognized Israel - and vice versa. If you believe, as I do, that the only stable solution is a two-state one, with the Palestinians getting all of the West Bank, Gaza and Arab sectors of East Jerusalem, then you have to hope for the weakening of <u>Hamas</u>.

Why? Because nothing has damaged Palestinians more than the <u>Hamas</u> death-cult strategy of turning Palestinian youths into suicide bombers. Because nothing would set back a peace deal more than if <u>Hamas</u>' call to replace Israel with an Islamic state became the Palestinian negotiating position. And because <u>Hamas</u>' attacks on towns in

The Mideast's Ground Zero

southern Israel is destroying a two-state solution, even more than Israel's disastrous and reckless West Bank settlements.

Israel has proved that it can and will uproot settlements, as it did in Gaza. <u>Hamas</u>' rocket attacks pose an irreversible threat. They say to Israel: "From Gaza, we can hit southern Israel. If we get the West Bank, we can rocket, and thereby close, Israel's international airport - anytime, any day, from now to eternity." How many Israelis will risk relinquishing the West Bank, given this new threat?

Shouldn't We Blow Up the Bar and Replace it with a Mosque? <u>Hamas'</u> overthrow of the more secular Fatah organization in Gaza in 2007 is part of a regionwide civil war between Islamists and modernists. In the week that Israel has been slicing through Gaza, Islamist suicide bombers have killed almost 100 Iraqis - first, a group of tribal sheikhs in Yusufiya, who were working on reconciliation between Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds, and, second, mostly <u>women</u> and children gathered at a Shiite shrine. These unprovoked mass murders have not stirred a single protest in Europe or the Middle East.

Gaza today is basically ground zero for all three of these struggles, said Martin Indyk, the former Clinton administration's Middle East adviser whose incisive new book, "Innocent Abroad: An Intimate Account of American Diplomacy in the Middle East," was just published. "This tiny little piece of land, Gaza, has the potential to blow all of these issues wide open and present a huge problem for Barack Obama on Day 1."

Obama's great potential for America, noted Indyk, is also a great threat to Islamist radicals - because his narrative holds tremendous appeal for Arabs. For eight years <u>Hamas</u>, Hezbollah and Al Qaeda have been surfing on a wave of anti-U.S. anger generated by George W. Bush.

And that wave has greatly expanded their base.

No doubt, <u>Hamas</u>, Hezbollah and Iran are hoping that they can use the Gaza conflict to turn Obama into Bush. They know Barack Hussein Obama must be (am)Bushed - to keep America and its Arab allies on the defensive. Obama has to keep his eye on the prize. His goal - America's goal - has to be a settlement in Gaza that eliminates the threat of <u>Hamas</u> rockets and opens Gaza economically to the world, under credible international supervision. That's what will serve U.S. interests, moderate the three great struggles and earn him respect.

Load-Date: January 13, 2009



Joy is in short supply for Eid; Gaza's blockade means that this is the hardest holiday its people can remember.

The Independent (London)

December 13, 2008 Saturday

First Edition

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Section: WORLD; Pg. 34

Length: 835 words

Byline: Donald Macintyre

Body

Ironic text messages of goodwill for the great festival of Eid Al Adha - easily as central to the Muslim calendar as Christmas is in the West - became the vogue in Gaza this week. "Despite there being no salaries, the money we don't have to give to our children, the high price of Egyptian lamb, and the switching off of power, we will celebrate by the light of an Egyptian candle," read one. It summed up the daily power cuts, the utter impossibility for most families this year of affording the traditional Eid sheep and the fact that smuggling tunnels under the border with Egypt have turned into a lifeline for the 1.5 million inhabitants of blockaded, *Hamas*-controlled Gaza.

The sardonic text message marking the most miserable Eid in Gaza anyone can remember came up on the mobile belonging to Adel Razeq. He runs Gaza's National Agency for Family Care and has been struggling with meagre resources to set up a "food bank" intended to distribute meals - in some cases repackaged leftovers from restaurants, wedding parties and even funerals - to the growing legion of undernourished in Gaza, where more than 50 per cent of families have for the first time been classified as living below the "deep poverty" line of £315 per month for two adults and six children.

Mr Razeq's team has identified severe need in 10 times the 400 to 500 families he is already helping and he believes that a much higher underlying demand is hidden by the pride of unemployed fathers. "We even get kids coming in here when the parents won't," he explains. "They will say 'I love my dad but he can't give us what we need'."

Certainly, the jobless man of the house remains discreetly indoors as his daughter, Besma El Ghoulah, 19, prepares this year's apology for an Eid feast for a family of 15: half a sheep's stomach cooking over an outdoor fire from wood foraged in the street. It was a neighbour's present to Besma's brother-in-law, who lost his job in a factory brought to a halt by Israel's blockade on commercial goods imposed after *Hamas* took full control of Gaza by force in June 2007. Unable to afford fruit or red meat, the family usually only eats a fresh chicken once a month. Besma says that her two- year-old brother Bilal has been diagnosed with slow growth and anaemia, reinforcing the recently leaked findings of the Red Cross that chronic malnutrition in Gaza is on the rise.

Joy is in short supply for Eid Gaza's blockade means that this is the hardest holiday its people can remember.

Meanwhile, two other Eid traditions - the menfolk visiting their <u>female</u> relatives and giving new clothes to the children - have this year been nullified. "My father didn't go out of the house," explains Besma. "He has no money to travel. Sometimes my father cries when he has no money to give my little brother sweets."

Not far away in the city's eastern Shajaia suburb, Eid has been even bleaker under the leaky asbestos roof of the ramshackle three-room house where Rabbia Farahad, 59, lives with his wife, Najah, and 10 children. Mrs Farahad says the family have fruit once a month and vegetables once a week. "If we have apples I give out half of one to each," she says. The family epitomise another conclusion of the Red Cross report, that mutual support mechanisms are beginning to break down. "This is the worst Eid we have ever been through," says Mr Farahad, who used to be a farmworker in Israel. "Before, people used to help us but now no one has any money."

The family has no compunction in citing the de facto <u>Hamas</u> government - and its split with Fatah - among the culprits. "First I blame the Israeli occupation [for the blockade]," says Mr Farahad's 16-year-old daughter Tahani, before adding sarcastically: "Then I blame our two beloved governments. They are the reason for this." For Tahani, as for so many other Gazans, the only answer is, "unity of Fatah, *Hamas* and the rest of the factions".

Adeeb Yusef Zarouk, 46, a father of seven, can remember the prosperous Eids his family enjoyed when he worked as a welder in Israel. His only living repairing satellite dishes has dried up because his customers have no money. He says he too would "love to see" a unity government. But blaming malign influence by Iran and Syria, he doesn't think it will happen after <u>Hamas</u>'s no-show at talks brokered by Cairo. An opponent of <u>Hamas</u>, he is cynical about the possible renewal next week of the ceasefire, noting that it did not open the crossings or restart the economy when it was enforced for four months. "The truce will be extended because Israel and <u>Hamas</u> will benefit," he says. "But it won't help the public."

He believes, like many other Gazans, that Israel's blockade is having exactly the opposite effect to that it intends. Jobless young people are being given little option but to join <u>Hamas</u> or another armed faction. Charging that <u>Hamas</u> had distributed \$100 payments to its supporters this Eid, he says: "This siege is having a very strong effect on the people but though they say it is against <u>Hamas</u> it is not affecting <u>Hamas</u> at all. The Israelis don't know what they are doing. <u>Hamas</u> is the only one who is benefiting."

Load-Date: December 12, 2008



Leading article: Gaza ground assault: When victory is a hollow word

The Guardian - Final Edition
January 5, 2009 Monday

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Section: GUARDIAN LEADER PAGES; Pg. 30

Length: 655 words

Body

There was only one certainty as Israel's tanks and thousands of troops this weekend launched their biggest assault on Gaza for four years: the number of civilian casualties will rise exponentially. Israel may phone, text, drop leaflets and fire warning missiles at Gazans trapped in their homes, but the reality is that there is nowhere for 1.5m people to run. Gaza is a ghetto from which there is no escape.

Just before the ground offensive was launched on Saturday, Israel lobbed a shell into Palestine Square, Gaza City's main shopping area and five Palestinians were killed. Earlier, they flattened the American International School, the one private school in the strip, which itself had been attacked by militants. Another air strike destroyed a mosque in Beit Hanoun during evening prayers killing around a dozen Palestinians. Yesterday afternoon a mother and her four children were killed by an air strike in Gaza City. As Israeli forces battled last night on the outskirts of Gaza City, the killing of innocent Palestinians continued.

The last time the tanks rolled into Gaza in February and March last year, more than half the Palestinian casualties were civilian, according to Human Rights Watch. That pattern is now set to be repeated. After a week's aerial bombardment, the death toll already stands at nearly 500, of which approximately 70 are children and 27 <u>women</u>, according to independent Palestinian sources. Of the 2,650 Gazans injured, more than 270 are <u>women</u> and 650 children. So much for Israel's claim that their targets are <u>Hamas</u> militants. Even if you stretch the term to include policemen, this is a "surgical" operation in which civilians will die in their hundreds.

There are, however, many uncertainties. The ghost of Israel's humiliation at the hands of Hezbollah in Lebanon in 2006 hangs over this enterprise and Israel will want to exorcise it. <u>Hamas</u> and other militant groups in Gaza have about 15,000 men under arms, of which only 1,000 men form a trained core in the form of Iz al-Din al-Qassam. It is doubtful whether a force of this size could inflict the sort of military casualties Israel suffered in Lebanon. Israel will judge the success of its operation on the extent to which it will have depleted <u>Hamas</u>'s command structure, as well as its ability to launch rockets. But even if the Israeli army succeeds in its aims and destroys <u>Hamas</u> both as an army and as an organisation, it will have also destroyed the last remnants of government in the strip. Israel would have fought its way back to where it was in 1994, before the advent of the Palestinian authority, and back in direct control of Gaza. That is plainly not what it wants, because it would mean re-assuming control of 1.5 million Gazans as well. Putting a proxy Palestinian government in place would be just as fraught. Destroying the infrastructure of <u>Hamas'</u>'s rule in Gaza would also wreck the effective government on which any future ceasefire would depend. To take one small but relevant example, half of Gaza's ambulances have already been destroyed.

Leading article: Gaza ground assault: When victory is a hollow word

<u>Hamas</u> is more than just a guerrilla army. It is a political movement as well. As such, <u>Hamas</u> will have been seen to have borne the brunt of the occupier's might and <u>Hamas</u>'s claim to assume the leadership of the Palestinian national movement will have been enhanced as a result. If the United Nations stands by as the ground operation continues, Fatah in the West Bank will increasingly be seen by the Palestinian street as a Vichy regime, fit only for collaboration. The disunity among the Palestinian factions seen last week in the West Bank should not be misinterpreted as acquiescence. There is real anger too, of the worst sort - anger without effective leadership. There is only one way out of the political trap which Israeli forces are now entering, and that is an immediate ceasefire. It would enhance <u>Hamas</u>'s credibility, but not as much as a total military victory might.

Load-Date: January 5, 2009



Touted as traitors

The Jerusalem Post January 2, 2009 Friday

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 14

Length: 1236 words

Byline: KHALED ABU TOAMEH

Highlight: Widespread protests that have erupted throughout the Arab world against 'collaborators' like the PA's Mahmoud Abbas and Egypt's Hosni Mubarak may signal the start of a third intifada - against any leaders seen as

colluding with Israel to topple *Hamas*. PALESTINIAN AFFAIRS

Body

The IDF's Cast Lead offensive in the Gaza Strip may have severely harmed <u>Hamas</u>'s military capabilities and weakened its tight grip on the area, but it has also further undermined the credibility of the "moderate," pro- Western Arab regimes.

Many of the "moderate" Arab leaders, including the Palestinian Authority's Mahmoud Abbas, were not afraid to alienate the Arab street by blaming <u>Hamas</u> for the latest cycle of violence. Some of them are even reported to have gone as far as quietly urging Israel to pursue its military operation until <u>Hamas</u> is removed from power.

Since the beginning of the operation, the Arab media have been full of reports suggesting that Abbas, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, Jordan's King Abdullah II and Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah bin Abdel Aziz had all given Israel a "green light" to attack Gaza.

Apart from seriously embarrassing these Arab leaders, the reports have also sent hundreds of thousands of Arab protesters to the streets to condemn not Israel, but what they regard as their governments' involvement in the "US-Zionist conspiracy" to remove *Hamas* from power.

The widespread protests are seen by some Arab political analysts as marking the beginning of a popular "intifada" against corrupt, pro-Western Arab dictators. They expect these protests to intensify as the IDF operation continues and the number of Palestinian casualties rises.

"The radicals among the Arabs have succeeded in igniting a popular intifada against the failed Arab rulers, thanks to the Israeli war," said Dr. Issam Nu'man, a respected Lebanese political commentator. "The war has exposed the partnership among Arab regimes, Israel and the US."

Most of the heat on the Arab street is directed against Mubarak and Abbas - the only two leaders who had the courage to blame *Hamas* for the war because of its continued rocket attacks on Israel. Walid Tabtabai, an Islamist member of the Kuwaiti parliament who took off his shoe and waved it in the air, while hurling curses at Abbas, is being hailed throughout the Arab world as a hero. Other members of the parliament called on their government to ban the "traitor" Abbas from entering the country.

Touted as traitors

Several members of the Jordanian parliament, in an unprecedented move, burned the Israeli flag inside the chamber, and called on King Abdullah to expel the Israeli ambassador. At least 20,000 Palestinians and Jordanians staged a huge demonstration in Amman, during which they chanted slogans against Israel, the US and Arab leaders, especially Mubarak and Abbas.

Mubarak is being attacked for allegedly giving Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni a "green light" to wipe out *Hamas* during their meeting in Cairo 48 hours before the IDF operation was launched. The Arabs are particularly angry with him for allowing Livni to stand in front of media representatives in the Egyptian capital and issue threats to crush *Hamas*.

"What would have happened if a Palestinian leader had issued threats to eliminate Israel from the heart of the Egyptian capital?" asked Abdel Bari Atawan, editor of the London-based Palestinian daily Al-Kuds al-Arabi. "It would have been the end of the world."

Mubarak, who is currently facing growing opposition on the streets of Cairo, is also being accused of participating in the Israeli blockade on Gaza by refusing to reopen the Rafah border crossing. His declared policy, that the border crossing won't be reopened until Abbas's loyalists are permitted to return to the terminal, has further enraged many Palestinians, Egyptians and Arabs. This anger was reflected in a fiery speech given by Hizbullah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah, who called on the Egyptians to overthrow Mubarak's regime.

"Mubarak has become the number one enemy of the Arab masses," commented a Palestinian newspaper editor in Ramallah. "President Mahmoud Abbas is also in big trouble, because he's being portrayed as someone who supported the Israeli attack so that he could return to the Gaza Strip."

THE INCITEMENT against Mubarak and Abbas in the Arab media is likely to intensify as Al-Jazeera continues to broadcast horrific images of dead <u>women</u> and children in Gaza. As in the past, it is now spearheading a campaign aimed at discrediting "moderate" Arab rulers, by depicting them as pawns in the hands of the Israelis and Americans. The message that Al-Jazeera is sending to the Arab and Islamic masses is: "You must rise against your treacherous leaders, because they are serving the interests of Israel and the US."

During the Second Lebanon War in 2006, Al-Jazeera and many Arab media outlets also waged a campaign against the Arab leaders, accusing them of "collusion" with Israel. Fortunately for those leaders, that war did not last too long. Moreover, it was regarded as a campaign against Hizbullah alone, while the current offensive is being seen as an attempt to punish the Palestinians for having voted for *Hamas*.

Operation Cast Lead will not wipe out <u>Hamas</u> completely, even if it results in the demolition of all of the Islamist movement's government buildings and security installations. On the contrary, the operation, by all accounts, is likely to boost <u>Hamas</u>'s popularity not only among the Palestinians, but also on the streets of Khartoum, Amman, Cairo and Beirut.

Ironically, the offensive has already undermined the standing of the "moderate" regimes and leaders in the Arab world by making them appear as if they are on Israel's side. By seeking to ban the protests on the Arab street, these leaders have only drawn more fire from their constituents and the Arab media.

Mubarak, Abbas and King Abdullah II tried unsuccessfully over the past week to prevent the protests from spreading. The Jordanian monarch even went as far as asking his intelligence chief to step down for failing to stop the demonstrations. In Ramallah, Abbas and his aides are busy trying to convince the Palestinians and the Arab world that they have no plans to return to Gaza "aboard Israeli tanks," and that they never gave their blessing to the Israeli operation.

But the damage has already been done. Abbas, along with the rest of his "moderate" colleagues, is now trying to salvage what's left of his credibility. Clearly, he doesn't have much time, since his term in office expires next week, leaving the Palestinians with only one freely- elected, legitimate government - the *Hamas* regime.

Touted as traitors

After January 9, Abbas is likely to come under heavy pressure to step down not only from <u>Hamas</u>, but also from many people in his Fatah faction who accuse him of being a failed leader and who hold him responsible for the fact that <u>Hamas</u> is in power in Gaza.

The talk about a "third intifada" that would be directed this time against the Arab rulers appears to be gaining momentum on the Arab street, where many people are no longer afraid to openly condemn their leaders as "traitors" and "Israeli puppets."

The Arab street is ready for a third intifada, said Palestinian writer Rashad Abu Shawar. "Those Arabs who are exonerating Israel and blaming <u>Hamas</u> are being regarded as traitors," he said. "This week, we already saw the spark of the third intifada on the streets of Ramallah, Hebron, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, as well as inside Israel. These Arab regimes want to see Gaza surrender, so that they can eliminate the term 'resistance' from their lexicon. The third intifada won't only finish off the PA; it will also destroy the illusion of peace with the Israeli enemy."

Graphic

Photo: PA PRESIDENT Mahmoud Abbas with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. Most of the heat on the Arab street is directed against the two leaders for blaming <u>Hamas</u> for the war. (Credit: AP)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011



Children caught in the Gaza crossfire

The New Zealand Herald January 2, 2009 Friday

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Section: NEWS; World

Length: 457 words

Body

BEIT HANOUN - Samar Hamdan ran weeping through the street, trying to touch the body of her slain 11-year-old brother during a funeral procession in this northern Gaza town.

Just a day before, 15-year-old Hamdan's two sisters were also buried, victims of the same strike from an Israeli missile.

As Israel steps up its attacks on the <u>Hamas</u> rulers of the Gaza Strip, one of the most densely populated spots on earth, children are paying the price.

&"In this crowded strip, everything is beside everything else, &" said Karen Abu Zayd, a top UN official in Gaza.

Israel maintains it is only targeting <u>Hamas</u> militants and the rockets they send streaking into southern Israel. More than 400 Palestinians have been killed in the strikes and many of them have been members of the security forces.

But at least 37 children and 17 <u>women</u> have died so far, according to the <u>Hamas</u>-run Health Ministry - numbers that UN officials also believe are correct.

The broad range of Israel's targets - police compounds, fire stations, homes of militants, <u>Hamas</u>-run mosques and university buildings - means most shelling is occurring in residential areas.

Israel says that militants fire rockets from residential areas and schools - aware that the response may cause civilian casualties.

&" Hamas uses civilians as human shields, &" said Israeli military spokeswoman Major Avital Leibovich.

&"The targets we picked are military.&"

But with some 1.4 million Gazans crammed into a sliver of land 40 kilometres long and just 5 to 12 kilometres wide, military targets and civilians tend to exist side by side.

Israel's strike yesterday against the home of top *Hamas* leader Nizar Rayan was a typical case.

The bomb flattened the house and killed the man involved in attacks on Israel - as well as 18 other people, including nine of his children, aged 2 to 19, and all four of his wives.

Television footage showed medics clutching the bodies of lifeless children dug out of the rubble the house and neighbouring buildings.

Children caught in the Gaza crossfire

<u>Hamas</u> officials said Rayan refused to leave his home, although he knew he was a likely target - effectively risking civilians living nearby.

For the Hamdan children, however, the attack was all the more random.

The three children, Haya, 12, Lama, 4 and Ismail, 11, were dumping garbage in an empty field near their home on Tuesday morning, not knowing that moments before Gaza militants nearby had just fired rockets at Israel.

An Israeli warship fired a missile at the site. The two girls were killed instantly, while Ismail lingered on until Wednesday.

At his funeral, his sister Samar tried to follow the flag-wrapped body of her brother, until the mourners stopped and took her home to her devastated mother.

&"My children are dead, why am I alive?&" she wailed.

- AP

Load-Date: January 2, 2009



Foreign residents flee as bombardment continues

Irish News

January 3, 2009 Saturday

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Section: Pg. 12 Length: 677 words

Body

Israel bowed to international pressure yesterday to allow hundreds of Palestinians with foreign passports to leave besieged Gaza. But it kept up attacks for a sixth day, including bombing a mosque it claimed was used to store weapons and destroying the homes of more than a dozen *Hamas* operatives.

Israel has been building up artillery, armour and infantry on Gaza's border in an indication the week-old air assault against its *Hamas* rulers could soon expand with a ground incursion.

International calls for a ceasefire have been growing and French President Nicolas Sarkozy is expected in the region next week.

There was no slowdown in violence yesterday, with Israel attacking new targets and Palestinians firing at least 30 rockets into southern Israel.

Israel managed to open its border with Gaza to allow nearly 300 Palestinians with foreign passports to flee.

Many of the evacuees were foreign-born **women** married to Palestinians and their children.

Spouses who did not hold foreign citizenship were not allowed out.

The Israeli foreign ministry said most of the evacuees were Russian or Eastern European.

Israel launched the bombing campaign last Saturday in a bid to halt weeks of intensifying Palestinian rocket fire from Gaza.

It has dealt a heavy blow to *Hamas* but failed to halt the rockets.

New attacks yesterday struck homes in the southern Israeli city of Ashkelon, wounding four Israelis.

After destroying *Hamas*' security compounds, Israel turned its attention to the group's leadership.

Planes hit around 20 houses believed to belong to *Hamas* militants and members of other armed groups.

The Israelis either warned residents by phone or fired a warning missile to try to reduce civilian casualties.

Israeli planes also dropped leaflets east of Gaza giving a confidential phone number and email address for people to report locations of rocket squads.

It used similar tactics during its 2006 war against Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Foreign residents flee as bombardment continues

Most of the targeted homes belonged to activist leaders and appeared to be empty at the time but one man was killed in a strike in the Jebaliya refugee camp in northern Gaza.

Separate airstrikes killed five other Palestinians - including a teenage boy east of Gaza City and three children - two brothers and their cousin - who were playing in southern Gaza.

More than 400 Gazans have been killed and 1,700 wounded in the Israeli campaign, Gaza health officials said.

The number of combatants and civilians killed is unclear but <u>Hamas</u> has said around half of the dead are members of its security forces and the UN has said more than 60 are civilians, 34 of them children.

Three Israeli civilians and one soldier have also died in the rocket attacks, which have reached deeper into Israel than ever before, bringing an eighth of Israel's population of seven million within rocket range.

The mosque destroyed yesterday was known as a <u>Hamas</u> stronghold and the army said it was used to store weapons.

It also was identified with Nizar Rayan, the <u>Hamas</u> militant leader killed yesterday when Israel dropped a one-ton bomb on his home.

Israel's military said the homes of <u>Hamas</u> leaders are being used to store missiles and other weapons and the hit on Rayan's house triggered secondary explosions from the stockpile there.

While keeping up the military pressure, Israel has offered a small opening for intense diplomatic efforts, saying it would consider a halt to the fighting.

But it has attached the strict condition that international monitors enforce the truce.

The fighting follows a six-month truce that was repeatedly violated by Palestinian rocket and mortar fire.

Concerned about protests, Israeli police stepped up security and restricted access to Friday prayers at Jerusalem's al-Aqsa Mosque, barring all males under 50 from entering.

Prayers in Jerusalem ended without incident, though in a nearby east Jerusalem district youths clashed with antiriot police on horseback.

Jerusalem's mufti Mohammed Hussein said a mere 3,000 Palestinians attended prayers because of tough restrictions, which barred all males under the age of 50 from entering.

Load-Date: January 5, 2009



Deadly attacks pound Gaza; More than 300 dead in worst Israeli assault in decades

The Calgary Herald (Alberta)

December 29, 2008 Monday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A1

Length: 988 words

Byline: Joel Greenberg, Calgary Herald

Dateline: JERUSALEM

Body

Widening an offensive against <u>Hamas</u>, Israeli aircraft pounded targets across the Gaza Strip for a second day Sunday, hitting smuggling tunnels at the Egyptian border and the main security complex in Gaza City as angry protests spread throughout the Middle East and across the globe.

The death toll in what has been the most lethal Israeli assault on the Gaza Strip in decades reached more than 300, with about 900 others wounded, according to the United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

The UN office said most of the dead were members of the <u>Hamas</u> civilian police, while at least 20 children, nine **women** and 60 other unarmed civilians were killed, most in the first minutes of the Israeli air campaign.

In Calgary, about 100 people gathered outside City Hall to protest the attacks in Gaza.

The International Red Cross said Gaza hospitals were overwhelmed, unable to cope with the scale of casualties and in urgent need of medical equipment.

I srael allowed a shipment of food and medical supplies into Gaza on Sunday.

Israel launched the intensive bombings--more than 300 air strikes since midday Saturday--in response to stepped-up rocket fire from the Gaza Strip by Palestinian militants after the expiration of a six-month truce.

The UN Security Council called Sunday for an end to hostilities, but there were few signs that effective diplomacy was underway to bring an end to the violence.

Militants in Gaza fired 20 rockets at Israeli communities, causing no serious casualties, but two rockets landed more than 30 kilometres from Gaza near the city of Ashdod, significantly exceeding the range of previous attacks.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said at the weekly meeting of his Cabinet that the situation in southern Israel "is liable to last longer than we are able to foresee at this time," while Defense Minister Ehud Barak said the army would "deepen and widen the operation as necessary."

Deadly attacks pound Gaza; More than 300 dead in worst Israeli assault in decades

The Cabinet authorized the call-up of 6,500 army reservists, and infantry and armoured units were moved to the Gaza border, but there were no signs of an imminent ground invasion. Israeli officials have been wary of bogging the army down in close-quarter combat in the densely populated territory.

In the first diplomatic fallout from the Israeli military campaign, a Syrian official said Damascus would suspend indirect talks with Israel, begun earlier this year. The official reportedly said, "Israel's aggression closes all doors" to any peace moves. Israel and Syria held four rounds of indirect talks with Turkish mediation.

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan condemned the Israeli assault on Gaza as "a crime against humanity." Turkey is one of the few Muslim countries that has diplomatic relations with Israel.

Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni said in foreign television interviews the aim of the Israeli attacks was not to topple the <u>Hamas</u> rulers of the Gaza Strip or occupy the territory, but to ensure Israelis living near the Gaza border were not threatened by rockets.

Israeli officials and commentators said the purpose of the campaign was to weaken <u>Hamas</u> and compel it to accept a long-term truce, but the group remained defiant.

Fawzi Barhoum, a <u>Hamas</u> spokesman, vowed, "our resistance will continue . . . in all its forms including martyrdom operations,"a reference to suicide bombings in Israel. <u>Hamas</u> leaders have gone into hiding, fearing Israeli attempts to kill them.

In Sunday's attacks, Israeli warplanes struck dozens of smuggling tunnels under the Gaza-Egypt border that have served as a lifeline for <u>Hamas</u>, providing a conduit for arms and commercial goods. The smuggling has helped <u>Hamas</u> withstand a blockade of the Gaza Strip by Israel and Egypt.

After the bombings at the frontier, crowds of Palestinians trying to escape Gaza breached a border wall with Egypt but were pushed back by Egyptian guards, some firing in the air. One border guard reportedly was killed in an exchange of fire with armed Palestinians.

Earlier, Israeli warplanes attacked the main security compound in Gaza City, which also houses the central prison. The building was hit with three bombs, reducing it to rubble. Prisoners who emerged unharmed scrambled over the wreckage as rescue workers looked for others buried underneath.

Early today an air strike hit the Islamic University in Gaza City, a <u>Hamas</u> stronghold, wrecking some of its buildings. An army spokesman said the buildings served as development and manufacture sites for rockets and other weapons.

In another attack on a building in the Jabalya refugee camp, a 14-month-old baby was killed along with a man and two **women**, said Dr.Mu'awiya Hassanein, head of the Gaza emergency services.

Other targets hit included a security room and mosque near Shifa Hospital that the army said served as a meeting place for armed militants;a <u>Hamas</u> television station; local government buildings; police headquarters; and a fuel depot.

More than 5,000 marched in Damascus, Syria, where protesters burned an Israeli and an American flag. In Amman, Jordan, thousands marched toward parliament to demand the expulsion of the Israeli ambassador, and in Beirut, protesters clashed with police outside the Egyptian embassy.

Egypt has been criticized during the crisis for sealing its border with <u>Hamas</u>-ruled Gaza and not allowing regular shipments of aid and movement to and from the territory. Egyptian students demonstrated at campuses in Cairo and Alexandria, accusing President Hosni Mubarak and other Arab leaders of not doing enough to support the Palestinians.

Stone-throwing protests erupted in the West Bank and two Palestinians were shot and killed in confrontations with Israeli troops. The army said one protester was targeted as he prepared to hurl a firebomb.

Deadly attacks pound Gaza; More than 300 dead in worst Israeli assault in decades

In the West Bank town of Hebron, Palestinian forces loyal to President Mahmoud Abbas reportedly shot and wounded three people while during a protest by Islamist groups in support of *Hamas*.

Graphic

Colour Photo: Yannis Behrakis, Reuters; The sun sets behind an Israeli tank near Kibbutz Mefalsim, just outside the northern Gaza Strip, as Israel stepped up air strikes on the region while preparing for a possible invasion.;

Photo: Amir Cohen, Reuters; Israeli troops closed in on the Gaza strip borders sunday in advance of a possible ground invasion.;

Photo: Naaman Omar, Bloomberg; smoke rises from buildings after an Israeli air strike on a <u>Hamas</u> security compound in Gaza City on sunday. two days of intense fighting has left more than 300 dead and 900 injured, according to United nations estimates.;

Load-Date: December 29, 2008



What has to happen to end the battle over Gaza

Times Colonist (Victoria, British Columbia)

January 8, 2009 Thursday

Final Edition

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Section: COMMENT; Pg. A10

Length: 815 words

Byline: Thomas L. Friedman, Special to Times Colonist

Body

The fighting, death and destruction in Gaza is painful to watch. But it's all too familiar. It's the latest version of the longest-running play in the modern Middle East, which, if I were to give it a title, would be called: "Who owns this hotel? Can the Jews have a room? And shouldn't we blow up the bar and replace it with a mosque?"

That is, Gaza is a mini-version of three great struggles that have been playing out since 1948: 1) Who is going to be the regional superpower -- Egypt? Saudi Arabia? Iran? 2) Should there be a Jewish state in the Middle East and, if so, on what Palestinian terms? And 3) Who is going to dominate Arab society -- Islamists who are intolerant of other faiths and want to choke off modernity or modernists who want to embrace the future, with an Arab-Muslim face?

Let's look at each.

Who owns this hotel? The struggle for hegemony over the modern Arab world is as old as Nasser's Egypt. But what is new today is that non-Arab Iran is now making a bid for primacy -- challenging Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Iran has deftly used military aid to both <u>Hamas</u> and Hezbollah to create a rocket-armed force on Israel's northern and western borders. This enables Tehran to stop and start the Israeli-Palestinian conflict at will and to paint itself as the true protector of the Palestinians, as opposed to the weak Arab regimes.

"The Gaza that Israel left in 2005 was bordering Egypt. The Gaza that Israel just came back to is now bordering Iran," said Mamoun Fandy, director of Middle East programs at the International Institute of Strategic Studies. "Iran has become the ultimate confrontation state. I am not sure we can talk just about 'Arab-Israeli peace' or the 'Arab peace initiative' anymore. We may be looking at an 'Iranian initiative.' " The whole notion of Arab-Israeli peacemaking likely will have to change.

Can the Jews have a room here? <u>Hamas</u> rejects any recognition of Israel. By contrast, the Fatah-led Palestinian Authority, which controls the West Bank, has recognized Israel -- and vice versa. If you believe, as I do, that the only stable solution is a two-state one, with the Palestinians getting all of the West Bank, Gaza and Arab sectors of East Jerusalem, then you have to hope for the weakening of *Hamas*.

Why? Because nothing has damaged Palestinians more than the <u>Hamas</u> death-cult strategy of turning Palestinian youths into suicide bombers. Because nothing would set back a peace deal more than if <u>Hamas</u>' call to replace Israel with an Islamic state became the Palestinian negotiating position. And because <u>Hamas</u>' attacks on towns in southern Israel are destroying a two-state solution, even more than Israel's disastrous and reckless West Bank settlements.

What has to happen to end the battle over Gaza

Israel has proved that it can and will uproot settlements, as it did in Gaza. <u>Hamas'</u> rocket attacks pose an irreversible threat. They say to Israel: "From Gaza, we can hit southern Israel. If we get the West Bank, we can rocket, and thereby close, Israel's international airport -- anytime, any day, from now to eternity." How many Israelis will risk giving up the West Bank, given this new threat?

Shouldn't we blow up the bar and replace it with a mosque? <u>Hamas</u>' overthrow of the more secular Fatah organization in Gaza in 2007 is part of a region-wide civil war between Islamists and modernists. In the week that Israel has been slicing through Gaza, Islamist suicide bombers have killed almost 100 Iraqis -- first, tribal sheiks in Yusufiya, who were working on reconciliation between Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds, and, second, mostly <u>women</u> and children gathered at a Shiite shrine. These unprovoked mass murders have not stirred a single protest in Europe or the Middle East.

Gaza today is basically ground zero for all three of these struggles, said Martin Indyk, the former Clinton administration's Middle East adviser. "This tiny little piece of land, Gaza, has the potential to blow all of these issues wide open and present a huge problem for Barack Obama on Day 1."

Obama's great potential for America, noted Indyk, is also a great threat to Islamist radicals -- because his narrative holds tremendous appeal for Arabs. For eight years <u>Hamas</u>, Hezbollah and al-Qaeda have been surfing on a wave of anti-U.S. anger generated by George W. Bush. And that wave has greatly expanded their base.

No doubt, <u>Hamas</u>, Hezbollah and Iran are hoping that they can use the Gaza conflict to turn Obama into Bush. They know Barack Hussein Obama must be (am)Bushed -- to keep America and its Arab allies on the defensive. Obama has to keep his eye on the prize.

His goal has to be a settlement in Gaza that eliminates the threat of <u>Hamas</u> rockets and opens Gaza economically to the world, under credible international supervision. That's what will serve U.S. interests, moderate the three great struggles and earn him respect.

Thomas L. Friedman wrote The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the 21st Century.

Load-Date: January 8, 2009



Israel rejects ceasefire plea

The Daily Telegraph (London)

January 1, 2009 Thursday

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The Daily Telegraph

Section: NEWS; International; Pg. 1

Length: 220 words

Byline: Tim Butcher in Jerusalem

Body

GAZA was braced for a sixth day of attacks last night after international demands for a 48-hour ceasefire were rejected.

The Israeli government dismissed calls for humanitarian supplies to be allowed in, claiming it would give the *Hamas* militants the chance to regroup.

The decision came as the White House backed the continued campaign, saying <u>Hamas</u> must stop firing rockets into Israel before the strikes would stop.

Washington's position contrasted with that of Britain and the UN, with Gordon Brown warning that the people of Gaza were enduring a "humanitarian crisis".

Local sources said 390 Palestinians had died since Israel launched its attack on Saturday, of which roughly a quarter were **women**, children and other non-combatants.

<u>Hamas</u> militants continued to fire Grad rockets from Gaza at Israeli targets up to 25 miles away. They are now reaching further than ever before, putting more than 700,000 Israelis at risk.

<u>Hamas</u> spokesmen in Gaza gave contradictory signals about whether the movement could consider a ceasefire. A police spokesman said it would examine any proposal that would lift the blockade but Fawzi Barhum, a government spokesman, took a more defiant stance.

He said: "The current efforts aimed at ending the combat and installing a ceasefire put the executioner and the victim on equal footing."

Load-Date: January 1, 2009



GROUND ZERO; THE MIDDLE EAST'S TROUBLES ARE BOILING OVER IN GAZA

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (Pennsylvania)

January 8, 2009 Thursday

SOONER EDITION

Copyright 2009 P.G. Publishing Co.

Section: EDITORIAL; Pg. B-7

Length: 833 words

Byline: Thomas L. Friedman

Body

The fighting, death and destruction in Gaza is painful to watch. But it's all too familiar. It's the latest version of the longest-running play in the modern Middle East, which, if I were to give it a title, would be called: "Who owns this hotel? Can the Jews have a room? And shouldn't we blow up the bar and replace it with a mosque?"

That is, Gaza is a mini-version of three great struggles that have been playing out since 1948:

- * 1) Who is going to be the regional superpower -- Egypt? Saudi Arabia? Iran?
- * 2) Should there be a Jewish state in the Middle East and, if so, on what Palestinian terms?
- * 3) Who is going to dominate Arab society -- Islamists who are intolerant of other faiths and want to choke off modernity or modernists who want to embrace the future, with an Arab-Muslim face?

Let's look at each.

Who owns this hotel?

The struggle for hegemony over the modern Arab world is as old as Nasser's Egypt. But what is new today is that non-Arab Iran is now making a bid for primacy -- challenging Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Iran has deftly used military aid to both <u>Hamas</u> and Hezbollah to create a rocket-armed force on Israel's northern and western borders. This enables Tehran to stop and start the Israeli-Palestinian conflict at will and to paint itself as the true protector of the Palestinians, as opposed to the weak Arab regimes.

"The Gaza that Israel left in 2005 was bordering Egypt. The Gaza that Israel just came back to is now bordering Iran," said Mamoun Fandy, director of Middle East programs at the International Institute of Strategic Studies. "Iran has become the ultimate confrontation state. I am not sure we can talk just about 'Arab-Israeli peace' or the 'Arab peace initiative' anymore. We may be looking at an 'Iranian initiative.' "

In short, the whole notion of Arab-Israeli peacemaking likely will have to change.

Can the Jews have a room here?

GROUND ZERO THE MIDDLE EAST'S TROUBLES ARE BOILING OVER IN GAZA

<u>Hamas</u> rejects any recognition of Israel. By contrast, the Fatah-led Palestinian Authority, which controls the West Bank, has recognized Israel -- and vice versa. If you believe, as I do, that the only stable solution is a two-state one, with the Palestinians getting all of the West Bank, Gaza and Arab sectors of East Jerusalem, then you have to hope for the weakening of <u>Hamas</u>.

Why? Because nothing has damaged Palestinians more than the <u>Hamas</u> death-cult strategy of turning Palestinian youths into suicide bombers. Because nothing would set back a peace deal more than if <u>Hamas'</u> call to replace Israel with an Islamic state became the Palestinian negotiating position. And because <u>Hamas'</u> attacks on towns in southern Israel is destroying a two-state solution, even more than Israel's disastrous and reckless West Bank settlements.

Israel has proved that it can and will uproot settlements, as it did in Gaza. <u>Hamas'</u> rocket attacks pose an irreversible threat. They say to Israel: "From Gaza, we can hit southern Israel. If we get the West Bank, we can rocket, and thereby close, Israel's international airport -- anytime, any day, from now to eternity." How many Israelis will risk relinquishing the West Bank, given this new threat?

Shouldn't we blow up the bar and replace it with a mosque?

<u>Hamas'</u> overthrow of the more secular Fatah organization in Gaza in 2007 is part of a regionwide civil war between Islamists and modernists. In the week that Israel has been slicing through Gaza, Islamist suicide bombers have killed almost 100 Iraqis -- first, a group of tribal sheikhs in Yusufiya, who were working on reconciliation between Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds, and, second, mostly <u>women</u> and children gathered at a Shiite shrine. These unprovoked mass murders have not stirred a single protest in Europe or the Middle East.

Gaza today is basically ground zero for all three of these struggles, said Martin Indyk, the former Clinton administration's Middle East adviser whose incisive new book, "Innocent Abroad: An Intimate Account of American Diplomacy in the Middle East," was just published. "This tiny little piece of land, Gaza, has the potential to blow all of these issues wide open and present a huge problem for Barack Obama on Day 1."

Mr. Obama's great potential for America, noted Mr. Indyk, is also a great threat to Islamist radicals -- because his narrative holds tremendous appeal for Arabs. For eight years *Hamas*, Hezbollah and al-Qaida have been surfing on a wave of anti-U.S. anger generated by George W. Bush. And that wave has greatly expanded their base.

No doubt, <u>Hamas</u>, Hezbollah and Iran are hoping that they can use the Gaza conflict to turn Mr. Obama into Mr. Bush. They know Barack Hussein Obama must be (am)Bushed -- to keep America and its Arab allies on the defensive.

Mr. Obama has to keep his eye on the prize. His goal -- America's goal -- has to be a settlement in Gaza that eliminates the threat of <u>Hamas</u> rockets and opens Gaza economically to the world, under credible international supervision. That's what will serve U.S. interests, moderate the three great struggles and earn him respect.

Notes

Thomas L. Friedman is a syndicated columnist for The New York Times.

Load-Date: January 8, 2009



Banned shells used in blitz, say medics

Herald Sun (Australia)
January 12, 2009 Monday
1 - FIRST Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 22

Length: 487 words

Body

ISRAEL has pressed on with its assault on *Hamas* in Gaza as the death toll in the 16-day-old war passed 850.

Three Palestinians were killed and dozens wounded by Israeli tank fire and air strikes yesterday, some allegedly by banned white phosphorous shells, medics said.

Hamas remained defiant in the face of Egyptian-led efforts to broker a cease fire.

The Islamist movement vowed it would not negotiate a truce ``under fire".

<u>Hamas</u> leader Khaled Meshaal said it would not accept any truce without the withdrawal of all Israeli forces and the lifting of the blockade enforced when the Islamists won power 18 months ago.

"With an open mind we will work with any initiative or any resolution but only based on these demands. We will not accept negotiations on a truce under fire," he said.

A closed-door briefing was told at the weekend that Israeli troops had killed more than 550 Palestinian fighters since the operation began.

Army spokesman Jacob Dallal declined to confirm the number but said ``several hundred" fighters, most of them from *Hamas*, had been killed since Israel launched its offensive on December 27.

"There is no question the military ability of *Hamas* has been diminished," he said.

The army denied the claim by Palestinian doctors that Israel was using banned white phosphorous shells.

A woman was killed and 60 people hurt in tank shelling on a village east of Khan Yunis, said Dr Yusef Abu Rish, of Nasser hospital.

Of those, 55 "were burned over their bodies in a way that can only be caused by white phosphorous," he said.

His claim was echoed by Dr Muawiya Hassanein, head of Gaza emergency services, who said these weapons had already been used by Israel.

Army Captain Guy Spigelman rejected the report. ``We deny that we were operating in that area . . . Everything we use is according to international law". White phosphorus is used as a smokescreen or for incendiary devices, but can be deployed as an anti-personnel weapon capable of causing burns.

Banned shells used in blitz, say medics

Hamas claimed it was repulsing the Israeli offensive.

The head of its powerful Syria-based politburo, Meshaal, accused Israel of carrying out a ``Holocaust" in Gaza.

"You have lost on the moral and humanitarian fronts . . . and you have created a resistance in every house," Meshaal said on Arab TV.

"I can say with full confidence that on the military level, the enemy has totally failed. It has not achieved anything. Has it stopped the rockets?" he asked.

Since the Israeli offensive began, at least 854 people have died, including 270 children, 93 <u>women</u>, and 12 paramedics, according to Palestinian medics. Another 3490 people have been wounded.

<u>Hamas</u> and other armed groups fired at least 13 rockets into Israel on Saturday, wounding four people.

Worldwide pro-Palestinian demonstrations were held at the weekend, including rallies in Europe, the US, South America and Asia.

heraldsun.com.au > Latest updates on the bloody conflict in the Gaza Strip

Load-Date: January 11, 2009



Escalation Feared as Israel, Continuing Bombing, Lets Foreigners Leave Gaza

The New York Times

January 3, 2009 Saturday

Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section A; Column 0; Foreign Desk; Pg. 5

Length: 1243 words

Byline: By ISABEL KERSHNER and TAGHREED EL-KHODARY; Isabel Kershner reported from Jerusalem, and Taghreed El-Khodary from Gaza. Reporting was contributed by Reem Makhoul-Farrell from Jerusalem, Khaled Abu Aker from Ramallah, the West Bank, Marc Santora from the United Nations, and Alan Cowell from London.

Taghreed El-Khodary reported from Gaza and Isabel Kershner from Jerusalem.

Dateline: JERUSALEM

Body

Israeli warplanes pounded <u>Hamas</u> targets in Gaza for a seventh day on Friday while Israel allowed hundreds of foreigners, many of them married to Palestinians, to leave the enclave, raising fears there that Israel was planning to escalate its week-old campaign.

Tensions spread to the West Bank and East Jerusalem, where Palestinian anger at reports of civilian casualties in Gaza seemed to be translating into at least a temporary increase in popular sympathy for *Hamas*.

Israel has vowed to press its offensive until there is no more rocket fire out of Gaza; its troops and tanks remained along the border, poised for a possible ground invasion.

The United Nations special coordinator for the Middle East, Robert Serry, told reporters on Friday that he was deeply worried that Israel would decide to move into Gaza.

"We are gravely concerned about that prospect because that would just mean another cycle of violence and a further escalation of the conflict," he said. "This must stop. With Israeli tanks on Gaza's border, it is absolutely imperative now that we find an immediate and lasting way out to avoid an even deeper and deadlier conflict."

Israeli analysts and experts have said that any ground operation should be brief but powerful.

Alex Fishman, the military analyst of the popular daily newspaper Yediot Aharonot, wrote Friday, "Since the name of the game is killing and destruction, the ground operation has to be quick, with a lot of firepower at friction points with <u>Hamas</u>." He added, "The goal is to exact a high price in the early stages of the ground operation and to end it quickly."

Palestinian militants continued to launch salvos of rockets at southern Israel on Friday, with several hitting the coastal city of Ashkelon, lightly injuring two Israeli <u>women</u> there.

Escalation Feared as Israel, Continuing Bombing, Lets Foreigners Leave Gaza

Israeli air and naval forces pummeled more bases of <u>Hamas</u>, the Islamic group that controls Gaza. The military said it hit the houses of several <u>Hamas</u> militants that also served as weapons depots as well as tunnels used for weapons smuggling and missile launching sites. Warplanes also bombed a mosque in Jabaliya, in northern Gaza. The military said that <u>Hamas</u> was using the mosque as a terrorist base and that it was storing rockets there.

It was the mosque where Nizar Rayyan, the senior <u>Hamas</u> militant leader killed in an Israeli strike on Thursday, used to preach. Mr. Rayyan's four wives, at least nine of his children and several neighbors were also killed when his home was bombed.

About 2,000 Gazans turned out for the funeral in Jabaliya on Friday. Speakers called for revenge as Israeli fighter jets swooped threateningly overhead.

With <u>Hamas</u> calling for Palestinians in the West Bank and East Jerusalem to make Friday a "day of wrath," a few thousand turned out in Ramallah, the administrative headquarters of the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank. In Israeli-controlled East Jerusalem, the police came out in force to prevent disturbances after noon prayers. Small riots broke out in some Arab neighborhoods around the city, but most were quickly dispersed. And in Hebron, protesters clashed with the Palestinian police, leaving at least 10 injured.

In Gaza, local residents went out to pray at mosques and to shop for essentials, but did not linger. Medical officials in Gaza said 430 Palestinians had been killed and some 2,200 wounded since the Israeli campaign began last Saturday. The casualty figures include many <u>Hamas</u> security personnel members, but the United Nations has estimated that a quarter of those killed were civilians.

Three Israeli civilians and one soldier have been killed in rocket attacks in the past week, as *Hamas* deployed its more advanced, longer-range projectiles capable of hitting Israeli cities more than 20 miles away.

Hundreds of spouses of Palestinians, including <u>women</u> from Russia, Romania, Ukraine and Western Europe, left Gaza on Friday with the help of diplomats from their countries.

Alla Semaks, a 34-year-old Ukrainian married to a Palestinian, and her four children were among around 300 people who came in buses to the Erez checkpoint in northern Gaza to cross into Israel. Her husband, Mohammed Atawneh, 36, was not leaving because he had only Palestinian identity papers, she said in a telephone interview.

"I want to come back when the situation allows it," she said. "I have nothing in Ukraine. My children are very afraid for their father. We fear there will be an Israeli ground offensive."

A Gaza teenager, Jawaher Hajji, who said she had lost two close relatives in the past week, described a scene of growing desperation in the enclave. "There is no water, no electricity, no medicine,"Jawaher, a 14-year-old who has United States citizenship, told The Associated Press. "It's hard to survive. Gaza is destroyed."

At the United Nations, officials moved beyond calls for an immediate cease-fire, saying that an international monitoring mechanism needed to be established in Gaza to prevent future outbreaks of violence. "We will need a monitoring mechanism if we do not want to repeat the mistakes of the past," said Mr. Serry, the Middle East envoy.

His comments were echoed by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. "We are working toward a cease-fire that would not allow a reestablishment of the status quo ante where <u>Hamas</u> can continue to launch rockets out of Gaza," she said in Washington. "It is obvious that that cease-fire should take place as soon as possible, but we need a cease-fire that is durable and sustainable."

Both Israel and the Western-backed Palestinian Authority have been working assiduously to subdue <u>Hamas</u> in the West Bank since the Islamic group took over Gaza in 2007.

But the events in Gaza and the gruesome images broadcast repeatedly by the Arabic television networks are stirring strong emotions among West Bank Palestinians, who are directing most of their anger at Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

The authority's security forces had been instructed to prevent any popular displays of support for <u>Hamas</u> and clashes with Israeli forces, by keeping protesters away from Israeli Army checkpoints and other flash points, leading some Palestinians to accuse the authority of colluding with Israel.

Muneer al-Zughair, a spokesman in Jerusalem for the families of Palestinian prisoners, said <u>Hamas</u> had been strengthened by what he called "the massacre" in Gaza. "People feel that they are the only ones who are doing something for the Palestinian people," he said.

At the entrance to the Shuafat refugee camp on the edge of Jerusalem, Palestinian youths burned tires and threw stones at an Israeli checkpoint where soldiers stood in full riot gear. A man from the camp, who identified himself only as Qassem, said: "Everyone is against what is happening in Gaza. The Israeli Army are the terrorists."

Many denounced the bombing of mosques and the deaths of civilians. "Let them go in on the ground and take out *Hamas*, but spare the children," said a taxi driver from the camp who identified himself by his first name, Yasir. The missiles from the air "do not differentiate," he said.

At a news briefing at the White House on Friday, the deputypress secretary, Gordon D. Johndroe, said Israel had a right to defend itself from the rocket attacks out of Gaza. But he added that Israel also needed to "avoid unnecessary civilian casualties," and to continue the flow into Gaza of humanitarian goods.

http://www.nytimes.com

Graphic

PHOTOS: A Palestinian threw stones at Israeli troops on Friday during a demonstration at the Shuafat refugee camp, near Jerusalem.(PHOTOGRAPH BY ODED BALILTY/ASSOCIATED PRESS)(A5)

Palestinians gathered for the funeral procession of Nizar Rayyan, a <u>Hamas</u> leader, and four of his wives and at least nine of his children in Jabaliya on Friday.(PHOTOGRAPH BY ASHRAF AMRA/ASSOCIATED PRESS)

A car in Ashkelon, a city in southern Israel, was destroyed by a Palestinian missile on Friday.(PHOTOGRAPH BY MOISES SAMAN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES)(A7)

Load-Date: January 3, 2009



Another 14 children are killed in Gaza nightmare

Daily Mail (London)

January 6, 2009 Tuesday

IRE Edition

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Section: Pg. 8

Length: 607 words

Byline: MATTHEW KALMAN

Body

Rage: Mourners at the funeral of a <u>Hamas</u> fighter in Rafah in southern Gaza From Matthew Kalman in Jerusalem AT LEAST 14 more Palestinian children were killed in the Gaza Strip yesterday as the misery and terror of civilians trapped by the Israeli bombardment intensified.

With Israel defying mounting international demands for a ceasefire, aid workers warned of a humanitarian crisis facing terrified families trapped in their homes with little power, food, fuel and medicine.

The death toll passed 535 as planes, helicopters, artillery and tanks pounded the Palestinian territory for a tenth day.

Fierce battles with *Hamas* militants raged, some for the first time in the warren of tunnels beneath Gaza City.

Twenty-one of those who died yester-day were civilians. Palestinian medics say a total of 30 children and 18 **women** are among 90 civilians killed since Israel's ground invasion began on Saturday.

<u>Hamas</u> leader Mahmoud Zahar yesterday broke cover to warn that Jewish children and Jews throughout the world were now targets of *Hamas*.

'The Zionists have legitimised the killing of their children by killing our children. They have legitimised the killing of their people all over the world by killing our people,'

Zahar said in a grainy video broadbroadon *Hamas* TV.

Yesterday's casualties included three Palestinian children and their mother, killed when a tank shell hit their home in Gaza City.

A three-year-old Palestinian girl died from Israeli army fire in the central Gaza Strip, doctors said. Her father, mother and other family members were also wounded.

And 13 members of another famfamincluding a mother and three children, were killed when tank fire hit their home east of Gaza City. Amid harrowing scenes in the city's morgue, the weeping father of one of the children begged helplessly: 'Get up, boy, get up, please get up. I am your dad and I need you.'

An onlooker compared the chil-dren's bodies to 'sleeping dolls'. The eldest was four.

Another 14 children are killed in Gaza nightmare

Bombs also hit a hospital morgue where a family were mourning a paramedic killed in an airstrike on Sunday. Three people were killed and 17 wounded, medical workers said. Médecins Sans Frontières, the medical aid agency, said surgical services in Gaza were 'overwhelmed' by the estimated 2,500 wounded in the attacks a s the suffering of innocent civilians continued.

Israel allowed in 80 truckloads of aid yesterday, but there were reports that the Israelis had warned the humanitarian organisa-tion Red Crescent in Gaza not to try to visit two areas where fighting had been taking place and where many injured were believed to be. Israel also scrapped arrangements to allow the first foreign reporters into Gaza since the onslaught began.

One Palestinian father queuing for bread in Gaza City said his sympathy was growing for the <u>Hamas</u> Islamists whose rocket fire into southern Israel triggered the offensive.

The Israeli army said 'many dozens' of Islamist fighters had been killed since Saturday's invasion.

Israeli defence minister Ehud Barak said the operation would continue until 'peace and tranquil-l i ty ' was secured for Israel's citizens.

At least 24 rockets have been fired into Israel in the past 24 hours and four Israelis have been killed by the missiles since the offensive began.

An Israeli soldier was killed in fighting on Sunday and 48 have been wounded since the invasion.

As international efforts to secure a resolution gathered momentum, a <u>Hamas</u> official said a delegation would head for talks in Egypt, which is attempting to broker a ceasefire.

But Zahar urged his 20,000 forces to fight on 'in the name of God'.

'Victory is coming, God willing,' he said.

reporter@dailymail. ie

Graphic

Rage: Mourners at the funeral of a Hamas fighter in Rafah in southern Gaza

Load-Date: January 6, 2009



One of the bloodiest days in decades of Israeli-Palestinian fighting Israeli assault kills over 200

Townsville Bulletin (Australia)

December 29, 2008 Monday

1 - Edition

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Section: WORLD; Pg. 11

Length: 321 words

Body

ISRAELI warplanes blasted Gaza targets including a mosque and a TV station yesterday in a day of airstrikes.

At least 230 Palestinians, most of them militants, died and more than 400 were wounded on Saturday, one of the bloodiest days in decades of Israeli-Palestinian fighting.

The unprecedented assault sparked protests and condemnations throughout the Arab world, and many of Israel's Western allies urged restraint, though the US blamed *Hamas* for the fighting.

But there was no end in sight. Israel obliquely threatened to go after <u>Hamas'</u> leaders, and militants kept pelting Israel with rockets. Hundreds of Israeli infantry and armoured corps troops headed for the Gaza border in preparation for a possible ground invasion.

In the first attack early yesterday, Israeli aircraft bombed a mosque near Shifa Hospital in Gaza City, destroying it. Two bodies were retrieved from the rubble. The blast, just after midnight, blew out windows at the hospital. The military said the mosque was `a base for terrorist activities'.

Another target early yesterday was the Al Aqsa TV station used by <u>Hamas</u>. Its studio building was destroyed, but the station remained on the air with a mobile unit. Palestinians counted about 20 airstrikes in the first hours of yesterday.

The Israeli airstrikes caused widespread panic and confusion, and black plumes of smoke billowed above the territory, ruled by the Islamic militant <u>Hamas</u> for the past 18 months. Some of the Israeli missiles struck in densely populated areas as students were leaving school, and <u>women</u> rushed into the streets frantically looking for their children. At least 15 civilians were killed.

In Gaza City's main security compound, bodies of more than a dozen uniformed *Hamas* police lay on the ground.

"There are heads without bodies. There's blood in the corridors. People are weeping, <u>women</u> are crying, doctors are shouting, "said nurse Ahmed Abdel Salaam from Shifa Hospital.

Load-Date: December 29, 2008



Yes, Israel has been sorely provoked. But there can only be one winner if it carries on like this

Daily Mail (London)

January 1, 2009 Thursday

1ST Edition

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Section: Pg. 17

Length: 1124 words

Byline: Stephen Glover

Body

MANY of Israel's friends and supporters defend its onslaught on Gaza. They argue reasonably enough that <u>Hamas</u> — the target of Israeli reprisals — is a terrorist organisation whose hardline leaders are not only committed to the destruction of the state of Israel but are also implacably anti-Semitic.

They also point out that in the past few months <u>Hamas</u> has fired thousands of rockets and mortars at southern Israel. If only a limited number of people have been killed — 14 since 2002 — that is a reflection of <u>Hamas</u>'s pretty rudimentary arsenal. The terrorists potentially represent a much more serious threat, which is why they should be rooted out now.

And if many Palestinian <u>women</u> and children have been killed — so these loyal friends argue — that is largely because <u>Hamas</u> with the utmost cynicism sites its offices and military bases in Gaza in civilian areas, ensuring that Israeli attacks on them inevitably lead to the deaths of innocent people, provoking exactly the kind of anti-Israel reaction that **Hamas** wants.

All this is true. But, while accepting as much, other of Israel's friends (among whom I number myself) are taking a rather different line. We accept that there has been provocation.

We know that <u>Hamas</u>, or at any rate parts of the organisation, is set on the destruction of Israel. We can see it is careless with the lives of its own Palestinian civilians, knowing that every death of an innocent woman or child serves a useful propaganda purpose.

We accept, too, that Israel is a democracy incorporating almost every shade of political opinion, not all of which is favourable to the attack on Gaza. We understand that since its inception in 1948 the country has been under repeated attack from various of its Arab neighbours, and has developed a deep sense of insecurity for very good reasons. B UT WE cannot, despite this, defend what is happening.

The disproportionality is too great. On the one hand we have a firstworld defence force with tanks, sophisticated mortars, and American-supplied F-16 aircraft pulverising not only <u>Hamas</u> targets but also, inevitably, dozens of innocent civilians. So far some 385 Palestinians have been killed, while only four Israelis have died.

This is a grim kind of arithmetic, I know. If Israel is fighting for its survival, you may say that any degree of retaliation is allowable. But *Hamas*, with its relatively low-grade weaponry, does not constitute a lethal threat to the state of

Yes, Israel has been sorely provoked. But there can only be one winner if it carries on like this

Israel. It is a worry and an annoyance and occasionally an outrage. Its activities do not however justify the intensity of Israel's response. The country is in danger of forsaking the moral high ground it once rightly occupied.

Nor is its behaviour obviously in its own self-interest. Most reasonable Israelis accept that there will have to be a Palestinian State. Let me quote one leading Israeli politician who recently gave an interview first published in an Israeli newspaper, and reprinted recently in The New York Review Of Books. This person spoke of the necessity of Israel making an accommodation with the Palestinians and the Syrians.

'The decision we have to make is the decision we've spent 40 years refusing to look at with our eyes open.' The politician went on to propose an Israeli withdrawal 'from nearly all, if not all, of the occupied territories'.

He accepted that most of Jerusalem would have to be given back to the Palestinians.

He also said that, if Israel wanted to make peace with Syria, it would have to return the Golan Heights, seized in the Six-Day War of 1967.

Who was this enlightened and reasonable-sounding person? None other than Ehud Olmert, who resigned as Prime Minister of Israel last September and is now acting head of government pending a general election due on February 10. Everything that Mr Olmert calls for would be warmly endorsed not only by Israel's reasonable friends abroad but also by moderates who have Palestinian interests at heart. Which of us would ask for more? And yet this statesman-like leader who understands so well the need for a compromise peace in the Middle East is presiding over a bloody onslaught on Gaza that encourages some of Israel's supporters to quail, and, crucially so far as his country is concerned, makes a Palestinian settlement less likely in the short-term. For the attack is certain to make *Hamas* more popular with ordinary people, not only there but also on the West Bank, where a more moderate Fatah administration is installed.

Massacring innocent Palestinians is liable to increase <u>Hamas</u>'s standing with ordinary Palestinians at the expense of Fatah, and therefore postpone, if not render impossible, the kind of early settlement which Mr Olmert has in mind. Remember that **Hamas** won the last Palestinian elections in 2006.

The more Israel hammers the organisation and its supporters, the greater <u>Hamas</u>'s popularity is likely to be. W HY, THEN, is the Israeli government behaving as it is? It is difficult to escape the conclusion that various leading politicians are competing to show that they are more muscular than one another in dealing with Israel's enemies. The trouble is that what may — or may not — go down well with the electorate will make a settlement even more difficult to achieve once the election is over.

So the ferocity of the attack on Gaza is not merely inhumane in its indiscriminate nature. It undermines the sort of agreement which Mr Olmert and many reasonable politicians in Israel say they want.

And it is also not good for the West. Arab television channels are showing relentless footage of the deaths and horrible injuries of innocent civilians in Gaza. These pictures will understandably outrage hundreds of millions of people in the Muslim world — not to mention Muslims in many European cities — and will probably further radicalise a small minority of them. Israel is unwittingly acting as Al Qaeda's most effective recruiting sergeant.

Iranian leaders in the meantime are rubbing their hands in glee. As <u>Hamas</u>'s paymasters, they will be delighted to see their terrorist cohorts gaining a propaganda victory and increasing their already considerable support among the Palestinian people. They will doubtless also hope that an Obama administration in Washington will be so taken up with mounting problems in Israel and Gaza and the Middle East that its attention will be deflected from the nuclear bomb Iran is building.

So who is gaining from the onslaught on Gaza? Not the innocent <u>women</u> and children, obviously. Not those who hope for an early peace settlement in the Middle East. Not Israel.

Certainly not the West. No, the only beneficiaries will be the extremists who feed off ever increasing violence, and will attempt to use Israel's rash behaviour to justify even greater abominations..

Yes, Israel has been sorely provoked. But there can only be one winner if it carries on like this

Load-Date: January 1, 2009



ISRAEL TIGHTENS NOOSE ON GAZA; TANKS MASS ON BORDER AS BOMBARDMENT GOES ON

Daily Record (PM) - UK

December 30, 2008 Tuesday

East Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 2 Length: 287 words

Byline: Martin Fricker

Body

ISRAEL declared "all-out war"on Hamas yesterday as its bloody bombardment of the Gaza Strip continued.

Defence minister Ehud Barak vowed his country would fight "to the bitter end" after three days of air raids.

Tanks and troops were poised along the border as the death toll rose above 360.

The UN said at least 57 civilians were among the dead and 1600 people had been hurt. UN humanitarian chief John Holmes said 62 **women** and children were confirmed killed.

Five sisters aged four to 17 were killed in a refugee camp.

Helicopter gunships, naval warships and fighter jets armed with bunker-busting bombs were used in the raids.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon said he was "greatly troubled" by the civilian deaths and called for an immediate ceasefire. PM Gordon Brown spoke on the phone with his Israeli counterpart Ehud Olmert, urging him to avoid civilian casualties.

Foreign Secretary David Miliband said the situation was "very dangerous and very dark".

But Barak refused to halt the deadliest air strikes ever seen in the Middle East. He said Israel was in "all-out war" with *Hamas*, who rule Gaza.

An army official vowed there would "not be a single *Hamas* building left standing."

A <u>Hamas</u> spokesman accused Israel of "committing a holocaust". They retaliated by firing more than 40 rockets into southern Israel, killing one and injuring dozens more.

The rockets reached 25 miles into Israel - further than ever before.

The US government called on *Hamas* to stop attacking Israel and agree a ceasefire.

White House spokesman Gordon Johndroe said: "Israel is going after terrorists who are firing rockets into Israel."

ISRAEL TIGHTENS NOOSE ON GAZA TANKS MASS ON BORDER AS BOMBARDMENT GOES ON

Pro-Palestine supporters clashed with police outside the Israeli embassy in London.

Graphic

THREAT: Israeli troops prepare their tanks on border with Gaza

TRAGIC: Mother grieves at her child's funeral

Load-Date: December 30, 2008



Prisoners flee as Israeli bombs smash jail

The New Zealand Herald December 30, 2008 Tuesday

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Section: NEWS; World

Length: 586 words

Body

GAZA CITY - Terrified prisoners fled from a Gaza City jail bombed by Israeli warplanes, their faces white with dust and red with blood as they stumbled over piles of rubble.

The dozens of prisoners rushed from their cells, carrying bags of clothes and blankets and running to get away from *Hamas* police.

One man was left behind, pinned under the rubble, shouting, "Wait for me! Pull me out!"

Israeli air strikes hit new targets yesterday - a fuel tanker, smuggling tunnels and a main *Hamas* security compound containing the prison.

Warplanes pounded the <u>Hamas</u>-ruled Gaza Strip for a third consecutive day and Israel prepared for a possible invasion after killing 310 Palestinians in the air raids.

Israel says the bombings are a response to almost daily rocket and mortar fire that intensified after the Islamist *Hamas* group ended a six-month ceasefire a week ago.

Mark Regev, a spokesman for Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, said the military action would go on until the population in southern Israel "no longer live in terror and in fear of constant rocket barrages".

A military spokesman said the operation could take "many days".

Mr Olmert's Cabinet has approved the call-up of 6500 reservists, and Israeli tanks were yesterday on Gaza's edge, poised to enter the coastal enclave of 1.5 million Palestinians.

<u>Hamas</u> remained defiant, and spokesman Fawzi Barhoum urged Palestinian groups to use "all available means, including martyrdom operations" - a reference to suicide bombings in Israel.

An Israeli military spokesman said Israeli aircraft staged "several dozen air strikes" during the night without providing any details.

As the bombs fell, <u>women</u> ran carrying their children, school students screamed and cars crashed into one another as panicked drivers tried to escape.

Four girls from one family, aged from 1 to 12, were killed in an air raid that targeted a mosque near their home in the northern town of Jabaliya.

Prisoners flee as Israeli bombs smash jail

The bomb attacks concentrated on Gaza City, where the *Hamas* interior ministry building was destroyed.

Gaza City's Islamic University, a *Hamas* stronghold, was also bombed, but witnesses said the attack caused no injuries.

An Israeli army spokesman said the university site was used for the development of rockets, explosives and

Prisoners flee as Israeli bombs smash jail electronic devices used by militants.

Hospital morgues have overflowed. In the initial chaos, the dead were wrapped in blankets and lined up on the ground, as frantic relatives searched for their loved ones.

"My children are wetting the bed, they cry when they hear planes," said Amal Hassan, 38, a mother of three. "I don't know what's going to happen next."

In a four-minute strike on Gaza's southern border with Egypt, Israeli aircraft destroyed 40 smuggling tunnels running under the border.

Hundreds of Palestinians gathered at the border wall, trying to get across. Egyptian border guards opened fire above the crowds, trying to scatter them.

The Gazans broke through the wall using a bulldozer and then a bomb, but the dozens of people who climbed through the breach were eventually forced to return.

In interviews on American television networks, Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, who hopes to become prime minister after the February election, appeared to rule out a large-scale invasion to restore Israeli control of the blockaded territory.

"Our goal is not to re-occupy Gaza Strip," she said on NBC's Meet the Press programme.

Asked on Fox News if Israel wanted to topple Gaza's *Hamas* rulers, she said, "Not now."

- AP, AAP

Load-Date: December 29, 2008



What would you do if rockets rained from the Hart?

Prince George Citizen (British Columbia)

January 9, 2009 Friday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 4

Length: 375 words **Byline:** Julia Serup

Body

Mr. Sale claims that "irrational acquiescence in Israeli violence in the occupied territories has become hardwired in western brains." Has he forgotten that Israel pulled out of Gaza in 2005, and since then <u>Hamas</u> has launched the reported number of 6,464 rockets at Israel, which has caused the injury and death of innocent Israeli civilians and the destruction of buildings?

Can you imagine what it would be like if that number of missiles were fired from the Hart Highway area at the Prince George bowl area for three years? Would we tolerate that? I think not.

Re: Gaza campaign not a war (letter, Jan. 6). Israel has threatened <u>Hamas</u> with military intervention if it didn't stop this tyranny, but without results. Israel then decided to attack to defend its civilian population, which it has the right to do, from terrorist attacks.

<u>Hamas</u> has responded by using <u>women</u> and children as human shields so Israel can be blamed when there is loss of life, which is unavoidable when one country declares war on another country.

What kind of government would be happy when its citizens are put in harm's way so their arsenal of weapons, which are provided by Iran and smuggled into Gaza, are protected by <u>women</u> and children? <u>Hamas</u> does little to help provide jobs and services for the citizens of Gaza. It is only interested in causing havoc in Israel and the death of its own people.

Since Israel moved into Gaza to remove the threat <u>Hamas</u> poses to its security, there has been. An immediate cry from people like Sale to get Israel to cease fire, which will then give <u>Hamas</u> an opportunity to re-arm, rebuild and mobilize for the next round of attacks. Will this lead to peace for the Palestinians and Israel? I think not.

Others have remarked that Israel's response to the rocket attacks have been heavy handed and extreme. Israel's response have not been unreasonable considering the suffering they have endured.

Sale claims that the people are desperate for food and supplies when in fact Israel has allowed these to enter Gaza and has stopped hostilities so this could take place.

I feel sorry for the Palestinians caught in the middle of this war. However, the dilemma does not stem from Israel but from the corrupt dictators of Gaza.

-- Julia Serup

Prince George

Load-Date: January 9, 2009



Secretary-General will promote truce on tour

The Leader-Post (Regina, Saskatchewan)

January 14, 2009 Wednesday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. D9

Length: 503 words

Byline: Jonathan Ferziger and Saud Abu Ramadan, Bloomberg

Dateline: TEL AVIV

Body

Israel and <u>Hamas</u> prepared for a United Nations-driven diplomatic push to stop fighting in the Gaza Strip that raged into a 19th day as Israeli troops battled Palestinian gunmen armed with anti-tank missiles.

Defense Minister Ehud Barak said the army's campaign to remove the ability of <u>Hamas</u> to launch rockets at Israel wouldn't stop the government from considering international efforts to bring about an Egyptian-brokered cease-fire.

"We are closely following the progress on the Egyptian truce initiative, but the fighting goes on," Barak told reporters yesterday during a visit to an air force base. *Hamas* leaders also vowed to keep on fighting, while leaving the door open to a cease-fire.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon arrives from New York today on a Middle East shuttle mission that will take him to Egypt, Israel, the West Bank, Jordan and Syria to promote the Security Council's call for a truce. Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos, a former European Union envoy for the Middle East, is also in the region pushing for a cease-fire.

Damascus-based <u>Hamas</u> official Musa Abu Marzouk told Al- Jazeera television that while the organization had "serious reservations" about the Egyptian initiative, he believed changes could be introduced that would lead to its acceptance.

At least 18 rockets were fired into Israel yesterday, according to a police spokesman. The number of rocket attacks has been cut to around 20 a day from more than 70 before the war, the military said. About 500 rockets and 200 mortar shells have been fired since the start of the operation on Dec. 27.

Thirteen Israelis have died, nine in combat, and one was critically injured last night, according to the army.

The Israeli army intensified its ground operations around Gaza City and the northern Gaza Strip, Palestinians and local radio stations said. Palestinian residents said they witnessed the fiercest gun battles between Israeli soldiers and Gaza militants since the beginning of the offensive. Israeli aircraft were called in to strike gunmen spotted with anti-tank missiles, the army said.

Secretary-General will promote truce on tour

The Israeli campaign has killed 960 Palestinians and left 4,400 wounded, according to Muiawia Hassanein, chief of emergency medical services in Gaza. The UN Relief and Works Agency said at least a quarter of the dead are civilians, many of them <u>women</u> and children. Hassanein says the figure is more than half.

<u>Hamas</u> still has an ample supply of rockets and more than 15,000 members of its military wing who enable the movement to keep fighting, a senior Israeli military intelligence officer said in a briefing to reporters. A network of tunnels dug inside the territory enable <u>Hamas</u> leaders to move around and transport arms, he said.

Their weapons are probably no more sophisticated than the Russian-designed rockets whose range of about 40 kilometers won't reach Tel Aviv, according to the officer, who couldn't be identified because of military regulations.

If *Hamas* had more powerful rockets, it would have used them already, he said.

Load-Date: January 14, 2009



Raising stakes, Israel sends ground forces to Gaza; Territory split as troops seize key areas; long fight expected

The International Herald Tribune January 5, 2009 Monday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1

Length: 1602 words

Byline: Taghreed El-Khodary and Isabel Kershner - The New York Times Media Group

Dateline: GAZA

Body

Isabel Kershner reported from Jerusalem. Ethan Bronner contributed from the Israel-Gaza border and Dina Kraft contributed from Sderot, Israel.

*

Israeli troops rolled into Gaza on Sunday under cover of heavy air, tank and artillery fire after to open a ground war against the militant group *Hamas* on Saturday night.

Witnesses said the Israeli forces had bisected Gaza's northern and southern parts and had taken over a number of strategic areas, including what the military said were rocket launching sites.

The campaign came after a week of intense airstrikes. Israel's stated goal was to destroy the infrastructure of *Hamas*, which controls the enclave, and to end the threat to southern Israel from Palestinian rocket fire.

In a telephone briefing for foreign correspondents, a senior Israeli military official said that Israeli troops would hold the areas they have taken inside Gaza at least for the duration of the operation to prevent militants from returning to fire rockets from there.

"We don't plan to retake the Gaza Strip but there are several places we control now and will control later," he said. "If it will be needed, we are prepared to stay there."

The military has warned that the campaign could take "many long days."

Even with the ground assault, though, <u>Hamas</u> continued its rocket fire - about 25 were fired at southern Israel by Sunday afternoon, the military said. One hit a house in the Israeli border town of Sderot. Touring the town some time later, Michael Bloomberg, the mayor of New York, had to be rushed into a protected space when Sderot's rocket-alert siren sounded.

Most of the fighting early Sunday was taking place in northern and eastern Gaza, in areas not far from the Israeli border. But at least five Palestinian civilians were killed and many were wounded Sunday morning when Israeli shells or rockets landed in the market of Gaza City while people were stocking up on supplies.

Raising stakes, Israel sends ground forces to Gaza Territory split as troops seize key areas long fight expected

The Israelis said that they had "hit" dozens of armed <u>Hamas</u> operatives during exchanges of fire overnight. But Palestinian hospital officials said that only about six <u>Hamas</u> fighters had been killed since the start of the ground invasion, a figure that could not be confirmed.

The Israeli Army said Sunday that a soldier has been killed in the fighting, the first Israeli fatality in the ground offensive, which was started late Saturday.

The army said the soldier was killed by mortar fire early Sunday in northern Gaza.

Hospital officials said that more than 30 Palestinian civilians had been killed by Sunday afternoon and more than 100 had been wounded since Israel began its advance. The Israeli military said that 30 of its soldiers had been wounded, two seriously, in clashes and from shrapnel.

The senior military official said that <u>Hamas</u> was using methods "imported from Iran and Hezbollah," the Lebanese militant group. Those methods, he said, were "guerrilla concept and tactics, exploiting both open areas and those of highest density of population." He said there had not been much man-to-man combat so far, and that <u>Hamas</u> was fighting back mostly with mortars and bombs of various kinds.

Wounded Palestinians poured into the emergency room of Shifa Hospital in Gaza City on Sunday, among them several <u>women</u> and children. Two young cousins and a 5-year-old boy from another family were killed by shrapnel on the flat roofs of their apartment buildings.

A woman who came to the hospital with a daughter, 15, who was wounded by shrapnel, said that soldiers had taken over their house in Beit Lahiya, had detained the men, who she said were farmers, and had told the rest of the family to leave. The daughter was wounded when the Israeli forces fired on the upper floors of the house before breaking down the front door.

Condemnation for the Israeli offensive grew across the Middle East.

A State Department official said in Washington on Saturday that the United States was working toward a cease-fire, The Associated Press reported. But the White House has blamed <u>Hamas</u> for the Israeli attack in any case, and has blocked approval of a United Nations Security Council statement on a cease-fire.

President Shimon Peres of Israel, meanwhile, rejected the possibility of a cease-fire on Sunday as Israeli forces pressed their offensive, but asserted that Israel did not intend to re-occupy Gaza.

Israel did not intend to occupy Gaza or to crush *Hamas*, Perez said, but to "crush terror."

"<u>Hamas</u> needs a real and serious lesson. They are now getting it," he added in an interview on the ABC News program "This Week." Peres also brushed aside the chances of a cease-fire to bring the fighting to a halt.

"We shall not accept the idea that <u>Hamas</u> will continue to fire and we shall declare a cease-fire. It does not make any sense," he said.

The Israeli ground assault escalated an offensive that had already killed more than 430 Palestinians. Four Israelis have been killed.

While a ground war in densely populated Gaza will probably increase the civilian toll there, the Israeli Army also faces threats. Since taking control of the territory a year and a half ago, <u>Hamas</u> has been able to smuggle in more and better weapons. Its more sophisticated arsenal has been on display in recent weeks, and even under heavy fire the group has shown its ability to keep hitting Israeli cities with long-range rockets.

Rockets fired from Gaza have plagued southern Israel for years, and they have drawn the military into the coastal territory repeatedly since troops formally withdrew and the Jewish settlements there were evacuated in 2005. A 48-hour raid in March 2008, aimed at inflicting a cost on <u>Hamas</u> for its continuing rocket fire, killed nearly 100 Palestinians.

Raising stakes, Israel sends ground forces to Gaza Territory split as troops seize key areas long fight expected

Israeli officials have said repeatedly that it was not their aim now to fully reoccupy Gaza. But it was clear that the military expected a grueling operation.

"This will not be easy and it will not be short," Defense Minister Ehud Barak said on national television shortly after the ground invasion began. He did not elaborate on how long Israel hoped to hold the rocket-launching sites.

The ground operation began after eight days of intensive attacks by Israeli air and naval forces on <u>Hamas</u> security installations, weapons stores and symbols of government in the Palestinian enclave.

"This has always been a stage-by-stage process," Shlomo Dror, a Defense Ministry spokesman, said in a telephone interview. "*Hamas* can stop it whenever it wants," by stopping its rocket fire, he added.

<u>Hamas</u> leaders in Gaza were in hiding, but a spokesman said Saturday by video that the "moment of decision has arrived" and that Gaza would be the Israeli Army's "graveyard."

<u>Hamas</u> has also vowed to use the invasion as an opportunity to capture Israeli soldiers. The group has been holding an Israeli corporal, Gilad Shalit, for more than two years.

The number of troops entering Gaza was not publicized, but the Israeli military said the operation involved "large numbers" of forces that included infantry and tanks, and engineering and artillery corps. On Saturday night, the prime minister's office said that a call-up of thousands of army reserve troops had begun.

An Israeli airstrike killed five Palestinians outside a mosque on Sunday, medical officials said. Another mosque in northern Gaza was hit during evening prayers Saturday - at least 11 worshipers were killed and about 30 wounded, Palestinian hospital officials said.

Hospital officials in Gaza City put the first week's Palestinian death toll at more than 430, including 26 <u>women</u>, 74 children and an unknown number of male civilians. Three Israeli civilians and one soldier had been killed.

At the United Nations in New York, diplomats said the United States had blocked approval of a Security Council statement that would have called for an immediate cease-fire, The Associated Press reported.

The UN ambassador for France, Jean-Maurice Ripert, the council president, said the 15 council members could not agree on a statement in closed discussions held after the ground invasion began. Several other members, speaking on condition of anonymity because the negotiations were closed, also said Washington was responsible for the failure to issue a statement, The AP said.

The U.S. deputy ambassador, Alejandro Wolff, said the United States saw no prospect of <u>Hamas</u> abiding by last week's council call for an immediate end to the violence. Therefore, he said, a new statement "would not be adhered to and would have no underpinning for success" and "would not do credit to the council," The AP said.

World reaction was intense. While thousands of protesters marched in cities across Europe to demand a halt to the Israeli bombing, in Prague, a spokesman for the new Czech presidency of the European Union said Israel's actions were "defensive, not offensive."

But other EU countries quickly distanced themselves from the Czech position. The French Foreign Ministry condemned "the Israeli ground offensive against Gaza as it condemns the continuation of rocket firing."

In London, the British foreign secretary, David Miliband, urged both sides to accept an immediate cease-fire.

More than 20,000 demonstrators marched against the Israeli air campaign in Paris and more than 10,000 in London, where some threw shoes at the prime minister's residence, a particularly Arab form of protest that gained worldwide currency last month when an Iraqi journalist hurled his shoes at President George W. Bush in Baghdad.

Both protests were held before the ground invasion began. Large protests also took place in at least seven other European countries and in Kuwait, Israel and New York.

Raising stakes, Israel sends ground forces to Gaza Territory split as troops seize key areas long fight expected

Load-Date: January 13, 2009



FIGHTING RAGES NEAR GAZA CITY; ISRAELIS DENY THERE'S HUMANITARIAN CRISIS; U.S. BLOCKS U.N. CALL FOR CEASE-FIRE

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (Pennsylvania)

January 5, 2009 Monday

SOONER EDITION

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Section: WORLD; Pg. A-1

Length: 1018 words

Byline: Sudarsan Raghavan, The Washington Post

Body

JERUSALEM -- Israeli ground forces backed by air and naval power pushed deeper into the Gaza Strip yesterday, engaging in fierce combat with *Hamas* fighters as they attempted to encircle the coastal region's largest city.

The second day of Israel's ground assault drew fresh international warnings that Gaza's humanitarian crisis would worsen in the coming days. The Palestinian death toll rose to roughly 507 with more than 2,000 wounded, including many civilians, according to United Nations and Palestinian health officials.

An Israeli soldier was fatally wounded in Gaza yesterday; three Israeli civilians and one soldier have also been killed by <u>Hamas</u> rocket and mortar fire inside Israel during the nine days of fighting. Israel insists its offensive is targeting only <u>Hamas</u>, the armed Islamist group that controls Gaza, and says the strip's 1.5 million residents do not face a humanitarian crisis.

Christopher Gunness, a U.N. spokesman, disagreed.

"We in the U.N., who have 9,000 or 10,000, workers on the ground, are in a much better situation to determine whether there is a humanitarian crisis, which there is, than Israel, which views Gaza through the lens of high-altitude bombers," he said.

Despite growing international criticism, the United States yesterday blocked passage of a U.N. Security Council statement urging an immediate cease-fire in Gaza. In Washington, meanwhile, Vice President Dick Cheney said yesterday that Israel did not seek U.S. approval before sending ground troops into Gaza.

"They didn't seek clearance or approval from us, certainly. They have said, now, for a period of months, ... [that] if the rocketing didn't stop, they felt they had no choice but to take action," Mr. Cheney said on CBS's "Face the Nation," adding that Israeli leaders "haven't told me exactly what they planned to do or when they plan to do it."

Sens. Harry Reid and Dick Durbin -- the top two Democrats in the Senate -- and Republican leader Mitch McConnell all described Israel's actions as understandable.

"I think what the Israelis are doing is very important," Mr. Reid said on NBC's "Meet the Press." "I think this terrorist organization, *Hamas*, has got to be put away. They've got to come to their senses."

FIGHTING RAGES NEAR GAZA CITY ISRAELIS DENY THERE'S HUMANITARIAN CRISIS; U.S. BLOCKS U.N. CALL FOR CEASE-FIRE

Messrs. McConnell and Durbin spoke on "This Week" on ABC.

Israeli tanks and infantry units have punched into areas north and south of Gaza City, effectively dividing the strip in two, and by last night were also operating just east of the city, according to witnesses and Israeli military officials. Israeli forces seized control of open areas that Israeli military officials say *Hamas* uses to launch rockets into southern Israel. More than 500 rockets and mortars have landed in southern Israel over the nine days of fighting.

A senior Israeli military officer, speaking to foreign journalists in a conference call, said Israel was prepared to control those areas as long as needed to stop the rocket fire.

"We are not speaking about recapturing the Gaza Strip," said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity. "This is not our objective. If we have to hold those areas, to stop the rockets, we will do this."

Israel so far has concentrated its ground forces in the northern half of the strip where hundreds of thousands of people live in a mix of refugee camps, crowded high-rise neighborhoods and agricultural villages. Meanwhile, Israeli jets and naval ships are bombarding the southern half of the strip, striking tunnels used to bring in weapons from the Egyptian Sinai and targeting *Hamas* leaders for assassination.

With a little more than a month until Israel holds national elections, pressure has been building for Israeli leaders to use the ground operation not just to weaken *Hamas*, but to paralyze it permanently.

"This morning I can look every one of you in the eyes and say the government did everything before deciding to go ahead with the operation," Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert told his Cabinet yesterday in his first public comments on the ground offensive. "This operation was unavoidable."

<u>Hamas</u> triumphed in parliamentary elections in January 2006, winning day-to-day control of the Palestinian Authority. Amid rising political tension, <u>Hamas</u> seized control of Gaza in June 2007 from rival Fatah forces, causing a severe split in the Palestinian national movement. Israel has restricted food, medicine, and other supplies to the strip in an attempt to end <u>Hamas</u> rocket attacks. In its founding charter, <u>Hamas</u> is committed to Israel's destruction.

Israeli troops appeared to be drawing closer yesterday to engaging <u>Hamas</u> in densely populated urban areas that are the movement's historic strongholds. The Israeli soldier killed early yesterday afternoon was involved in "a heavy exchange of fire" during a battle close to the Jabalya refugee camp. Another Israeli soldier was severely wounded in the same incident, an Israeli military spokesman said.

It was Israel's first fatality of the ground invasion, which began Saturday night and followed a weeklong air assault on Gaza. Eighteen other Israeli soldiers were lightly wounded yesterday.

Inside Gaza, reports from local journalists and eyewitnesses described scenes of fear, destruction and worsening food shortages. Many Gazans barricaded themselves in their homes, while others risked fleeing on the open streets. More than 3,000 people have been displaced by the conflict and have sought haven in U.N. shelters.

In Gaza City, wounded Palestinians streamed into Shifa Hospital, including <u>women</u> and children, according to Palestinian health officials. Ambulances, sirens blaring, sped through the streets. People piled the injured into cars or carried them in their hands into the hospital.

Mr. Gunness, the U.N. spokesman, said fuel shortages are worsening and hospitals are running on emergency generators. Electricity is growing scarce. About 250,000 people are without potable drinking water, he said, also predicting that wheat flour would run out in three days.

"Gaza has been bifurcated by this offensive. We can't get food up to the north," Mr. Gunness said. "In anyone's book, this is a humanitarian crisis."

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The Associated Press contributed to this report.

Graphic

INFORMATIONAL GRAPHIC: ESRI; AP: (Latest developments)

Load-Date: January 5, 2009



Polls show Israeli public in no mood for compromise; The view on the streets of Jerusalem shows strong backing for military intervention

The Independent (London)
January 3, 2009 Saturday
First Edition

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Section: WORLD; Pg. 24

Length: 923 words

Byline: Kim Sengupta IN JERUSALEM

Body

Some were troubled by pictures of children and <u>women</u> among the casualties, others voiced trepidation about a ground invasion, but the overwhelming view among Israelis on the streets of Jerusalem yesterday was that their government was right to attack Gaza and the offensive should go on for as long as it takes.

Israel's relentless air strikes on the Palestinian enclave may be drawing strong criticism and calls for a ceasefire in much of the rest of the world, but a common reaction of Israelis is that outsiders simply don't understand what they have been going through.

Domestic opposition has been much more muted than in some past wars, and even in those areas deemed to be Jerusalem's most liberal, the mood was generally uncompromising.

"I feel terribly sorry for the poor people of Gaza, but this had to happen," said 34-year-old Alona Keren, a chef from the German Colony. "Going in on the ground is necessary because that would be the only way to make sure that <u>Hamas</u> cannot continue firing rockets. I have friends in the army and some of them may not come back from such an operation. But I am afraid that is the price we must prepare ourselves to pay."

Ms Keren, like many Israelis, has spent time in the services - in her case two years in the air force. She also considers herself progressive and the way she votes in the coming general election has been influenced by events in Gaza. "I was going to vote for one of the left-of-centre parties, but I have now made up my mind I'll go for Kadima because it has taken action in Gaza."

An opinion poll this week in the Haaretz newspaper showed support of 71 per cent among the public for continuing air strikes, while 21 per cent backed ground operations as well - the same number who supported a ceasefire.

Polls also showed rising support for centrist parties, with significant jumps in the approval ratings for the Foreign Minister, Tzipi Livni, outgoing premier Ehud Olmert and Defence Minister Ehud Barak. However, the right-wing Likud, headed by Benjamin Netanyahu, still remains in the lead.

Polls show Israeli public in no mood for compromise The view on the streets of Jerusalem shows strong backing for military intervention

Miri Scheinfeld, a photographer, was in favour of accepting a proposal put forward by French President Nicolas Sarkozy for a brief "humanitarian" ceasefire. "My mother said the other day that we'll always have war in this country, and that is a very depressing thought. I know that most of the people in the outside world don't like what Israel is doing, but what is happening here is complicated. I am a secular person and I have always hoped the differences between us and the Arabs can be solved. I have gone and worked in Arab villages and will do so again in the future.

"But we had no choice over Gaza, they had been firing rockets at us for over eight years and I am glad we are hitting back at last. I think <u>Hamas</u> wants to destroy Israel. But we have nowhere else to go, so we must fight, although sometimes we use our strength in a wrong way."

The failure of the mainstream parties to bring peace has lost them Ms Scheinfeld's vote. "I am going to go for one of the green parties, I have no faith in the others. If there is any solution to this it will come from the ordinary Israelis and Palestinians."

Soli Furedi, 31, and his wife Sheri, 35, out with their three-month-old daughter, said that they had no interest in politics but the war against *Hamas* was a matter of Israel's survival. "We really could not let this [the rocket attacks] continue" said Mrs Furedi. "I know it's terrible but what else could Israel do? This is about protecting Israel, it does not mean we like the politicians; they do not fill us with confidence."

The support for the war among his fellow Israelis has left Daniel Ephraim in despair. "They are being manipulated and they do not see that. The bombing of Gaza may be killing some <u>Hamas</u>, but it is also killing civilians," the 28-year-old electrical engineer said.

"They start a war and the popularity of Livni and Barak goes up, this is so cynical. What about the possibility of a real peace? That has been put back by this for years. What is depressing is that such views are being held by younger people now. There was a difference between the old and the young when it came to such aggression in the past, but that is no more."

Meir Ben Hama, 64, has been running his general store for 40 years. "In all that time I cannot remember two years when there was peace, we've always had to face terrorist attacks" he said. "Let us pray for end to violence, but I do not think it will happen."

Timeline How the bombardment unfolded

* Saturday 27 December

Israeli air strikes on Gaza, in response to *Hamas* rocket attacks and cross-border raids by militants, kill 225 people.

* Sunday 28 December

Israeli aircraft target a laboratory at the Islamic University and 40 smuggling tunnels connecting Gaza to Egypt.

* Monday 29 December

Israel intensifies its attacks, bombing the <u>Hamas</u>-run interior ministry as <u>Hamas</u> fires rockets deeper into southern Israel. The defence minister, Ehud Barak, warns that Israel will fight "to the bitter end".

* Tuesday 30 December

A *Hamas* spokesman urges Palestinian militants to respond to Israeli attacks with "all available means".

* Wednesday 31 December

The UN Security Council fails to agree an emergency resolution calling for a ceasefire. Israel attacks the office of the *Hamas* Prime Minister, Ismail Haniyeh.

Polls show Israeli public in no mood for compromise The view on the streets of Jerusalem shows strong backing for military intervention

* Thursday 1 January

An Israeli strike kills a *Hamas* leader, Nizar Rayyan, at home in Gaza. Thirty *Hamas* rockets are fired into Israel.

* Friday 2 January

Israel bombs a mosque it claims is used by *Hamas* to store weapons.

Load-Date: January 2, 2009



Reservists take over in northern Strip as infantry units push deeper into Gaza. IDF tightens grip on Gaza City. Soldier seriously wounded by friendly fire

The Jerusalem Post January 13, 2009 Tuesday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1

Length: 706 words

Byline: YAAKOV KATZ; Herb Keinon contributed to this report.

Highlight: Lead Story

Body

IDF reservists took up responsibility for areas in northern Gaza on Monday, enabling regular-service infantry units to push deeper into Gaza City as defense officials said that Israel would continue expanding the ground operation until it received assurances that weapons smuggling would stop along the Philadelphi Corridor.

They said that thousands of reservists entered Gaza and thousands of others had been called up.

The IDF was "tightening" its grip on Gaza City and was sending troops deeper into the built-up urban centers where <u>Hamas</u> fighters are believed to be holed up, the officials said. The IDF has also been operating in southern Gaza.

Defense officials said that at least 150 smuggling tunnels were still believed to be intact in the Philadelphi Corridor after the IAF destroyed some 200. <u>Hamas</u> was still using the tunnels and trying to smuggle weaponry into Gaza, although in much smaller quantities than before the operation, they noted.

A soldier was seriously wounded and three others lightly wounded on Monday night in an apparent friendly fire incident between IDF paratroopers in northern Gaza.

Meanwhile Monday, the IDF clashed with <u>Hamas</u> gunmen throughout northern Gaza and attacked a mosque near Al- Atatra, from where <u>Hamas</u> had fired at troops and was storing a large weapons cache. In total, the IDF has bombed close to 10 mosques since the beginning of Operation Cast Lead on December 27.

IDF paratroopers discovered and destroyed a terrorist smuggling tunnel on Monday evening, some 300 meters from the Gaza border. The IDF said that <u>Hamas</u> had planned to use the tunnel to infiltrate Israel and carry out a terror attack.

In another incident, the IDF said that soldiers identified a number of gunmen and opened fire at them. Troops later searched the area and uncovered a large amount of weaponry including anti-aircraft missiles, mortar shells and machine guns.

IDF ground forces continued to battle Gaza gunmen, while the IAF struck <u>Hamas</u> installations in the northern Strip and in Gaza City. Four soldiers were lightly wounded in the fighting and evacuated to Beersheba's Soroka Hospital.

Reservists take over in northern Strip as infantry units push deeper into Gaza. IDF tightens grip on Gaza City.

Soldier seriously wounded by friendly fire

A reservist who was a conscientious objector was sentenced to two weeks in military jail for refusing to serve in Gaza.

Meanwhile, according to an army estimate Monday, slightly over 900 Palestinians have been killed since Operation Cast Lead began.

Based on intelligence and information obtained by the Gaza Coordination and Liaison Administration, the IDF has determined that at least 400 of those killed are known <u>Hamas</u> operatives. The IDF believes that among the remaining 500, at least half are <u>Hamas</u> operatives.

The IAF hit over 25 targets throughout Gaza on Monday, including eight groups of gunmen, two mortar launchers, four launching pads, three buildings and two vehicles driven by *Hamas* terror operatives.

Palestinians reported that five people were killed in one of the air strikes, including two <u>women</u> and a child. They said that several others were also wounded.

Meanwhile, The Jerusalem Post has learned that a shipment of US ammunition bound for Israel and not linked to Operation Cast Lead might be delayed until after the fighting stops.

The shipment was scheduled to dock in Ashdod in mid- to-late January but, as a result of the fighting in the area might be postponed. The postponement is believed to be for logistical reasons concerning the fact that the port lies within rocket range from Gaza, and not political ones.

Reuters reported that the US military sought to hire a merchant ship to deliver the ammunition to Israel this month from a port in Greece, but that the Pentagon said the shipment was not linked to the conflict in Gaza.

A Pentagon spokesman told the news agency the ammunition was for a US stockpile in Israel. The US military prepositions stockpiles in some countries in case it needs supplies at short notice.

Reuters quoted Air Force Lt.-Col. Patrick Ryder, a Pentagon spokesman, as saying "The delivery of ammunition is to a pre-positioned US munitions stockpile in Israel in accordance with a congressionally authorized 1990 agreement between the US and Israel."

US officials told the Post that the shipment was coordinated in the summer of 2008 and approved by the Pentagon in October.

Graphic

2 photos: RESERVISTS MAKE their way into Gaza yesterday as they join the fight against <u>Hamas</u>, allowing regular-army units to push further south. RESERVISTS BEGIN their entry into Gaza yesterday, after days of training and waiting for the order to come to join the action. (Credit: IDF Spokesman)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011



Pray for Both Israelis and Arabs

Korea Times January 2, 2009 Friday

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Length: 580 words

Byline: By Michael Stevens

Body

Lately in The Korea Times, we see many articles, cartoons and pictures of people protesting Israel's air strikes that have occurred in the Gaza Strip since Dec. 27.

More than 360 Palestinian have been killed by the Israeli attacks. This has led to furious demonstrations throughout the world, many stating that Israel has once again over-reacted.

One Palestinian mother of two living in America declared that, "It's horrible. Israel's reaction has been too harsh." Basically, this one statement has been echoed a million times since the attacks occurred.

Yet, I would suggest that the Palestinian mother move her family to one of the towns that are subjected to rocket attacks by *Hamas* and see if she still considers Israel's actions as being too harsh.

It is all too easy for people to condemn other countries such as Israel when they attack weaker people such as the Palestinians in Gaza.

However, is it reasonable to say that just because Israel is a stronger military power that it doesn't have the right to protect and defend its own people against attacks by *Hamas*?

Israel has been plagued by both rocket and mortar attacks, plus armed insurgents crossing its borders, for the past seven years - and they originated in Gaza.

Nadav Tamir, Israel's consulate general in Boston, summed it up by saying, "Nobody likes violence but " Israel is acting in self-defense and the first responsibility of any government is to protect its citizens."

When we look at the Palestinian group <u>Hamas</u>, we clearly see that it has no program of improving the well-being of its people. It has no programs for educating its children to be doctors, teachers or engineers. It has stated its one and only purpose, and that is war with Israel: sacrifice, heroism and martyrdom until total victory is achieved.

Every time Israel does nothing and tries to endure the attacks in the name of maintaining peace, <u>Hamas</u> tells the Palestinian people and the Islamic world that Israel is weak, it is confused, and helpless; its does this in order to recruit more soldiers willing to blindly fight and die for its cause.

However, when Israel does finally decide to fight back, <u>Hamas</u> uses the media to its advantage by reporting a high number of dead civilians and showing pictures of dead <u>women</u> and children in order to win support from the worldwide community.

Pray for Both Israelis and Arabs

Although, I will agree that the deaths are tragic and are disproportionate when you compare the two countries' casualties, sadly war is not about being fair and it isn't about being nice.

Israel, the U.S., the Egyptian government and numerous other nations have on multiple occasions appealed to <u>Hamas</u> to maintain the "ceasefire." Even so it chose to ignore the appeals and continued to terrorize and attack Israel. No nation can permit or tolerate, indefinitely, its citizens to be bombarded by an enemy committed to its annihilation.

Since 2005 <u>Hamas</u> has fired over 6,300 rockets from Gaza at Israel killing 10 people. Even though there are relatively few deaths caused by these rockets it isn't as if <u>Hamas</u> wasn't trying do more damage they fired every one of those rockets in the hopes of killing an Israeli, man, woman, or child.

As a Christian I would suggest that we all continue to pray for Israel and the safety of its people. As well, we must also pray for the leaders of the Arab world to also change their hearts and attitude toward the Jewish people so that they will be more willing to accept Israel's right to live in peace as a nation and as a people.

Load-Date: February 13, 2009



Israel's actions necessary so our citizens can live in peace

The Irish Times

January 9, 2009 Friday

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Section: OPINION; Opinion; Pg. 15

Length: 1134 words

Body

OPINION: Fintan O'Toole's charges against Israel were ill-informed, outrageous and ignorant, writes **Zion Evrony**

FINTAN O'TOOLE began his column this week (Israel must be held to account over Gaza action) by trying to insulate himself in advance from the charge of equating Israel with Nazi Germany. But in a transparent display of intellectual dishonesty, he then proceeds to do exactly that. In doing so he demonstrates a profound ignorance of the character and policies of Israel.

O'Toole, living in a State that, happily, has never had to defend its own existence, offers his readers a sophisticated version of a falsehood that draws a moral equivalence between the legitimate right of a democratic state to defend its own citizens and the genocidal actions of Nazi Germany.

Underlying this attitude is a prejudice that is comfortable with the stereotype of the Jewish people as victims, but becomes outraged when they act to defend themselves. O'Toole's implication is that the people of Israel should be the only people in the world to sit passively in the face of a systematic campaign to terrorise them.

I hope O'Toole will never have the awful experience of running with his children to reach a bomb shelter within 15 seconds.

This is now a daily reality for almost one million Israelis. But in a monumental failure of imagination, he can only understand Israel's response to this unacceptable situation as "a game of revenge".

O'Toole's pet theory, shared by some other commentators here in Ireland, seems to be that the Israeli psyche is so traumatised by the effects of the Holocaust that it must erupt periodically into outbursts of violence at the smallest hint of a threat. This is an attractive theory for those who do not pay attention to events.

His moral conscience seems to have slept through the years after 1993 when <u>Hamas</u> did its utmost to derail the Oslo peace process by murdering hundreds of Israeli civilians in suicide bombings of buses and cafeterias.

It slumbered on through the last eight years in which the people of southern Israeli towns and cities were bombarded by <u>Hamas</u> with 8,000 rockets and mortars (including over 3,000 in 2008 alone). When <u>Hamas</u> mistook Israel's restraint for weakness, ended the ceasefire and resumed its rocket attacks, using its new Iranian-supplied missiles to reach as far as the cities of Ashdod and Beersheva, it stayed asleep.

Only now, when Israel says "enough is enough" and fights back, is his conscience finally awake.

The problem with O'Toole's theory is that it is falsified by the facts. Here are just a few of them:

1. Israel has shown time after time its desire to live in peace with its neighbours.

In 1979 it signed a peace treaty with Egypt under which it withdrew its army and civilians from the Sinai peninsula (three times the size of Israel).

In 1994 it signed a peace treaty with Jordan.

At Oslo in the 1990s, at Camp David and Taba in 2000-2001 and most recently at Annapolis, it has shown its willingness to make painful sacrifices for the sake of peace with the Palestinians. In 2005 Israel withdrew all its soldiers and civilians from the Gaza Strip for the sake of peace and to allow Palestinians to build a prosperous society.

Its reward, however, was to be attacked from the vacated territory by *Hamas* and other terrorist factions.

<u>Hamas</u> took control of Gaza and turned it into a den of terrorism and oppression and smuggled in Iranian-supplied weapons and missiles through hundreds of tunnels dug under the border.

2. The actions of <u>Hamas</u> are perfectly in keeping with its ideology as set out in its charter, highly recommended reading for O'Toole and like-minded commentators.

This makes clear that its goal is to destroy the state of Israel and replace it with an Islamic state (Preface and Article 11), sets its face against all peace conferences, and declares that the only solution is by jihad/holy war (Article 13). It even includes a scriptural mandate for the killing of Jews (Article 7).

3. O'Toole disregards these realities and, instead, stretches the scope of the term "collective punishment" to include almost any Israeli defensive action.

The measures used by Israel to counter the <u>Hamas</u> terrorist threat before the present military action - such as preventing the traffic of materials used for the manufacture of rockets - were fully legitimate.

O'Toole chooses to ignore that it was <u>Hamas</u> that launched rockets at the Ashkelon power station supplying Gaza with two-thirds of its electricity needs, and also fired repeatedly at the border crossings.

4. Contrary to his assertion, Israel did not destroy the business infrastructure of Gaza. <u>Hamas</u> itself smashed the multimillion-dollar glasshouses left behind by evacuated Israelis and turned them into storage facilities for rockets and explosives.

It also used terror to force Israel to close the joint-venture industrial zones near the border that were an important source of employment for many Palestinians.

5. We come finally to his accusation that Israel's policy of self-defence is "profound racism".

In fact, Israel is a multi-ethnic democracy with an Arab minority of over 1.2 million represented in parliament, the supreme court and at all levels of the state.

The imbalance in the Israeli/Palestinian fatality figures, cited by him in support of his argument, results from the profoundly different moral approach taken by Israel and *Hamas* with regard to the lives of their own people.

Israel protects its civilians with shelters and early warning systems; <u>Hamas</u> deliberately puts Palestinians in harm's way.

As <u>Hamas</u> spokesman Fathi Hamad boasted last week on Al Aqsa TV: "We have created a human shield of <u>women</u>, children, the elderly and the jihad fighters as if to say to the Zionist enemy: 'We desire death as you desire life'."

To claim that, for Israelis, "one Israeli life is worth at least 20 Palestinian lives" is simply an outrageous violation of the truth.

Israel 's actions necessary so our citizens can live in peace

For us, every civilian death, Israeli or Palestinian, is a tragedy and we do what is humanly possible to avoid them.

For example, at air force meetings and briefings 80 per cent of the time is dedicated to discussing ways of hitting known terrorist targets without injury to surrounding civilians.

Israeli aircraft distribute hundreds of thousands of leaflets calling on residents to leave buildings that house a **Hamas** HQ office or a stockpile of rockets and that are about to be bombed.

It was the hope for peace that led us to withdraw from Gaza; it was the terrorism of <u>Hamas</u> that compelled us to reenter.

Israel's action there is necessary until Israeli citizens can live in peace.

In the meantime, O'Toole should educate himself as to the true nature, history and policy of Israel - a small democracy fighting for its right to live in peace and security.

Zion Evrony is Israeli ambassador to Ireland

Load-Date: January 9, 2009



Honor and killings

The Jerusalem Post January 9, 2009 Friday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 5

Length: 1120 words **Byline:** Liat Collins

Highlight: Hamas seems to hold that violence and vilification are somehow honorable

Body

The term "honor killing" has lately taken on an even more twisted connotation, as if there were ever anything respectable about killing someone to protect a reputation.

A different aspect of the concept appeared in Jerusalem last March in them deadly shootings at Yeshivat Merkaz Harav and in the tractor terror attacks last July. The motive in the three cases seems to have been an attempt by the perpetrators - all known to be petty criminals - to regain their "good" names. There have also been incidents of *female* suicide bombers, suspected by their families of adultery, who seem to have been offered the choice by Palestinian extremists: either kill yourself - and as many Jews as possible - or become the victim of an honor killing.

Now we are witnessing not just an honor killing but a whole war of honor. <u>Hamas</u> leader in Gaza Ismail Haniyeh, and those who help pull his strings in Syria and Iran, cannot admit that the Zionist entity might just be able to survive and thrive even when missiles are lobbed at places increasingly approaching the center of the country.

High, but not mighty, at the top of the shaky tree it has climbed, <u>Hamas</u> desperately needs a lull in the fighting but is unwilling to lose face - or in <u>Hamas</u>'s case more than one face - by giving in without showing some sign of gain. Hence we see <u>Hamas</u> leaders vowing to fight Israel "until victory" while claiming all the time to be the victims of Israeli aggression.

<u>Hamas</u> has been trying to kill as many Israelis as possible to maintain its honor while Israel finds itself struggling to do the honorable thing and remove the <u>Hamas</u> threat without harming too many innocent Palestinians. The matter, of course, has been further complicated by the fact that <u>Hamas</u> has no compunction about using local children as human shields - and even seems to welcome the images of dead and wounded: an honor roll of tiny shahids whose deaths can be exploited to mobilize others to kill. (Although France 2, the TV station which broadcast the dubious Muhammad al-Dura footage which helped fuel terror attacks against Israelis, was forced to admit a snatch of its Gaza footage shown this week was actually filmed a few years ago.)

It's a time-honored tradition used also by Hizbullah in the War in the North (a.k.a. Lebanon II). The Arabic- speaking world awarded Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah a victory for defending his honor by promising to fight Israel "beyond beyond Haifa," just as *Hamas* is now hitting "beyond beyond Sderot."

Deputy head of <u>Hamas</u>'s political bureau, Moussa Abou Marzouk, indeed, vowed the group would not talk about a permanent cease-fire so long as Israel continued its "occupation," and would continue the "resistance." There is

Honor and killings

some consolation in the fact that the echo sounded slightly hollow as <u>Hamas</u> leaders now speak from bunkers where they have gone into hiding, leaving the ordinary folk exposed.

<u>Hamas</u> and Hizbullah both seem convinced that honor can be gained through fighting and martyrdom rather than establishing peace and creating a real and viable state. Hence any cease-fire seems doomed to be just a temporary halt in open hostilities rather than an attempt at reaching even a cold peace. <u>Hamas</u>, unlike Hizbullah, is not willing to lose face by admitting that it misjudged Israel's response to the scores of Kassams it hurled on the Negev and "beyond." There is no honor among the thieves who have stolen the lives of so many - Palestinians and Israelis.

THE MIDEAST is not, of course, alone in being motivated by honor. Why else would so many countries be (politely) fighting each other for the honor of getting involved in the peace process? The harsh words by Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan that Israel's actions in the Gaza Strip would lead to punishment from Allah and Israel's "self-destruction" was probably fueled not only by images from Al-Jazeera but also from an attempt to repair his own image. After all, only recently was it revealed that Turkey was trying to help mediate an agreement with Syria. (Although ask my Armenian friends about human rights and Turkey and the word "honorable" will not be used to describe their intentions.)

I have seen Russians, Japanese and Norwegians all argue over their role in the Mideast peace process, each vying for a bit of the closest you can get to international standing in the post-colonial era.

President Hosni Mubarak in Cairo has obvious reasons for his efforts at brokering a truce between Israel and *Hamas*: The Palestinians threaten to remind Egypt that they can break through from Gaza into Rafah and the Sinai - the closed Gazan border that the world largely ignores. Furthermore, successfully mediating a cease-fire would bolster Mubarak's status as a leader in the Arab world.

How much of the rhetoric of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, for that matter, can be attributed to his attempts to establish his country's role as the leading pan-Islamic state?

Israel, too, is not immune to honor seeking. At least Prime Minister Ehud Olmert seems to have learned the hard way that pride comes before a downfall and has been maintaining a relatively low profile rather than wildly boasting about the country's military successes, as he did regarding Hizbullah in 2006.

WHO REALLY deserves an honorable mention in all this? Perhaps the average Palestinians in Gaza, caught up in this battle with nowhere to hide - and I'd welcome the chance to get to know them sometime.

But those who get pride of place are the Israeli residents who have not lost their healthy self-respect even under the enormous strain of missile fire. Ordinary people elsewhere in the country have done the decent thing and opened their hearts and homes to those needing a respite. And one can't but help respect, too, the children trying to make sense of it all - like the first grader who this week saw the photo of a fallen soldier and asked her mother: "Why is he smiling if he is dead?" Or the pupils at my son's Jerusalem elementary school who have been preparing care packages to send to soldiers and writing prayers to place in the Western Wall. All this, once again, emphasizes how close to home the fighting is and how close to our hearts those fighting to protect it. These are not soldiers sent thousands of miles overseas to serve their country; many of these fighters are as worried about their families on the home front as their families are concerned about them on the military front lines.

I feel unabashedly honored to be on the Israeli side - however bashed we might be by the likes of Erdogan.

Ismail Haniyeh could save a lot of lives if he did the honorable thing and just dropped dead. Or failing that, at least drop out of the picture and let all of us live in peace.

Graphic

Honor and killings

2 photos: An Israeli girl with her pet dog stands outside a bomb shelter in Beersheba. You can't help but respect the children struggling to cope with the missiles. An IDF mobile artillery piece fires towards targets in the southern Gaza Strip, trying to prevent the launching of more Kassams and Grads on Israel. (Credit: Tara Todras-Whitehill/AP. Anja Niedringhaus/AP)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011



MADNESS IN GAZA; ISRAEL ON BRINK OF DEADLY GAZA INVASION KIDS AMONG 280 KILLED BY AIRSTRIKES WORLD PLEA FOR END TO BLOODSHED

The Mirror

December 29, 2008 Monday

Eire Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 8 Length: 868 words

Byline: BY PAUL BYRNE

Body

THE world looked on in horror last night as violence in the Middle East escalated to its bloodiest yet with Israel poised to invade Gaza and vowing to crush *Hamas* rebels.

Tanks and troops gathered menacingly along the border with Palestine while F-16 jets stepped up their devastating bombing blitz of militant targets.

At least 280 people, including <u>women</u> and children, have been killed and more than 600 injured in raids on the densely populated Gaza strip - sparked by <u>Hamas</u> rocket attacks on Israeli towns.

As world leaders and religious figureheads pleaded for peace in the troubled region, Israel's Defence Minister Ehud Barak warned starkly: "The time has come to fight."

Military spokeswoman Major Avital Leibovich added: "Israel has had enough.

"We have to do whatever we can in order to protect ourselves."

But defiant *Hamas* leaders refused to crumble under the military might weighed against them and vowed revenge.

Spokesman Mushir al-Masri said: "These strikes fuel our popular support, our military power and the firmness of our positions. We will survive, we will not surrender, we will not be shaken."

Crumpled bodies filled Gaza's mortuaries yesterday, blood stained the streets from the dead and wounded and choking plumes of smoke billowed into the sky after the airstrikes - described by locals as the worst in living memory.

MADNESS IN GAZA ISRAEL ON BRINK OF DEADLY GAZA INVASION KIDS AMONG 280 KILLED BY AIRSTRIKES WORLD PLEA FOR END TO BLOODSHED

Doctors struggled to cope with the huge numbers of injured people flooding into already crowded hospitals and fears of a humanitarian crisis grew as drug stocks and medical supplies rapidly vanished.

The Israeli targets have been <u>Hamas</u> bases such as security compounds, police stations and government offices.

But thousands of innocent civilians live in close proximity to the buildings and have been caught up in the bloodshed. A 15-year-old boy died in an attack on a greenhouse in southern Gaza yesterday.

Israel blames <u>Hamas</u> for the bloodshed, insisting the strikes are in retaliation for more than 300 rocket attacks on its towns largest southern city Ashdod yesterday, which is 23 miles from Gaza - the deepest they have reached inside the country.

At least four people were killed when Israeli missiles hit one of *Hamas*'s main security compounds in Gaza City.

Bombs also destroyed a nearby mosque Israel claimed was "a base for terrorism".

The *Hamas* TV station was hit along with supply tunnels in southern Gaza.

Major Leibovich said: "Those tunnels, we believe, were used for smuggling weapons, explosives and people to train for terror missions in other countries in the region."

Middle East envoy Tony Blair is to fly to the area within days for urgent talks in a bid to broker a peace deal.

Along with the Pope, and UN leaders, he appealed for the six-month ceasefire broken last week to be reinstated.

Mr Blair added: "The terrible events and tragic loss of life in Gaza require, in the immediate term, the introduction of a genuine calm in which the rocket attacks aimed at killing Israeli civilians and the Israeli attacks on Gaza cease so that the suffering of the people, which is severe, can be lifted."

Pope Benedict XVI told pilgrims in St Peter's Square, Rome: "The homeland of Jesus cannot continue to be witness to so much bloodshed, which repeats itself endlessly. I implore an end to violence."

Critics believe Israel's overwhelming response to <u>Hamas</u> rocket raids are a show of might by Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and his government as elections loom in the country.

The Israeli public has a low opinion of how it has handled Gaza and until this weekend's airstrikes, opposition leader Binyamin Netanyahu led in polls. in the past week. Rebels targeted Israel's largest southern city Ashdod yesterday, which is 23 miles from Gaza - the deepest they have reached inside the country.

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Graphic

ATTACK Missile hits south Gaza; HORROR STRIKE The bloodied and terrified faces of innocent children caught up in yesterday's devastating airstrikes by Israeli warplanes on Gaza strip include two young girls and five boys. The young victims were rushed to overcrowded hospitals where doctors struggled to deal with the huge amount of injuries to civilians and <u>Hamas</u>. More than 600 people have been wounded since jets launched the raids in response to rebel rocket attacks; DEVASTATING Israeli helicopter strikes; FORCE Israeli troops fire tear gas at Palestinian protestors on border; SWOOP Israeli fighter moves in; DEMO SIPTU chief Jack O'Connor speaks at Gaza protest yesterday outside Dublin's GPO Picture: GARETH CHANEY

Load-Date: December 29, 2008



Beddoes condemns Israeli action

Fiji Times (Australia)

January 7, 2009 Wednesday

1 Edition

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Section: LOCAL; Pg. 5

Length: 243 words

Body

OUSTED leader of opposition Mick Beddoes has strongly condemned the recent actions of the Israeli Government along the Gaza Strip.

While hundreds of lives have been lost during these attacks, Mr Beddoes said Israel's bombardment and invasion of Gaza are an excessive and disproportionate response to the rocket attacks from *Hamas*.

He called on the international community to pressure both sides into an immediate ceasefire.

Mr Beddoes called on the United States of America to change its approach towards resolving the Middle East conflict, saying decades of failed attempts for peace is sufficient evidence to all concerned.

Mr Beddoes said the slaughter of unarmed and innocent <u>women</u> and children, in its bid to remove the <u>Hamas</u> leadership and its infrastructure, cannot be justified by the Israeli Government.

Mr Beddoes suggested the leaders start with a fully inclusive peace conference involving all parties to the conflict, including *Hamas*.

"The second important point would be to appoint a leader of a country, not previously involved or supportive of either side in the conflict, to chair and guide the process and thirdly, President-elect (Barack) Obama and his EU and Russian counterparts, should directly engage Israel, Fatah, *Hamas* and the Palestinian Authority in developing a comprehensive and sustainable peace for this troubled part of our world."

More than 500 lives have been lost since the Israeli airstrikes on Gaza Strip started over a week ago.

Load-Date: January 6, 2009



Column: Military action in Gaza could backfire, lead to future radicalism

University Wire

January 14, 2009 Wednesday

Copyright 2009 The Daily Gamecock via U-Wire

Length: 429 words

Byline: By Ryan Quinn, The Daily Gamecock; SOURCE: U. South Carolina

Dateline: COLUMBIA, S.C.

Body

The United States entered into the war in Iraq with the misconception that radicalism could be destroyed through bloodshed and firepower. This notion that has been proven untrue by six years of horror for both our troops and the Iraqi people. Now Israel is making the same mistake.

Despite pleas from the UN -- and even the Vatican -- for Israel to pull out of Gaza, the invasion rolls on. The Palestinians have suffered 900 casualties since the start; 400 of those were civilians, and half of those were women and children. In Israel's attempt to wipe out the radical <u>Hamas</u>, they are breeding a new generation of radicals: the children of those who saw what the invasion did to their innocent countrymen.

Israel's attack is perhaps justified: The catalyst of the invasion was rocket attacks by <u>Hamas</u> onto innocent Israeli civilians. Though the damage done by these attacks pale in comparison to the retaliation -- around four innocent Israelis killed since the beginning of the invasion compared to 400 innocent Gazans -- Israel can't be scolded for defending their people. But the scope is entirely unnecessary -- a bombardment and an invasion is overkill if the mission is simply to stop radicals from firing a few rockets. This is because Israel has another objective, stated by Daniel Klaidman in a recent Newsweek article: "to crush <u>Hamas</u> altogether, first by aerial attacks and then with a grinding artillery and infantry assault."

This is a doomed cause, for even if Israel does manage to wipe out <u>Hamas</u>, a new branch of radicalism will emerge, bent on avenging the injustices done to their fathers. Many in Gaza cannot comprehend the true nature of the conflict: The fact that Israel simply wants to destroy <u>Hamas</u>, not all Palestinians. All they see is predominately Muslim civilians being killed by predominately Jewish soldiers, and they interpret it as a Holy War. They don't distinguish between <u>Hamas</u> and themselves.

Likewise, the United States thought that it could destroy radicalism with military action, both in Afghanistan and Iraq, and found that it could not. Radicals feed off of bloodshed; they want war and they want civilians to be killed in order to establish the false image of a non-Muslim bully nation attacking an innocent Islamic nation. Neither the United States nor Israel should give them what they want. We must fight on our own terms with the weapons they don't possess -- the weapons of restraint, diplomacy and education. We must teach the next generation of Palestinians the true nature of this conflict.

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Load-Date: January 14, 2009



West weak while Palestinians pay

Hobart Mercury (Australia)
January 5, 2009 Monday
1 - Edition

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Section: TALKING POINT; Pg. 25

Length: 742 words

Byline: GREG BARNS

Body

IN Australia you can go to jail for donating money to a cause like <u>Hamas</u>, which runs the lives of 1.5 million Palestinians on the Gaza Strip.

However, it is not an offence for you to support organisations in Israel, which actively disrupt the lives of Palestinians by ripping up their olive groves or financing illegal settlements in areas of clear dispute between Israel and the Palestinians.

Hypocritical? You bet.

The Australian government, be it Liberal or Labor, like successive US administrations of any hue, is tied to a policy of supporting Israel at almost any cost. The plight of the Palestinians is given patronising lip service by Canberra and Washington.

If an Australian politician is invited to an Israeli function they will fall over themselves to be seen there. The same goes in the US. But if you suggest to those same politicians that they actively and consistently support Palestinian organisations or causes they will go weak at the knees and find any excuse to be out of town on that day.

There is no way any Australian or American politician should be supporting Israel's disproportionate use of force against *Hamas* in the Gaza Strip.

<u>Hamas</u> is an organisation with limited resources and munitions, while Israel has one of the best funded armies in the world.

The result of its Gaza offensive is untold suffering to innocent men, <u>women</u> and children, while the <u>Hamas</u> leadership remains in hiding underground.

Perhaps the most abject failure of the fracas in the Gaza has been that of the man whom so many thought -foolishly in this columnist's view -- would shift US policy towards the Middle East onto a more just and humane
plain.

Last week Mr Obama, in a scene eerily reminiscent of his predecessor George Bush, stayed on the golf course and wouldn't say boo while Palestinians were being remorselessly attacked by the Israelis.

West weak while Palestinians pay

Some of us are not surprised by Mr Obama's weakness last week. He, like all candidates for the US Presidency, actively courts the powerful pro-Israel lobby in the US. In fact, he did so very publicly after it became clear he would win the Democratic nomination.

Mr Obama was at pains to show the American electorate that he was not anti-Israel and now he is compromised hopelessly.

If he is the man of compassion and hope that his supporters never tire of telling us he is, then how can he be so indifferent to the suffering of ordinary Palestinians over the past days?

How can he sit back and let the Israelis make life so intolerable for those on the Gaza Strip that even the apolitical Red Cross has condemned Israel?

The pro-Israel lobby says *Hamas* is an organisation that is dedicated to the destruction of Israel. True, but this only tells part of the story.

<u>Hamas</u> might be a terrorist organisation in the eyes of those who would jail you for supporting it in Australia, but to many Palestinians it represents a lifeline.

Israel has blockaded the Gaza Strip since <u>Hamas</u> took control in 2007 and sought to strangle the area economically.

This has merely made <u>Hamas</u> more relevant to people in the area as it provides medical help, welfare, housing and employment. Israel has created the monster it now seeks in its bullying and indiscriminate fashion to destroy.

What is unfolding today -- a sad case of history in this part of the world yet again repeating itself -- is due to the West's refusal to pressure Israel's leadership for significant concessions and recognise the yearning of the Palestinian people for a homeland is as legitimate as that of the Jews.

It is the Palestinians who, from the Oslo Accords in 1995 onwards, are forced to make the big plays in diplomacy. The Palestinians are meant to stomach continual humiliation and eroding of their rights so that Israel might come to the party and negotiate some form of peace.

The leadership of Israel is today morally and ideologically corrupt. It does not matter who replaces Ehud Olmert as prime minister in the next couple of months, it seems political leaders in Israel know only one thing -- use military and economic might to destroy ordinary Palestinians so they give up on groups like *Hamas*.

It is a flawed and failed strategy, but Israel gets away with it because they are the good guys that politicians in places like Washington and Canberra pander to time and again.

Meanwhile, Palestinians are denied their fundamental human rights to be citizens of a place that is their homeland.

They talk about justice for all? Yeh . . . and pigs might fly.

Load-Date: January 4, 2009



<u>Israel sends reservists into Gaza battles; Officials say 900 killed and 3,800</u> wounded

The Vancouver Province (British Columbia)

January 12, 2009 Monday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A19

Length: 739 words

Byline: Agence France-Presse

Dateline: GAZA CITY

Body

GAZA CITY -- Israel poured reservists into the Gaza Strip yesterday as heavy clashes brought the death toll from its war on *Hamas* to 900 Palestinians as officials said that an end to the fighting might be in sight.

Israeli troops pushed deeper into Gaza's main city, as warplanes carried out nearly 60 air strikes on the 16th day of a war launched to combat Palestinian rocket fire, which has continued despite the offensive.

An Israeli private television channel said the army had begun sending in some of the thousands of reservists called up when the war began, and an army spokesman said they would be increasingly "integrated" into combat units.

Civilians again fell victim in the impoverished and isolated Palestinian enclave, one of the world's most crowded territories where half of the 1.5 million residents are under 18 years old.

Two women and four children were killed in a strike on a house in Beit Lahiya, medics and witnesses said.

Israeli officials suggested the end might be close to its offensive despite its rejection of a United Nations Security Council resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire.

"The decision of the Security Council doesn't give us much leeway," Deputy Defence Minister Matan Vilnai told public radio.

"Thus it would seem that we are close to ending the ground operation and ending the operation altogether."

Earlier, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said that Israel was nearing the goals it had set for its operation, but that fighting would continue for now. "Israel is approaching these goals, but more patience and determination are required," Olmert told a cabinet meeting.

Israel has "dealt <u>Hamas</u> an unprecedented blow," government secretary Oved Yehezkel quoted him as telling ministers. "It will never be the same <u>Hamas</u>."

Israeli forces have demolished some 200 smuggling tunnels beneath the Gaza-Egypt border -- <u>Hamas</u>'s main resupply route -- representing two-thirds of the total, military spokeswoman Avital Leibovich said.

Israel sends reservists into Gaza battles; Officials say 900 killed and 3,800 wounded

<u>Hamas</u>, which also ignored the resolution, vowed to keep on fighting. Yesterday, 19 rockets were fired into Israel from Gaza, including four military-grade Grad rockets, without wounding anyone.

Early yesterday, troops entered the narrow streets of Gaza City's southern Tal al-Hawa neighbourhood, encountering roadside bombs, mortar and gunfire from Palestinian fighters, witnesses said.

They withdrew at daybreak, but hundreds of panicked residents fled the area, clutching small children and hastily packed bags after a sleepless night.

"We couldn't take anything with us, not even milk for the children," said Ibtisam Shamallah, 22, as she fled with her two children.

Twelve bodies were later pulled from the rubble in Tal al-Hawa, including 10 fighters, medics said. In all, at least 26 Palestinians were killed in clashes yesterday, they said.

Egypt has spearheaded western-backed efforts to end the fighting, calling for an immediate truce, opening Gaza's border crossings, preventing arms smuggling and relaunching reconciliation efforts.

Yesterday, it ramped up pressure on Israel by summoning its ambassador to demand that the Jewish state comply with the Security Council resolution and open humanitarian corridors to relieve the besieged territory.

It also held what it said were positive talks with a <u>Hamas</u> team, saying the Islamists agreed "on the importance of . . . stopping the shedding of Palestinian blood as soon as possible."

Osama Hamdan, <u>Hamas</u>'s representative in Lebanon, told Al-Jazeera television afterwards that "there was some progress on some points" of the Egyptian proposal.

"We reject parts of this proposal . . . but that does not mean rejection of all the proposal." He added, without elaborating, that there had been no progress "on some of the sensitive points."

<u>Hamas</u>'s exiled political chief, Khaled Meshaal, vowed his group will not discuss any kind of ceasefire until the Israeli offensive stops.

"As long as there is an occupation, there is a resistance," he said.

The Egyptian-<u>Hamas</u> talks were due to resume later today and senior Israeli defence official Amos Gilad was to return to Cairo for more talks with the Egyptians.

Since the Israeli onslaught began Dec. 27, nearly 900 people have been killed, including 275 children, and 3,800 wounded, according to Dr. Muawiya Hassanein, head of Gaza emergency services.

Ten Israeli soldiers and three civilians have been killed in combat or in the more than 600 rocket attacks since the operation began.

Graphic

Colour Photo: Agence France-Presse; Two Israeli missiles, above, fall in the southern Gaza town of Rafah near the border with Egypt yesterday, followed by a ball of fire, centre, and a plume of smoke, right, from the residential area.;

Colour Photo: Agence France-Presse;;

Load-Date: January 12, 2009



Column: Israeli violence takes innocent lives

University Wire

January 12, 2009 Monday

Copyright 2009 Daily Bruin via U-Wire

Length: 928 words

Byline: By Saif Ansari, Daily Bruin; SOURCE: UCLA

Dateline: LOS ANGELES

Body

Israel is not interested in peace.

On Dec. 27, Israel launched

a massive military assault on the people of Gaza, resulting in the deaths of over 870 Palestinians. Israel has argued that it has acted in self-defense in response to the rockets fired into Southern Israel by Hamas and other Palestinian militant groups in the last month.

But

on Nov. 4, while the rest of the world eagerly awaited the results of the U.S. presidential election, Israeli troops raided Gaza in clear violation of a six-month cease-fire brokered by Egypt back in June. Before the raid, *Hamas* had not fired a single rocket into Israel for nearly five months.

Israel failed to observe the cease-fire altogether by refusing to lift the brutal blockade it has placed on Gaza since 2007. The blockade has produced the worst humanitarian crisis since the Six-Day War in 1947, leaving over a million

Palestinians without food, water, electricity and medical supplies.

In

contrast to reports by the United Nations, the American Red Cross,

Column: Israeli violence takes innocent lives

Amnesty International and local aid agencies, Israel's foreign minister Tzipi Livni contends that there is "no humanitarian crisis" whatsoever. Israel officials appear to be confident that the Gazans are living comfortable lives free from daily power outages and food shortages, violence and death: they apparently find international news coverage unnecessary and have barred foreign journalists from entering Gaza. Israel

never seemed to be committed to a durable cease-fire in the first place. Defense Minister Ehud Barak gave orders to the Israeli Defense Force six months ago to prepare for a military operation in Gaza at the very same time that Israel was involved in negotiations related to the June cease-fire. A country that both agrees to a cease-fire and plans on breaking it promises not a lasting peace but rather further conflict.

is interested only in the continued oppression of the Palestinian people. Of the hundreds killed, 375 have been civilians, out of which 270 have been children.

Israel

<u>Hamas</u>, Israel argues, is responsible for the Gazan's suffering and uses civilians as human shields.

by tightening the blockade and attacking military and civilian targets alike, Israel is responsible for hurting not only *Hamas* but, and in large part, Gaza's civilian population as well. A person who voted for *Hamas*, is affiliated with *Hamas* or simply lives amongst *Hamas* operatives is not necessarily a *Hamas* operative and is therefore not a combatant. In other words, merely supporting *Hamas* does not make a person equal to an actual *Hamas* fighter. Any action that collectively punishes the entirety of Gaza for the acts of a few is inhumane and is prohibited by international law.

The usage of human shields also does not justify Israeli attacks against civilians. A bombing on Jan.

Column: Israeli violence takes innocent lives

6, for example, killed 40 civilians, including <u>women</u> and children, who had taken refuge in a U.N. elementary school. In addition, the United Nations regularly gives the coordinates of its facilities and buildings to the Israeli military in order to protect them from attack.

claims that two *Hamas* militants were firing at IDF soldiers from inside the school, but the proper response was not to go ahead and attack the school - the proper response was not to attack the school at all. Mass civilian casualties are always unacceptable and are prohibited, again, by international law.

Furthermore, the allegation of the usage of human shields cannot possibly account for each, or even the majority, of the hundreds of civilian deaths incurred so far in the conflict.

Indeed, a U.N. investigation of the school bombing verified that there is, in fact, no evidence that there even were any militants at the school.

According to a recent EU report, Israel's offensive constitutes a severely "disproportionate use of force." The conflict has claimed the lives of 870 Palestinians compared to only 13 Israelis. Out of a population of 305 million, 870 deaths is proportional to over 170,000 Americans. Israel's sole rationale for the enormous number of casualties is self-defense.

It is difficult to understand the

Israel

justification that Israel acts only in order to defend itself when its own actions have provoked the attacks on its citizens. By placing a stranglehold on Gaza, restricting access in and out and reducing its economy to shambles, Israel has obliterated the livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, leaving over 60 percent of Gaza residents below the poverty line and generating complaints that Gaza has become "the world's largest open-air prison." It is in desperation that some

Page 4 of 4

Column: Israeli violence takes innocent lives

Palestinians have turned to violence in order to inflict the same

amount of harm on Israeli civilians in a feeble attempt to oppose

Israeli aggression.

The slaughter of innocents is never

justified, and steps must be taken to protect Israeli citizens from

harm. But the people of Gaza have a right to live as well, and anything

short of an equal respect for the life and liberty of both Israelis and

Palestinians is nothing but bigotry and prejudice.

Israel will

fail in Gaza. It executed a similar military operation in the summer of

2006, but failed to eradicate and only increased public support for the

political and military group Hezbollah.

A lasting genuine peace

will be ensured only when Israel acknowledges the claims of the

Palestinian people. Peace cannot be achieved, however, without the

proper implementation of justice. Without justice for all there will be

no cessation in hostilities, and Israelis and Palestinians alike will

continue to suffer from a conflict that has consumed both communities

for decades.

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Load-Date: January 12, 2009



Israeli forces push deeper into Gaza City

The Toronto Star

January 14, 2009 Wednesday

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Section: WORLD AND COMMENT; Pg. AA01

Length: 707 words

Byline: Oakland Ross, Toronto Star

Dateline: JERUSALEM

Body

Israeli ground forces fought their way to within 1.5 kilometres of Gaza City's centre yesterday, continuing their gradual penetration of the densely populated city, where thousands of <u>Hamas</u> fighters are believed to be concentrated.

The advance did not appear to herald the launch of a long-awaited third phase of the Israeli offensive in Gaza.

Israeli media reports said the country's political leaders were allowing time for progress to be made on international efforts to draft a peace plan acceptable to both sides.

Now in its 19th day, the Israeli offensive began Dec. 27 with an aerial assault, accompanied a week later by a ground invasion aimed at securing open areas of the territory and isolating Gaza City.

A third phase, should it go ahead, would involve a concerted, house-by-house drive toward the centre of Gaza City.

"The fighting goes on, and (Israeli troops) continue to apply force," said Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak.

Early today, an Israeli warplane fired a missile at the former Gaza city hall, used as a court building in recent years, witnesses said. The structure was destroyed and many stores in the market around it were badly damaged, they said

The military reported killing at least 30 *Hamas* fighters yesterday, in clashes that mainly took place on the outskirts of Gaza City.

On the diplomatic front, Egyptian mediators pushed <u>Hamas</u> to accept a truce proposal and Israel sent its lead negotiator to Cairo for "decisive" talks on a ceasefire.

Egypt is overseeing the talks in part because Israel refuses to speak directly with <u>Hamas</u>, which it considers a terrorist organization.

U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon also headed for the region to join diplomatic efforts. He is scheduled to visit Egypt, Syria and Jordan.

British Prime Minister Gordon Brown pressed leaders of Israel and Egypt for moves towards a full, sustainable ceasefire, his office said.

Ismail Haniyeh, a <u>Hamas</u> leader in Gaza, said in a televised address from his hideout yesterday that his side was willing to consider a truce with the Israelis. But <u>Hamas</u> has also said - in a seeming contradiction of Haniyeh's statement - any deal must include an Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and the lifting of Israel's 19-month-long blockade of the territory.

Israel says Gaza must stop its rocket fire prior to the signing of a truce and is also seeking provisions that would guarantee an end to arms smuggling into the territory.

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and intelligence chief Omar Suleiman, who has brokered the ceasefire negotiations, left Cairo for Saudi Arabia yesterday for talks with King Abdullah as Arab leaders tried to co-ordinate a regional strategy for ending the conflict.

Meanwhile, in Gaza, Israeli artillery continued to pound the city's periphery, and the Israeli air force attacked more than 100 targets, including weapons caches, tunnels, rocket launching sites and squads of *Hamas* militants.

Eighteen Palestinian rockets flew out of Gaza by mid-afternoon, hitting Ashkelon, Sderot and other southern Israeli towns but causing no damage or injuries.

<u>Hamas</u> fighters have been launching 20 to 30 rockets a day in recent days, down from more than twice that number at the outset of the Israeli offensive.

Israeli officials said an army officer was critically wounded when a booby-trapped house exploded in the northern Gaza Strip.

Gen. Gabi Ashkenazi, chief of the general staff, warned of increased civilian casualties as the close-range urban combat proceeds.

Yesterday's killings by the Israeli military raised the 18-day Palestinian death toll to about 950, according to the Israeli count. The military said 450 of the dead were known <u>Hamas</u> militants and many of the remaining 500 might also be.

Palestinian medical sources say more than half the dead are <u>women</u> and children. Over 4,000 Palestinians have been wounded.

Thirteen Israelis, 10 of them soldiers, have been killed.

The International Committee of the Red Cross confirmed yesterday Israel has been using the chemical agent white phosphorous in Gaza, both to illuminate night operations and to hide manoeuvres carried out by day. The ICRC said it had no evidence the agent, which can be severely harmful to humans, was being used improperly.

With files from the Star's wire services

Graphic

KHALIL HAMRA AP Palestinians mourn outside the morgue in Beit Lahiya, Gaza, yesterday.

Load-Date: January 14, 2009



CARNAGE; 205 KILLED AS ISRAELI AIR STRIKES HIT GAZA

Sunday Mail

December 28, 2008, Sunday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 6

Length: 395 words

Byline: By BRUCE WALKER

Body

AT least 205 people died in the Gaza Strip yesterday after a wave of Israeli air strikes.

The death toll was still rising last night after 30 missiles destroyed alleged <u>Hamas</u> rocket-launching pads and security compounds in civilian areas of Gaza City.

The strikes caused widespread panic in Gaza, which has been ruled by Islamic *Hamas* militants for 18 months.

Some of the Israeli warplanes struck in densely populated areas as pupils were leaving school.

Women rushed into the streets frantically looking for their children.

Almost 400 people, including children, were wounded with many buried beneath rubble.

The Israeli military said the F-16 bomber strikes were in response to an escalation in rocket attacks from Gaza over recent days, after a truce between the two sides expired.

They said mortar squads had fired 200 projectiles at Israeli targets.

<u>Hamas</u> immediately vowed revenge with a spokesman saying: "<u>Hamas</u> will continue the resistance until the last drop of blood."

Israel told its civilians near Gaza to take cover.

The first round of air strikes came just before noon and several waves followed. Plumes of black smoke rose over the city and sirens wailed.

One man sat in the middle of a street, close to a security compound, alternately slapping his face and covering his head with dust from the bombed-out building.

"My son is gone, my son is gone," wailed shopkeeper Sadi Masri, 57.

He said he sent his son out to buy cigarettes minutes before the air strikes and now could not find him.

"May I burn like the cigarettes, may Israel burn," Masri said.

As he spoke, civilians rushed to the targeted areas, trying to move the wounded in their cars to hospitals.

CARNAGE 205 KILLED AS ISRAELI AIR STRIKES HIT GAZA

In the West Bank, <u>Hamas'</u>s rival, moderate Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, said in a statement that he "condemns this aggression" and called for restraint.

Israel has targeted Gaza in the past but the number of attacks was unprece-dented. Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak warned that "the operation will last as long as necessary".

Last night Prime Minister Gordon Brown said: "I am deeply concerned by continuing missile strikes from Gaza on Israel and by Israel's response today.

These attacks are designed to cause random destruction and to undermine the prospects of peace talks led by President Abbas.

"Peaceful means are the only way of reaching a lasting solution."

SUNDAY EMAIL

reporters@sundaymail.co.uk

Graphic

Despair: A Palestinian carries a wounded child

Massacre: Bodies lie outside *Hamas* police station after attacks

Chaos: Angry civilians at a bomb site

Load-Date: December 28, 2008



Gaza guns fall silent to bury dead

The Express

January 8, 2009 Thursday

U.K. 1st Edition

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Section: NEWS; 19 Length: 522 words

Byline: By Raymond in Tel Aviv and Padraic Flanagan in London

Body

THE guns fell briefly silent in Gaza yesterday, in a three-hour lull to allow the dead to be buried and let aid into the war zone.

Fighting resumed immediately after the truce, held 12 days into Israel's onslaught against *Hamas*, as diplomats pressed for a permanent ceasefire.

<u>Hamas</u> and Israel both said they would consider a Franco-Egyptian ceasefire plan. But Jerusalem rejected a claim by French president Nicolas Sarkozy that Israel had already accepted the truce.

After a meeting of the security cabinet, Israeli officials said they would send a delegation to Egypt in the coming days to discuss a truce proposal put to them by President Hosni Mubarak.

Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas also said he would attend the talks.

Details of the proposal were unclear but it was believed to be based on installing an international force to prevent the smuggling of weapons from Egypt into Gaza while allowing border crossings into the territory to be opened.

But Israel demanded that rockets stop being fired by *Hamas*.

Gaza residents took advantage of the break in hostilities to rush into the streets and stock up on supplies or search for loved ones.

Queues formed outside bakeries and grocery shops for the first time since Israel sent troops into the beleaguered territory on Saturday.

The first details of Israel's ground invasion of Gaza also began to emerge, with soldiers describing close combat with *Hamas* "ghters trying to lure them into a boobytrapped warren of underground tunnels and alleys.

<u>Hamas</u>'s main strategy is to draw Israeli troops into crowded urban settings where their local knowledge and guerrilla tactics will have the advantage.

The soldiers said they had encountered numerous suicide bombers and would-be kidnappers on motorbikes whose aim was to snatch Israeli soldiers as hostages.

Gaza guns fall silent to bury dead

In one incident, a soldier said he pulled his comrade from a tunnel under a <u>Hamas</u> fighter's house and foiled a kidnap attempt.

But for three hours at least, Palestinians in Gaza and Israelis in nearby towns were grateful for the chance to temporarily resume their lives.

Trucks from UN and aid warehouses distributed tons of food, medical supplies and fuel to distribution centres, hospitals and shops throughout Gaza.

Ashraf Al-Issawi, a father of eight in Gaza City, said it was the first time he had ventured more than a few yards from his apartment for days.

"I went down today because I thought it might be more safe, " he said. "We have run out of rice and cooking gas. I have to buy bread or we will have nothing to eat."

Large queues formed at bakeries for a ration of one bag of bread per family.

At the end of the truce, fighting resumed around Gaza. Two <u>Hamas</u> rockets landed in the Israeli desert town of Beersheba, 20 miles west of the nuclear plant of Dimona. There were no casualties or damage.

Coventry-based Manal Timraz, 39, joined the calls for peace after 15 members of her family living in Gaza - four cousins and 11 of their young children - were wiped out by a bomb last Friday.

"I am British and I want my family to be able to live in peace throughout the world, " said Egyptian-born Manal, who moved here six years ago.

Graphic

Palestinian women grieve their losses during a lull in the fighting yesterday

Load-Date: January 8, 2009



Daily struggle to find food and fuel in Gaza

The New Zealand Herald January 14, 2009 Wednesday

Copyright 2009 The New Zealand Herald All Rights Reserved

Section: NEWS; World

Length: 493 words

Body

GAZA CITY - In 17 days of war, Hisham Abu Ramadan has fallen into a new

routine.

He gets up before dawn and goes to his mosque, not just to pray but to charge his cellphone, since it's the only place in the neighbourhood with a generator. After prayers, he queues at a nearby bakery, where as many as 150 people are already waiting to buy bread.

"We've got accustomed to this life," said Abu Ramadan, 37. Others face a

tougher time.

In Khaled al-Dali's two-room shack in the Shati refugee camp, 21 people - half of them relatives who fled the fighting - take turns sleeping because there are not enough mattresses to go around. Without fuel, the

family cooks on fires made from rubbish. He has sold most of his furniture to buy food.

Gazans have become adept at coping with conflict, but Israel's

unprecedented assault on their <u>Hamas</u> rulers has strained even their survival skills. The massive bombardment has badly disrupted the flow of electricity and water, already stop-and-go before the start of the war. Israel has cut Gaza in half, cutting north and south off from each other.

During the short daylight hours, shoppers crowd the few open stores and outdoor markets in a hunt for scarce goods, from nappies to milk. At dusk, streets quickly become deserted as civilians retreat indoors, for fear of being mistaken for militants by Israel's military.

"Everything is difficult now - eating, drinking, moving," said Mohammed

Saleimeh, 26. When electricity comes on in the Nusseirat refugee camp in

central Gaza, the <u>women</u> in his 20-member family rush to bake bread. When water comes on, they wash the cloth nappies they now use instead of disposable ones.

In southern Israel, <u>Hamas</u> rocket barrages have also severely disrupted life, sending people rushing into shelters when air raid sirens go off.

Daily struggle to find food and fuel in Gaza

Many businesses have closed and classes have been suspended, but residents have sufficient food, electricity and fuel.

In Gaza, the ability to cope largely depends on how much of a buffer, in

food and cash, families had going into the war, and in part on their ties to Gaza's *Hamas* rulers.

Mohammed Awad, a senior *Hamas* official, told the movement's Al Agsa TV

on Monday that 25,000 people on the *Hamas* payroll, from police to civil

servants, had received their December salaries. <u>Hamas</u> members said the money was being paid in cash, with **Hamas** activists making the rounds to distribute it.

A man with a trimmed beard was seen handing out money from a suitcase in

the hallway of a building in one Gaza City neighbourhood, then asking

employees to sign a receipt.

THE AID LIFELINE

Israel is allowing some humanitarian aid convoys to enter but the shipments and distribution are often disrupted by fighting.

A three-hour daily truce was introduced last week to allow aid into Gaza.

There are 60 trucks carrying aid entering Gaza each day, less than a sixth of the 400 truckloads deemed the minimum necessary.

As many as 88 per cent of Gaza's residents are said to now require food

aid.

- AP

Load-Date: January 14, 2009



UCLA students join Los Angeles protests over Gaza war

University Wire

January 12, 2009 Monday

Copyright 2009 Daily Bruin via U-Wire

Length: 849 words

Byline: By Anna Andersen, Daily Bruin; SOURCE: UCLA

Dateline: LOS ANGELES

Body

Thousands of people from Los Angeles, many of them UCLA students, gathered in front of the Federal Building in Westwood, Calif. over the weekend to protest the situation in Gaza.

On Saturday, protesters met to show solidarity with Palestine at an event organized by the Act Now to Stop War and End Racism Coalition.

The following day, protesters supporting Israel came out to a rally organized by the pro-Israeli StandWithUs organization to denounce *Hamas* and show solidarity with Israel.

Both protests were part of demonstrations happening across the country in response to the escalating conflict in Gaza, which broke out Dec. 27.

Saturday afternoon, shouts of "Free, free Palestine. Palestine will be free," resonated throughout the crowd as cars flying Palestinian flags honked in support as they drove down Wilshire Boulevard.

Protesters' signs carried messages such as "Stop the invasion," "No U.S. aid to Israel," "End the siege of Gaza," "Stop bombing children," and "Babies are not part of *Hamas*."

In a similar scene on Sunday, a new chant, "Hey, hey, ho, ho. *Hamas* must go," rang through the crowd, which was waving Israeli and American flags.

Many of the Sunday protesters' signs read, "Israel we stand with you," "<u>Hamas</u> stop the rockets" and "There is a reason terrorists wear masks, they use human shields."

Many protesters from both groups said they ultimately called for peace and expressed regret over the unfortunate number of casualties, which have reached 870 on the Palestinian side and 13 on the Israeli side, according to an Associated Press report on Sunday.

On Saturday, coffins were set out on the lawn in front of the Federal Building and were later carried into the march, which looped through the closed-off streets of Westwood Village before returning to the Federal Building.

Following the march, a sound recording of rockets and explosions was broadcast over the crowd. Participants dropped to the ground in a symbolic "die-in."

UCLA students join Los Angeles protests over Gaza war

The Los Angeles Police Department estimated that 1,500 people protested on Saturday, and at least 1,600 people attended Sunday's protest.

"We're out here to show our support for peace and to stand in solidarity with the people of Gaza," said Faisal Attrache, president of the UCLA United Arab Society in a statement echoed by many of the protesters who came out on Saturday.

"The recent attack on Gaza has stirred up protests and marches like never before. I'm looking around, and I see people from different organizations, religions and ethnicities," Attrache said. "This is because it's a protest against a humanitarian crisis."

Abdallah Jadallah, a third-year civil engineering student and president of the Muslim Students' Association, elaborated on the crisis. "The people of Gaza have been without food and supplies for months. Now, there are ships waiting to deliver aid to Gaza, but Israel is preventing it," Jadallah said.

On Sunday, Shirley Eshaghian, president of Bruins for Israel, also recognized the humanitarian crisis but blamed <u>Hamas</u> for bringing this in large part upon its own people. "Israel is doing what it can to drop warning leaflets before it attacks, but it is unfortunate that <u>Hamas</u> has been building tunnels to smuggle in arms instead of building bomb shelters for its people," she said.

Trevor Klitofsky, director of Bruins for Israel, said what is happening in Gaza is unfortunate. "But after *Hamas* launched something like 8,000 rockets, it's inevitable that something like this would happen," Klitofsky said.

Regarding the number of casualties, Klitofsky expressed regret, but he explained that it's a difficult situation. "*Hamas* launches rockets from schools and hospitals hoping that Israel won't attack back, but if it does, Israel looks bad, and they gain support because *women* and children are dying," Klitofsky added. "Unfortunately, *Hamas* benefits from this type of publicity."

Both sides sympathized with the death of civilians, approximately third of which are children, according to a Jan. 8 United Nations report.

Yannina Casillas, a second-year international development studies student said her most important reason for joining the Saturday protest was to stand up for human lives, the human right to food, the human right to live.

"Both sides deserve that," she said.

As Saturday's march reconvened at the Federal Building, Dylan Wilkerson, a volunteer for the Act Now to Stop War and End Racism Coalition, stood on the corner of Veteran and Wilshire. "We organized this in just a week," Wilkerson said. "I think it's a testament to the level of rage and the changing tide in public opinion."

Jacqueline Rafii, a fourth-year comparative literature student and a member of Bruins for Israel expressed concern over this change in public opinion.

"I felt compelled to come out today as much of the world is anti-Israel to a degree never seen before," Rafii said. "Israel is doing what it can to avoid civilian deaths, but *Hamas* hides in densely populated areas."

Still, violence from both sides continues despite worldwide pressures calling for a cease-fire.

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Load-Date: January 12, 2009



Chaos in Gaza as airstrikes continue

therecord.com

December 29, 2008 Monday

Final Edition

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Section: FRONT; Pg. A5

Length: 539 words

Byline: Ibrahim Barzak, The Associated Press

Dateline: GAZA CITY, GAZA STRIP

Body

Terrified prisoners fled a Gaza City jail bombed by Israeli warplanes yesterday, their faces white with dust and red with blood as they stumbled over piles of rubble.

Across the territory, grieving families pitched traditional mourning tents of green outside homes. Yet the rows of chairs inside these tents remained largely empty, as residents cowered indoors for fear of new Israeli strikes.

Even for war-weary Gazans, who've lived through countless Israeli incursions, air attacks and months of bitter Palestinian infighting, the latest surprise Israeli air offensive was unusually traumatic. In all, more than 290 people --most of them *Hamas* police officers, but also 20 children -- were killed in about 300 Israeli air attacks.

On Saturday, shortly after Israel unleashed its deadliest offensive against <u>Hamas</u> and its rocket squads, hospital morgues quickly overflowed. In the initial chaos, the dead were wrapped in blankets and lined up on the ground, as frantic relatives searched for their loved ones.

Yesterday, 25 unclaimed bodies still lay in the morgue of Gaza's largest hospital, Shifa, their faces disfigured beyond identification. In the southern town of Rafah, residents held a mass funeral for 14 people, including two brothers, and a father and son, all of them members of the *Hamas* security forces.

The shelling began at 11:30 a.m. Saturday, a work day in Gaza, just as children returned home from school, **women** shopped in local markets and police directed traffic.

Israeli warplanes unleashed scores of bombs and missiles simultaneously at <u>Hamas</u> security installations. Residents described a veil of dust, smoke and rubble covering one world, and lifting to reveal another filled with horror. <u>Women</u> were running, carrying their children, uniformed students screamed and cars crashed into each other as panicked drivers tried to get away.

The dead and wounded were rushed to hospitals in cars. Some carried blankets filled with body parts. "I have a head here," one man yelled as he rushed into the crowded reception area of Shifa Hospital.

Police directed them to the hospital morgue, but it was already full by the afternoon. Men searching for relatives smacked their heads against the floor in grief and helplessness.

Chaos in Gaza as airstrikes continue

Inside the hospital, some of the floors were slick with blood. Wounded people sat in corridors, shooing away doctors, telling them to treat more urgent cases first.

Israeli strikes hit a new series of targets yesterday: a fuel tanker, a <u>Hamas</u> television station, smuggling tunnels and a central prison in a main <u>Hamas</u> security compound.

The bombing of the prison set free dozens of prisoners, who rushed out from their cells, fleeing *Hamas* police.

One man remained pinned under the rubble, his face smeared partly in white dust, partly in blood, shouting: "Wait for me! Pull me out!"

At times, shock turned into confusion and denial. A news photographer who found the body of a friend under the rubble drove him home, unwilling to believe he was dead.

"My children are wetting the bed, they cry when they hear planes," said Amal Hassan, 38, a mother of three children. "I don't know what's going to happen next. Maybe the next bomb will fall here, maybe the next person killed will be one of us." she said.

Graphic

Photo: adel hana, the associated press, An injured Palestinian prisoner is helped after an Israeli missile hit a security headquarters and prison yesterday in Gaza City.

Load-Date: December 29, 2008



World - Gazan guerillas launch Qassam rockets

Morning Star

November 6, 2008 Thursday

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Length: 225 words

Body

Palestinian guerillas fired 35 Qassam rockets at Israel on Wednesday in response to an Israeli air strike which killed six *Hamas* militants.

Two Israeli <u>women</u> and a 13-year-old girl suffered from shock when at least one rocket landed in Ashkelon, but noone was injured.

Tel Aviv has ordered the full closure of all goods crossings between Israel and Gaza after the first major exchange of fire since a truce took effect in June.

Israel and Palestinian resistance groups reached the Egyptian-mediated ceasefire after months of indirect negotiations.

Hamas government spokesman Taher Nunu condemned the Israeli air strike as a violation of the truce.

Mr Nunu said: "This is a serious breach of the truce understandings reached through Egyptian mediation. We consider this the most serious in a string of breaches."

On Tuesday, Israeli forces killed a <u>Hamas</u> fighter and injured three other militants in a shoot-out during the first major Israeli incursion into Gaza since the ceasefire took effect.

The Israeli army claimed that the operation was "legitimate" because its forces had uncovered a tunnel about 300 yards inside the central Gaza Strip which, it claimed, militants planned to use to abduct Israeli soldiers.

Gaza's <u>Hamas</u> administration insisted that it had not violated the truce and said that its fighters had been acting to prevent Israeli aggression.

Load-Date: November 6, 2008



RATTLED PALESTINIANS BRACE FOR MORE

Daily News (New York)

December 29, 2008 Monday

SPORTS FINAL EDITION

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 4

Length: 275 words

Byline: BY ERICA SILVERMAN in Gaza City and HELEN KENNEDY in New York DAILY NEWS WRITERS

Body

AMID THE LARGELY deserted streets of Gaza City, 32-year-old Belal was in his pizza parlor wrapping drinking glasses one by one.

He was trying to protect them from shattering in the constant building-shuddering reverberations from an Israeli bombardment that showed little sign of ending soon.

"We are paying a heavy price for electing <u>Hamas</u> as our leaders," said the father of four small children, who didn't want to give his last name.

"The goal of the Israeli attacks is to weaken <u>Hamas</u>, to try and turn their supporters against them," he added, wrestling with big metal shutters to try to protect his windows.

He thought it might work. "It is impossible for *Hamas* to succeed as a government now," he said.

Hamas supporters countered that the air strikes will only strengthen support for the militants.

"Rocket fire into Israel is the answer. Martyrdom operations inside Israel are also the answer," said Amad Atiyah, 30. "Israel will cry for these operations."

He was going through the rubble of the destroyed presidential compound, looking for his 32-year-old cousin, a guard for <u>Hamas</u> leader Mahmoud Zahar. Atiyah and a team of others had pulled 40 corpses, including seven *female* secretaries, from the rubble, along with four survivors.

Even before the air strikes began this weekend, life in Gaza had been increasingly difficult.

Israel sealed the borders last year and tightened the blockade Nov. 4, stopping food, fuel and medical supplies from entering the teeming territory of 1.5 million people. Even charities like Oxfam and CARE were kept out, and the United Nations had to stop handing out emergency food rations last month.

RATTLED PALESTINIANS BRACE FOR MORE

Graphic

Israeli soldier prays while atop tank just outside southern border of Gaza Strip. Israel called up 6,500 reservists and began moving armored units to border, paving way for ground invasion that could last several weeks. Photo by AP

Load-Date: December 29, 2008



40 killed in Gaza sanctuary; Israeli mortar shells explode near UN school

The International Herald Tribune
January 7, 2009 Wednesday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1

Length: 862 words

Byline: Taghreed El-Khodary and Isabel Kershner - The New York Times Media Group

Dateline: GAZA

Body

Isabel Kershner reported from Jerusalem. Alan Cowell contributed from Paris.

*

The punishing Israeli offensive against <u>Hamas</u> in Gaza took an even deadlier turn Tuesday, the 11th day of the campaign, when Israeli mortar shells killed up to 40 Palestinians near a United Nations school. Many of those killed, including <u>women</u> and children, had come to the school seeking refuge from other battle zones, witnesses said.

United Nations officials put the initial death toll at 30 and said 55 people had been wounded, with several in critical condition. Palestinian health officials said 40 had been killed.

The carnage, at the Jabaliya refugee camp north of Gaza City, could add urgency to the international efforts to shape a cease-fire.

Even before the incident in Jabaliya, international relief agencies were describing a desperate situation inside the Palestinian enclave, as Israel continued to pound it from the air, sea and land.

The Israeli military said that an initial inquiry indicated that a number of mortar shells had been fired at Israeli forces from within the school compound. The forces responded with mortar shells, said a military spokesman, Ilan Tal, a brigadier-general in the reserves, adding: "They shot back to save their own lives."

The military asserted in a statement that this was not the first time that <u>Hamas</u>, the Islamic militant group that governs Gaza, has fired mortars and rockets from schools, "deliberately using civilians as human shields."

Christopher Gunness, a spokesman for the UN Relief and Works Agency, which offers assistance to registered Palestinian refugees and runs the school, said his organization was calling for an independent inquiry. "Anyone on either side of the confrontation lines found to have violated international humanitarian law must be brought to justice," Gunness said.

A young witness from Jabaliya, Ibrahim Amen, 16, said a man had come to the mosque Tuesday and asked for volunteers to pile sand around the camp "to help protect the fighters." Ibrahim went to help with his brother, Iyad, 20, who was wounded by the Israeli mortar fire.

40 killed in Gaza sanctuary Israeli mortar shells explode near UN school

Ibrahim said that a commander of the military wing of <u>Hamas</u>, Abu Khaled Abu Asker, was in the area at the time and had been killed on the spot. Abu Asker's house had been destroyed in an Israeli strike earlier Tuesday. It was about 100 meters from the school.

On Monday night three Palestinian men were killed when another United Nations school compound was hit by Israeli fire. The United Nations agency said in a statement that more than 400 Palestinians from northern Gaza were taking refuge in the school in Gaza City at the time.

The Israeli Army was given the coordinates of all United Nations schools and other facilities in Gaza, Gunness said, and they were "all very clearly marked."

With the death toll in Gaza now above 600, international efforts to halt the violence appeared to be moving into higher gear.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was to go to the United Nations on Tuesday to help with the international efforts to create a cease-fire, the State Department said.

President Nicolas Sarkozy of France, after seeking to enlist Syria, a key backer of <u>Hamas</u>, in maneuvers toward a cease-fire, extended his tour of the Middle East on Tuesday and was headed back to Egypt.

Egypt, an experienced broker, is a necessary player in any formula for a cease-fire involving Israel and <u>Hamas</u>. A delegation of exiled <u>Hamas</u> leaders who are based in Syria also arrived in Egypt on Tuesday to engage in first contacts since Israel began its military campaign.

Tony Blair, the envoy of the so-called Quartet of Middle East peace makers, said Tuesday that a mechanism for cutting off the supply of arms and money that comes to <u>Hamas</u> through tunnels dug beneath the Egypt-Gaza border could bring a "quick halt" to the Israeli campaign.

"The Egyptians, in principle, are prepared to do this," Blair said on BBC Radio. "They want to do it, they recognize it's in their own interests as well."

Israeli losses have also risen since the ground invasion began Saturday. The military said that three soldiers were killed late Monday night in a "friendly fire" incident when an Israeli tank shell was mistakenly fired at a building they occupied.

Another soldier was killed Monday night in an incident the military said could also have been caused by an Israeli tank shell. On Tuesday a soldier was killed by *Hamas*.

Three civilians and a soldier were killed by rockets fired out of Gaza at southern Israel before the ground campaign began.

Israel has stated that putting an end to the *Hamas* rocket fire is a primary goal of its campaign.

But *Hamas* has continued firing rockets and on Tuesday reached further into Israel than ever before.

A Katyusha-type rocket slammed into the Israeli town of Gadera, about 40 kilometers, or 25 miles, north of the Gaza border and about 30 kilometers south of Tel Aviv.

The rocket landed between houses and one baby was lightly wounded, the Israeli authorities said.

The location was significant for Israelis, since Gadera is considered part of central Israel. The thousands of rockets fired out of Gaza in recent years have all landed in the south.

Load-Date: January 7, 2009



Middle East violence deeper reality for some

University Wire

January 12, 2009 Monday

Copyright 2009 Iowa State Daily via U-Wire

Length: 2011 words

Byline: By James Pusey, Iowa State Daily; SOURCE: Iowa State U.

Dateline: AMES, lowa

Body

On Dec. 27, while most Americans were still caught up in holiday cheer, Omar Manci felt something else: anger.

He watched the television in disgust as the satellite news broadcast from the Middle East displayed images of **women** and children-bodies blown to pieces-being pulled from the rubble of Gaza City.

Manci, a lowa State University senior majoring in accounting, traces his ancestry to Palestine. He said he has good friends in Gaza, whom he has not been able to talk to since Israel began its attack on the area several weeks ago.

"I haven't been able to get a hold of them, I haven't been able to talk to them to see if they're OK. I hope they are and pray to God everyday that they are, but I still haven't found out," Manci said.

On Dec. 27, the Israeli military launched an attack on Gaza in response to repeated missile attacks on southern Israel by <u>Hamas</u>, the governing group in Gaza. To date, Israel's latest round of attacks has killed 898 Palestinians and wounded 3,695, with <u>women</u> and children making up 45 percent of the casualties, according to CNN.

As the bombs continue to drop, many people worldwide are joining the chorus of protesters against Israel's actions, including Manci and other members of the Ames and ISU community.

Manci said he organized two protests in Ames, one on Sunday at the corner of Lincoln Way and Grand Avenue, and another on Monday in front of the Memorial Union.

He said he was disturbed by the way the United States and Western media have responded to the conflict. He said he believes the news coverage has been favoring Israel, and that the world is overlooking the disproportionate and inhumane response of the Israeli military.

"Even if you want to use the fact that <u>Hamas</u> fires rockets into southern Israel as an excuse, it's inexcusable. The infrastructure damage and the amount of death is just unbelievable," Manci said.

Manci said he understands <u>Hamas</u>' frustration because Israel has been treating the Palestinians there unfairly, blocking supplies to Gaza.

"If you corner someone enough they're going to fight back. I think it's provoked by Israel, and I think it's justified by Palestinians to fight back and resist," Manci said.

However, others believe the Israeli attacks on Gaza were necessary for the protection of Israel's civilian population.

Middle East violence deeper reality for some

Michelle Garland Stern, graduate student in curriculum and instruction for educational psychology, was born and raised in Iowa. She gained dual citizenship with Israel in 2001 and spent more than four years living and raising her kids in Haifa. She said she sees Israel's actions as a logical defense.

"What in the hell were the Israelis supposed to do? Missiles are being shot into Israel on a daily basis," Garland said.

In March of 2003, Garland witnessed an attack by a <u>Hamas</u> bomber. She and her three children were on their way to the bus stop when they heard the explosion. As they neared the bus stop, they saw the burning wreckage of what was once a public bus filled with passengers. She said she will never forget what she saw that day.

"It was unreal. It was absolutely unreal. I saw someone without a head on their body," Garland said. "The thing that struck me the most is how much hatred it had to have taken for someone to do this."Â

Fortunately for her, Garland and her children were running late that afternoon. If it hadn't been for a few unexpected phone calls, she and her kids would have been sitting in the path of the explosion.Â

Later, she read online that the mother of the bomber was praised by her neighbors, and was treated to a party with pastries and sweet coffee.

"Just think, they could have had this celebration over the death of me and my children," Garland said.

Richard Mansbach, professor of political science, specializes in foreign policy and said <u>Hamas</u> was among the first groups to orchestrate these types of attacks.

He said he understands the outcry from the Palestinian community in the wake of the Israeli attack on Gaza, but he said the fault does not lie completely with Israel.

"I don't blame them for not being happy about what Israel is doing. But they should probably be even less happy with what their own leaders have done," Mansbach said.

Mansbach said <u>Hamas</u> has been firing rockets into Israel since it took control of Gaza in 2006. In June of 2008, the two sides worked out a six-month truce in which <u>Hamas</u> was expected to halt rocket-fire on Israel, and Israel agreed to lift its blockade on supplies to Gaza.

Mansbach said both sides failed to respect their agreements completely, though both sides disagree about who crossed the line first.

At any rate, the truce expired on Dec. 22. In the following week, more than 300 *Hamas* rockets were fired into southern Israel.Â

According to the BBC, Israel was in favor of prolonging the cease-fire, but <u>Hamas</u> refused the offer because Israel had failed to respect the original terms of the truce.

"It was an absolute invitation to war," Mansbach said.Â

Though he said the loss of civilian life in Gaza is undoubtedly tragic, Mansbach said it could hardly be avoided due to the dense population of Gaza and the fact that the missiles striking southern Israel were launched from the homes of civilians in Gaza.

"You either turn the other cheek and say, 'Keep launching your missiles,' or presumably you strike at where the missiles were launched from," Mansbach said. "In effect, *Hamas* is using their own citizens as human shields."

Manci said this is an unfair argument because *Hamas* is firing its missiles from the same densely populated areas that Israel boxed them into in the first place.Â

But Mansbach said constant rocket-fire is just the beginning of what is at stake for Israel in this conflict.

Middle East violence deeper reality for some

According to the New York Times, the Israelis believe <u>Hamas</u> is being backed by Iran, a country Mansbach said is seeking to increase its influence in the Middle East and is on the verge of obtaining nuclear weapons.

"That's really scary stuff. That's what the Israelis refer to as an existential threat," Mansbach said.

Mansbach said Israel's situation is made more complex by the fact that it not only faces opposition from <u>Hamas</u> to the south, but also from Hezbollah fighters positioned on its northern border. Neither <u>Hamas</u> nor Hezbollah recognizes Israel as a sovereign nation.

"Imagine just for a moment that Iowa was a country and you had two terrorist groups with missiles who refused to recognize you, in Nebraska and Illinois. How do you react?" Mansbach said.

But Manci said this is an unfair comparison as not all countries consider <u>Hamas</u> and Hezbollah terrorist groups, and the Palestinian people see the situation from an entirely different perspective.

"Imagine if someone came in, stole your house, took your land, set up shop there, expanded, made it nicer, prettier and everything. They called it their own, and you have no right to it just because it was taken by force," Manci said.

Garland said Jews and Arabs have both had a constant presence in Palestine for more than 3,000 years, and both sides claim the land as their own.

The conflict between Israel and Palestine has been going on since 1948, when Israel was established as a home for the Jews, while the Palestinian people living there, including Manci's ancestors, were forced to leave their homes.Â

Last summer Manci said he traveled to Palestine and saw his ancestors' homeland for the first time. He is the first member of his family to return since 1948.

After 60 years of conflict in Palestine, Mansbach said a solution to the problem is closer than most people realize.

"I think almost everyone knows what the outcome is going to be within a few kilometers. There's going to be two states," Mansbach said. \hat{A} \hat{A}

The problem is, Mansbach said, though most people favor a two-state solution, Palestine is divided among three groups: Israel, <u>Hamas</u> and Fatah, which presides over the West Bank. Mansbach said attempts at getting the three sides to agree has proved nearly impossible.

Garland said most Israelis support the two-state plan.Â

Manci said the fighting won't stop until Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory comes to an end.

Both said they just want peace.

"I could almost lay out for you what a final agreement would look like," Mansbach said. "The problem is how to get there."

The current conflict

<u>Hamas</u> - <u>Hamas</u> is the smaller of the two main Palestinian political groups. It has been in control of the Gaza Strip since June 2007, after seizing power from the Fatah party in multiple conflicts. <u>Hamas</u> said it fired missiles into Israel in response to Israel blocking supplies to Gaza.

Israel - The state of Israel was established in 1948 and is the world's only Jewish state. A It is bordered by Lebanon, Egypt and Syria, and is also adjacent to Gaza and the West Bank. Israel is a parliamentary democracy led by Prime Minister Ehud Olmert. On Dec. 27 Israel launched an attack on Gaza in response to repeated missile attacks on southern Israel by *Hamas*.

- Information from the New York Times

Timeline of Israel and its relations with neighboring regions

May 14, 1948 - Israel officially established itself as a state after the British Mandate expired, forcing Palestinians out of the area. Israel faced opposition from its Arab neighbors, and on the following day Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq invaded Israel, launching the 1948 Arab-Israeli War.

May 11, 1949 - Israel joined the United Nations.

June 1967 - For years Arab countries refused to acknowledge Israel's independence and intermittent fighting was common. Israel accused Egypt of blocking its access to an important waterway. This launched the Six-Day War between Israel and Egypt, Jordan and Syria, although Algeria, Iraq, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Tunisia contributed to the Arab forces. Israel captured four territories including the Gaza Strip, Golan Heights, Sinai Peninsula and West Bank.

Sept. 1970 - The month is known as Black September as King Hussein bin Talal of Jordan attempts to restore his monarchy from the Palestine Liberation Organization's invasion of his country. Thousands of Palestinian armed forces were killed and the rest were forced to Lebanon.

April 25, 1982 - Israel withdraws from the Sinai Peninsula in accordance with a 1979 Israel-Egypt treaty.Â

Jan. 1991 - Operation "Desert Storm" begins with a U.S. attack on Iraq. Former President Saddam Hussein responds by firing missiles at Israel and Saudi Arabia. Israel does not respond to the attack. In February, Iraq offers a complete withdrawal from Kuwait but insists Israel pull out from all Arab territories it occupies.

Sept. 13, 1993 - A Declaration of Principles, commonly known as the "Oslo Accords," which stated that "a transfer of authority from Israeli military government ... to authorized Palestinians" would begin as soon as the declaration entered into force.

Oct. 26, 1994 - In a peace treaty with Jordan, the international boundaries between the two countries were established as following the Jordan and Yarmouk Rivers, effectively resolving the territorial disputes between the two.

May 25, 2000 - Israel withdraws from southern Lebanon, a territory occupied since 1982.

April 2003 - A quartet among the U.S., EU, U.N. and Russia attempts to bring peace between Israel and Palestine but is thwarted by violence between the two from September 2003 to February 2005.

Feb. 2005 - An agreement is reached and a Palestinian cease-fire is brokered, causing violence in the region to drop significantly.

Summer 2005 - Israel withdraws from the Gaza Strip but maintains control of most access points to the region.

Jan. 2006 - <u>Hamas</u> is elected in to head the Palestinian Legislature, which causes a halt in relations between Israel and the authorities in Palestine. <u>Hamas</u> refuses to recognize Israel's sovereignty, won't honor previous peace agreements between the two countries and is rejected as a legitimate leader by the international community.

- Information for this timeline compiled from the CIA World Factbook, USA Today Gulf War Chronology, the Yale Law School Avalon Project and the United Nations

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Load-Date: January 13, 2009



Israeli offensive in Gaza

The Irish Times

January 6, 2009 Tuesday

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Section: LETTERS; Pg. 13

Length: 2196 words

Body

Madam, - We are well rid of the annus horribilis of 2008. It now looks, however, as if 2009 may be even worse. It certainly is for the unfortunate inhabitants of Gaza.

As I write I am sitting within a hundred miles or so of the conflict watching Al-Jazeera, the only broadcaster providing live TV coverage from the area. I have known both Israel and Palestine well over the past 30 years and have very good friends on both sides, and I am horrified, as they are, by what we are being forced to witness. I have often supported Israel and deplored terror attacks and suicide bombings against her citizens. Not even the most rabid Zionist dare call me either anti-Semitic or anti-Israeli. Indeed at this very moment I have as a guest at my house here in Cyprus one of my close Israeli Jewish friends.

For all the nasty and inflated rhetoric of people like Ahmedinajad in Iran it is actually the Israelis, under the protection of the Washington-Jerusalem axis led by Bush and Olmert, who are driving the Palestinians into the sea. Where does all this horror and barbarism come from? More than 60 years ago Christian Europe was complicit in the Nazi extermination of 6 million Jews as well as hundreds of thousands of gypsies, homosexuals and political dissidents. Europe then attempted to assuage its guilt by helping to create the state of Israel, thus landing our problem in the lap of the completely guiltless Palestinians. Tragically, it seems that, as sometimes happens with individual humans, the abused is becoming the abuser. That is why the massive bombardment from land, sea and air of a civilian population besieged and entrapped within a tiny area carries such sinister resonances of the destruction of the Warsaw Ghetto. It is astonishing that there has been virtually no international condemnation at official level of the bombing of a mosque in Gaza during evening prayers with at least a dozen people militarily murdered in the process. Had this been a church or a synagogue in Israel, one can only imagine the outcry.

Just as was recorded by the great Jewish scholar Richard Klemperer, trapped in Germany in the 130s and 1940s, language itself has become debased. Words must have lost their meaning when persons such as the Israeli Minister Tzipi Livni and the US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice can maintain that "there is no humanitarian crisis in Gaza". Tell that to the mother in Gaza who saw her five daughters blown to pieces in front of her eyes, to the 11-year-Id boy who had his face burnt off by an Israeli incendiary or the 1.5 million Palestinians with virtually no food, water, electricity or medical supplies and indeed no effective shelter from the US-supplied bombs raining down on them from the sky. How dare the incoming Czech presidency purport to speak in the name of Europe in describing the Israeli blitz as defensive rather than offensive? And of course the United States has used its veto once more to prevent any statement emerging from the UN.

I have seen American-accented Israeli spokespersons repeatedly ask how European countries would react if they were subjected to sporadic bomb or missile attacks. For two decades the United Kingdom, both in Northern Ireland and Britain, was subjected to just such sustained attacks by the Provisional IRA. I am very glad to say that they did

Israeli offensive in Gaza

not invade Dundalk or flatten the city of Dublin in a series of air raids. Of course it is to be deplored that Israeli civilians have also become casualties in this downward spiral of tit-for-tat violence. However, when the casualties are running as they now are at 125 to 1, one must question the proportionality of Israeli actions.

I have often raised both in the Senate and in the Foreign Affairs Committee the matter of the human rights protocols attached to the external association agreement between the EU and Israel. So far both our own Government and the EU itself have steadfastly refused to ensure that these human rights provisions are even monitored, let alone implemented.

Alas for suffering humanity. But thank God for the sparks of decency visible even in this terrible conflict. I salute in particular the tremendous moral courage of those Israeli Jews whom I have seen on TV speaking out against the current violence and in support of peace. - Yours, etc,

Senator DAVID NORRIS, Cyprus.

Madam, With reference to the ongoing Irish Times coverage of Israel's military action, including its ground incursion, against *Hamas* in the Gaza Strip, I wish to make the following points:

- 1. The questions I have been asking the Irish people are fundamental to any discussion of Israel's action: "What would you do if Dublin were subjected to a bombardment of 8,000 rockets and mortars similar to that endured by Israeli towns and cities for eight years?" And: "What would you do if you had only 15 seconds to run for shelter from rocket fire, not once or occasionally but almost every day for eight years?"
- 2. Even leading Arab countries such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia, and the chairman of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, have blamed *Hamas* for ending the ceasefire and triggering the current situation.
- 3. The goal of the present ground operation is to destroy the terrorist infrastructure of <u>Hamas</u> the rocket launch sites and the tunnels used to smuggle weapons and explosives into Gaza, in order greatly to reduce the quantity of rockets and mortars fired at the civilian population of southern Israel. We are not interested in the reoccupation of Gaza, but in the creation of a more secure reality for almost a million residents of southern Israel and a life without the constant threat of rocket and mortar fire.
- 4. All civilian deaths in this conflict, whether Palestinian or Israeli, are tragic. The people of Gaza are not our enemies. Israel makes every possible effort to avoid civilian casualties by leafleting and telephoning evacuation warnings to families living in houses used by <u>Hamas</u> as launch pads for rocket fire, or for storage of weapons and explosives.
- It is <u>Hamas</u> that turns these places into military targets; some of its members even boast about the use of <u>women</u> and children as human shields.
- 5. Since Israel withdrew completely from Gaza in 2005, <u>Hamas</u> has been the enemy of normality there, and bears chief responsibility for the so-called "siege". Its rocket fire forced Israel to close the crossings periodically. The Rafah crossing between Egypt and Gaza remains closed because <u>Hamas</u> in 2007 expelled the European Union monitors charged with supervising the crossing under the agreement that accompanied Israel's withdrawal. Egypt refuses to reopen it until <u>Hamas</u> reinstates the European monitors and Palestinian Authority control. Since the present operation began, <u>Hamas</u> has also rejected an Egyptian offer to evacuate injured Palestinians to hospitals in Egypt.
- 6. Israel has acted and continues to act to improve the humanitarian situation. During the ceasefire period, even while smuggling and tunnelling continued, Israel almost doubled the number of truckloads of humanitarian supplies entering Gaza from Israel to 17,000, compared with 9,000 in the six months preceding the ceasefire.
- 7. Israel, a democratic state, is acting in self-defence, whereas <u>Hamas</u>, a terrorist organisation bent on Israel's destruction, stands in the way of peace. Yours, etc,

ZION EVRONY, Ambassador of Israel, Dublin.

Israeli offensive in Gaza

Madam, - Israel is again displaying its outright disregard for international law. One small example of its ruthlessness is more than evident in its programme of dropping leaflets on the people of Gaza warning them to leave their homes which are about to be bombed. Given that Israel has the Gaza Strip surrounded, where do they expect them to go?

It is time to boycott this pariah state. We should send home the Israeli ambassador instead of allowing him space in this paper to peddle his lies and justify Israel's crimes against humanity. - Yours, etc,

L.O. WHITE, Mooncoin, Co Kilkenny.

Madam, - While some would argue that our Government has been unworthy of praise in recent months, Minister for Foreign Affairs Micheál Martin is certainly to be commended for his comments on Israel's actions in Gaza. Mr Martin's comments were reasonably clear by comparison with the mealy-mouthed opinions offered by other governments.

Yet again the Israeli government has executed a grossly disproportionate response to the actions of <u>Hamas</u>, and in doing so has provided <u>Hamas</u> with its most efficient recruiting officer. In the long term, the current actions will do nothing to resolve the "situation", but will in fact make it worse for Israelis and Palestinians alike.

Israel, which regularly likes to point out that it is the only true democracy in the region, must recognise that <u>Hamas</u> was itself democratically elected, and ask the question why. Only when Israel - and indeed the so-called western world - face up to the reasons <u>Hamas</u> has been able to take power democratically in Gaza can the problem start to be resolved.

Our Government, in concert with the EU, and hopefully America under its new leadership, must bring Israel to realise that it cannot beat a nation into submission.

The only workable solution will come through dialogue. - Yours, etc,

WILLIAM O'CONNELL, Poynstown, Killincarrig, Co Wicklow.

Madam, - Here is a question for all those demonstrating on behalf of the Palestinians. Which Palestinians do you support? The "moderate" Palestinians of the Fatah-controlled Palestine Authority, with which Israel is in negotiations based on a two-state solution, or the extremist *Hamas* Palestinians who control the Gaza Strip?

<u>Hamas</u> has been labelled a terrorist organization by the UN, the EU and the US, and has refused to recognize the existence of Israel. Not only did it take control of Gaza by an illegal coup in which many Fatah operatives were killed and injured, but during the current conflict, according to Khaled Abu Toameh, the Jerusalem Post's Arab Affairs correspondent, <u>Hamas</u> has murdered 35 Fatah prisoners and "kneecapped" or mutilated 75 more detainees.

So let's be clear, there is a vast difference between supporting the Palestine Authority and supporting <u>Hamas</u> in Gaza. The former want a negotiated settlement with Israel while the latter wants to destroy Israel and then start a world-wide Caliphate. - Yours, etc,

JACK COHEN, Netanya, Israel.

Madam, - The World Press Photo of the year award 2006 was given to photographer Spencer Platt, who captured an image of four stylishly dressed young <u>women</u> and their driver cruising through the rubble of war-torn Beirut in a convertible. The photograph, not surprisingly, caused controversy.

Nikola Solic's photograph in your edition of January 2nd is equally striking, and will surely be remembered as an iconic image of the tragedy that is Gaza 2009. The image is of a group of young, clearly well-off Israelis, five *females* and one male, surveying from a hilltop distance an Israeli air strike on the Gaza Strip. One young woman is laughing heartily; another gazes languidly into the distance, and has a mobile phone glued to her ear; another, armed with binoculars, is looking, presumably, at a scene of devastation. An extraordinary photograph that narrates, even better than words can do, the attitudes of a nation. - Yours, etc,

Israeli offensive in Gaza

CIARAN COSGROVE, Glenageary, Co Dublin.

Madam, - Much of the media and several of your letter-writers seem to have forgotten that Israel and the Palestinian Authority had an internationally supported workable peace until <u>Hamas</u> decided to abandon it, just as they did the recent ceasefire. Several commentators who wanted no negotiating with Sinn Féin-IRA unless there was a ceasefire seem to think Israel should negotiate with <u>Hamas</u>, whose avowed determination is to drive Israelis from the Middle East. And in all the talk of proportionality, one mustn't forget who it is that supports <u>Hamas</u>. - Yours, etc,

PETER LYDON, Upper Rathmines Road, Dublin 6.

Madam, - Nadav Cohen of the Israeli Embassy (January 3rd) suggests that one of the elements that precipitated his country's current slaughter of Palestinians - using US-supplied aircraft, let us not forget - was the blowing-up of a border fence.

He is ready to ignore the fact that there should be no fences at all around Gaza; that fences, walls, refusal of food and medicines, targeted murder of <u>Hamas</u> leaders and other such events have turned Gaza into a ghetto from which its citizens have every right to attempt to escape, and every right to fight for their basic dignity. He has forgotten his history if he cannot see - as many enlightened Israelis can, thankfully - the dreadful comparisons between what is happening around Gaza and the dark military violence visited on the ghettos of Poland six decades ago.

Thus has Israel, an abused child, been raised to become the abuser, complete with self-justification of its actions and an unwillingness to listen to others. One excuse for violence follows upon another. Does this rage not also have its root in Israel's deep sense of guilt at having displaced so many Palestinian people in order to establish its own identity? No, Mr Cohen, it's got nothing to do with blowing up a fence. - Yours, etc,

FRED JOHNSTON, Circular Road, Galway.

Load-Date: January 6, 2009



IDF likely to expand Gaza op before cease-fire is imposed. Army impatient for government to decide on next move. Commander of Izzadin Kassam's rocket division killed in strike. Gilad to Cairo tomorrow to seal Egyptian commitment to stop smuggling

The Jerusalem Post
January 11, 2009 Sunday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1

Length: 1119 words

Byline: YAAKOV KATZ, AP contributed to this report

Highlight: Lead Story

Body

The IDF will likely expand its operations in the Gaza Strip in the coming days in an effort to press Egypt to declare its readiness to stop the weapons smuggling from the Sinai Peninsula into Gaza, defense officials said Saturday.

The IDF is currently operating in the northern Gaza Strip but on Saturday, the air force dropped leaflets throughout Gaza warning residents of an impending expansion of the operation.

One possibility is that the IDF will move deeper into Gaza City. Another possibility is that the IDF will push into southern Gaza.

"The IDF will escalate the operation in the Gaza Strip," the leaflets read in Arabic. "The IDF is not working against the people of Gaza but against *Hamas* and the terrorists only. Stay safe by following our orders."

The leaflets urged Gazans not to help *Hamas*, and to stay away from its members.

As Operation Cast Lead entered its third week, senior military sources expressed concern that if the political echelon did not immediately decide on its future direction, IDF soldiers would become static targets and lose the initiative to *Hamas*.

"The troops cannot just stand and wait," one officer explained. "They always need to be on the move."

On Monday, head of the Defense Ministry's Diplomatic- Security Bureau, Amos Gilad, is scheduled to travel to Cairo for talks with the Egyptians about the weapons smuggling, which Israel insists must be stopped before it ends the Gaza offensive.

"The Egyptians understand that they need to deal with the smuggling," a senior official said. "While in public they deny that the weapons come into Gaza through the tunnels, in private they recognize that this is the truth."

On Saturday, German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier met with Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit to advance the issue. Steinmeier is to come to Tel Aviv on Sunday and meet with Defense Minister Ehud Barak.

IDF likely to expand Gaza op before cease-fire is imposed. Army impatient for government to decide on next move. Commander of Izzadin Kassam's rocket division k....

Officials said that Steinmeier would likely arrive with positive impressions from his talks in Cairo, where he received the impression that the Egyptians were willing to begin confronting the tunnel industry in Rafah.

The officials said that Egypt was not likely to agree to the deployment of a multinational or American force along its border with Gaza or even sign a memorandum of understanding with Israel regarding the tunnels.

"Both of these initiatives would be interpreted as signs of weakness by people who oppose the regime of Hosni Mubarak in Egypt," another defense official said.

What was likely to happen, the officials said, was that the Egyptians would receive technical support from foreign countries in detecting the tunnels. The US has already sent combat engineers to advise the Egyptians and the Germans have offered them equipment as well.

On Saturday, the air force bombed a rocket squad and killed Amir Mansi, a senior member of *Hamas*'s military wing, Izzadin Kassam, and commander of its rocket division in Gaza City.

Mansi was behind dozens of rocket attacks against Israel in recent weeks, a senior IDF officer said. Mansi had close ties to Hizbullah, and was known to receive information from the group on a regular basis, including learning how to fire rockets, the officer added.

Mansi was killed while attempting to fire mortars at troops in Jebl Rice, in the northern Gaza Strip. Two other <u>Hamas</u> gunmen were also hit.

The IDF officer said the fact that Mansi was personally involved in attacking Israeli troops showed that Izzadin Kassam was in "serious distress," as senior *Hamas* operatives would not ordinarily venture onto the battlefield.

Entire <u>Hamas</u> companies had been wiped out, and some <u>Hamas</u> fighters had gone AWOL or fled the fighting, the officer said.

"We know of complete battalions that have just been erased," the top officer said. "They are afraid to come out and fight. That's why Mansi went out to fire rockets on his own."

The officer also said that <u>Hamas</u> had replicated the "nature reserves" - including tunnel systems and rocket launchers - that the IDF found in southern Lebanon in 2006, this time within built-up areas in Gaza City.

The group had built the tunnels so that if the IDF penetrated further into the city, it would encounter hand- to-hand resistance.

According to the officer, at least 300 <u>Hamas</u> gunmen had been killed since the ground forces stage of Operation Cast Lead began eight days ago. The IDF estimate, he said, was backed up by intelligence.

On Saturday, the Palestinian death toll since Operation Cast Lead began on December 27 passed 800.

Ten IDF soldiers have been killed since the operation began, nine in Gaza fighting and one in a <u>Hamas</u> mortar strike on the IDF base at Nahal Oz. Three Israeli civilians have been killed.

Twenty-three rockets were fired at the South on Saturday. Two that fell in Ashkelon left one person moderately wounded, three people lightly hurt, and caused extensive damage to homes.

Some 20 soldiers were lightly wounded in fighting over the weekend.

More than 15 terrorists were killed overnight Friday, the IDF said. Aircraft attacked more than 40 targets, including 10 rocket-launching sites, weapons-storage facilities, smuggling tunnels, an anti-aircraft missile launcher and gunmen.

IDF likely to expand Gaza op before cease-fire is imposed. Army impatient for government to decide on next move. Commander of Izzadin Kassam's rocket division k....

The dropping of the leaflets appeared to be partly a psychological tactic. Defense officials are prepared for a third stage of the offensive, in which soldiers would push much further into Gaza, but are waiting for approval from the government.

The officials said the army had also planned a fourth stage that called for a full reoccupation of Gaza and toppling *Hamas*.

On Saturday night, IDF infantry, tanks, artillery, engineers and intelligence branch personnel were engaging *Hamas* gunmen. Snipers fired at soldiers from the Paratroopers Brigade. The troops fired back and reported a hit.

Mortar shells were fired at soldiers. Troops returned mortar fire.

Between 1 p.m. and 4 p.m. on Saturday, the IDF ceased fire to allow the transfer of humanitarian aid into Gaza. This "humanitarian corridor" has been observed daily since Wednesday.

In the day's bloodiest reported incident, an Israeli tank shell killed nine people in a garden outside a home in the northern Gaza town of Jabalya, said Adham el-Hakim, administrator of Kamal Adwan hospital.

The IDF disputed the account, saying it did not carry out attacks in that area on Saturday.

Israel has come under international criticism for the rising number of civilian casualties. Palestinian paramedics said the nine people killed in the garden were from the same clan and included two children and two **women**.

"Residents brought them to the hospital in a civilian car. They put them all in the trunk because their bodies were mangled," Hakim said.

Separately, a woman was killed by tank fire in the nearby town of Beit Lahiya.

Graphic

2 photos: SOLDIERS MAKE preparations at a staging area just outside Gaza yesterday. IDF operations create smoke in Gaza City. (Credit: Dan Balilty/AP; AP)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011



An unusual war, everyone wins

Prince George Citizen (British Columbia)

January 10, 2009 Saturday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 4
Length: 640 words
Byline: The Citizen

Body

Admittedly, this whole Gaza Strip situation looks pretty bad.

But, the fact is, it's a war that everybody wins.

The Israeli government wins because it's an election year in that country and nothing says "we're doing something" like air strikes, artillery and an armoured assault. <u>Hamas</u>, the Islamic fundamentalist group that rules the Gaza, has been firing rockets into Israel for months but, with George W. Bush a limping canard and American foreign policy set to change under Barack Obama, the window was small but perfect just recently for a Falklands-type action that would whip voters to the ballot box.

The Israeli armed forces win because they get to spit out the nasty taste of their disastrous incursion into Lebanon in 2006. There are no borders to worry about and nowhere for <u>Hamas</u> to go. As long as it keeps civilian casualties to a "reasonable" level -- and since <u>Hamas</u> is hiding in an urban area, what's reasonable? -- it'll pretty much be able to have its way in the Gaza Strip until it's satisfied.

<u>Hamas</u> wins because it's unlikely Israel will raze the entire Strip to the ground and, as such, the group will still be intact when it's all over. It'll be able to claim it stood against one of those most formidable armies on earth, it will have once again provoked Israel into an aggressive response and it will be able to claim it is the face of Palestinians resisting Israeli oppression. Its patron, Iran, will be able to bask in the spectacle of a western-backed democracy killing innocent <u>women</u> and children (notwithstanding the gunmen it supports hiding behind them), giving it more material to spread its anti-Semitic lies and its fundamentalist hate.

<u>Hamas</u> will win its next election -- who else will protect Palestinians living there by lobbing explosives at Israeli families? -- and Iran will have another bargaining chip to play in the international arena.

Politicians and governments around the world win because they get to wander onto the stage of history and play whatever part they want for another chapter in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Freshly-coined Canadian Foreign Minister Peter Kent chose the staunch defender of Israel role, shaking his head at the horror and pointing his finger at *Hamas* for endangering its own civilians. The minister looks decisive, flashes the hard-on-terrorism look, and, best of all, gives the impression he knows where the Gaza Strip is and is mighty concerned at a mighty important piece of foreign policy. Even Liberal leader Michael Ignatieff got some ink, saying Canada shouldn't touch *Hamas* "with a 10-foot pole."

An unusual war, everyone wins

The media wins because there are lots of great visuals (mourning widows, billowing smoke), endless talking heads to chatter with, tons of background material and plenty of chewy moral questions to ruminate over. Is Israel right to respond?

What level of response is appropriate? Why can't *Hamas* behave?

Is the terrorist organization really intent on wiping a nation born from the Holocaust off the face of the earth, or are they just misunderstood?

And the best part is editorialists can use the same material they used the last time all this happened. The main problem is figuring out a way to type while wringing one's hands at man's inhumanity to man.

The only losers are Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip, who have been living under an Israeli blockade that's made food, electricity and money scarce and have to sit in the middle of all this; Israeli civilians who will still end up scrambling to bomb shelters if they're lucky or suffer another wave of suicide attacks if they're not; and the peace process, which once again was making achingly small steps toward a ladder, only to tread on another massive snake.

Because that's what's all this is -- an endless game of snakes and ladders. And the people who have the least to lose keep rolling the dice.

Load-Date: January 12, 2009



Israel tightens its grip on Gaza Strip; Dateline: Gaza January 12, 2009

Daily Post (North Wales)

January 13, 2009 Tuesday

North Wales Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 19

Length: 482 words

Byline: MICHAEL McHUGH

Body

ISRAEL stepped up its attacks on Gaza yesterday as it considered whether to escalate its devastating two-week offensive.

But despite the tightening Israeli cordon <u>Hamas</u> militants still managed to fire a rocket which struck near the southern town of Kiryat Gat but caused no casualties.

The army announced yesterday that it had begun sending reserve units into Gaza to assist thousands of ground forces already in the territory, a strong signal it is planning to step up the offensive, which has already killed 870 Palestinians.

Thirteen Israelis, including 10 soldiers, have also died.

With Israeli troops already surrounding Gaza's main population centres, Israeli leaders have given mixed signals on how much further the army is ready to push, saying the operation is close to achieving its goals but vowing to press forward with overwhelming force.

Israeli leaders are expected to decide in the next day or two on whether to push the offensive into a third phase - in which the army takes over larger areas of Gaza.

This move would require the use of thousands of reserve units massed on the border with Gaza.

A push into densely crowded urban areas would threaten the lives of many more civilians. More than 20,000 Palestinians have already fled Gaza's rural border areas and crowded into nearby towns, staying with relatives and at UN schools turned into makeshift shelters.

Israeli security officials believe they have struck hard at <u>Hamas</u>, killing hundreds of the Islamic militant group's fighters, including top commanders. The director of the Shin Bet security agency told the Cabinet on Sunday that <u>Hamas</u> leaders in Gaza are ready to surrender.

The army also says <u>Hamas</u> has been avoiding set battles against the advancing Israelis, resorting instead to guerrilla tactics as its fighters melt into crowded residential areas.

Page 2 of 2

Israel tightens its grip on Gaza Strip Dateline: Gaza January 12, 2009

An army spokeswoman said residential districts in Gaza were riddled with booby traps and explosives, and in some cases dummies were placed at apartment entrances to simulate militants and rigged to explode if soldiers approach.

Hamas has vowed to continue fighting.

Israeli ground forces made their deepest foray yet into Gaza City yesterday with tanks rolling into streets supported by infantry.

The army "is advancing more into urban areas," the spokeswoman said.

"Since the majority of the *Hamas* militants are pretty much in hiding in those places, mainly urban places, then we operate in those areas."

International aid groups have repeatedly said Israel must do more to protect Palestinian civilians, who are believed to make up about half of the dead.

POLICE yesterday arrested five antiwar protesters outside the Northern Ireland offices of US defence firm Raytheon.

Nine <u>women</u> chained themselves together on the top floor of the building at the science and technology park in Londonderry in protest at the Israeli offensive in Gaza.

Graphic

Smoke from the renewed Israeli bombardment obscures the besieged Palestinian city yesterday

Load-Date: January 13, 2009



Murder before your very eyes

Asian Image January 4, 2009

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Section: WORLD NEWS (WORLD)

Length: 540 words

Byline: Asian Image reporter

Body

If you were to watch your television screens over the past week you would think there is a war going on in Gaza.

That there are in fact two opposing sides and in this war Israel is simply defending it's borders and it's people. We are told this is a war between *Hamas* 'militants' and the democratic nation that is Israel.

The news channels many of whom have been barred from entering Gaza continue to give us a false account of what is happening on the ground. For all their journalistic integrity why do they continue to tell us that this is in fact a war between two equally equipped sides?

After a week when <u>women</u> and children have been murdered our news channels are more content with reporting that it was the fault of <u>Hamas</u> that this took place in the first place.

It was <u>Hamas</u> who started this war and it is only <u>Hamas</u> who can end it. If <u>Hamas</u> don't want to negotiate then the people of Gaza will die in their hundreds and thousands more will be bombed to smithereens.

There is no mention that of the fact that over the years Palestinian land has been stolen on a daily basis. No mention of Israeli settlements. No mention that Israel has more weapons of mass destruction that any other nation in the middle east.

There is also no mention of how Gaza has been enclosed for many months and is nothing more than an open air prison. There is no mention of how Gaza is completely locked out from the rest of the world with no water or power.

If this was occurring anywhere else in the world there would be outrage from governments. There would be UN resolutions in their dozens and politicians would be lining-up to condemn the attacks.

As soon as the ground offensive began on Saturday night we were presented with another series of baseless statements which news channels were more than willing to report on as facts without question.

We were told how Israel has leafleted residents and told them to 'leave'. Where the residents are supposed to run too when Gaza is imprisoned on all sides is anyone's guess.

There were repeated reports of how Israel was keen maintain humanitarian supplies into Gaza without actually giving us evidence of that aid was.

Murder before your very eyes

There has also been a concerted effort to justify the killing of innocent people. It is okay that over 400 people have died in Gaza due to military shelling because *Hamas* is in power.

Any mention of Israeli aggresion must be accompanied by a statement of *Hamas* extremism and rocket attacks.

The truth even the British public has realised is that this is simply another attempt to grab land and push the Palestinian people into extinction. There is no intention on the part of Israel for any sort of peaceful resolution. There is one aim and one aim only. To remove what is left of this fragmented population from their borders.

This is not a war of any sort. This is murder and genocide before our very eyes and it is sickening to see our governments sit by and tell is it is something else.

Does anyone in the world actually believe that if there were no rocket attacks of any sort or someone else was in charge in Gaza that peace would prevail?

Strategically Israel must survive by any means necessary and if that means the west has to sacrifice all it's ideals for this to come about then so be it.

Load-Date: January 4, 2009



Ceasefire plan fails to halt bloodshed; Israel contemplates expanded offensive in Gaza

The Vancouver Sun (British Columbia)

January 10, 2009 Saturday

Final Edition

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Section: CANADA & WORLD; Pg. B10

Length: 577 words

Byline: Matthew Fisher, Canwest News Service

Dateline: SDEROT, Israel

Body

A major new Israeli ground offensive in Gaza was still being contemplated Friday after Israel and <u>Hamas</u> both rejected a ceasefire call by the United Nations Security Council and continued shooting at each other.

After his war cabinet dismissed the non-binding UN resolution, which passed 14-0 in New York on Thursday with the U.S. abstaining, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said in a statement that his army, air force and navy "would continue operations" against the Palestinian territory.

It was not made public after the cabinet meeting whether Olmert's war cabinet had voted on or approved a plan to broaden the war by sending more ground troops into Gaza. Thousands of reservists were placed on alert in case such an escalation gets the green light.

Referring to more than 30 rockets and mortars that were fired into southern Israel from the narrow coastal strip on Friday, Olmert said this "proves" the UN motion was "not practical and will not be honoured in actual fact by the Palestinian murder organizations."

For its part <u>Hamas</u>, which has ruled Gaza since staging a bloody coup against the Fatah Movement in 2007, also announced through three mid-ranking officials that it would ignore the move by the Security Council. As Raafat Morra, <u>Hamas</u>'s spokesman in Lebanon, told Agence France-Presse the resolution "does not suit us because it is not in the best interest of the Palestinian people."

Israel has demanded an end to rocket attacks from Gaza. <u>Hamas</u> has, in turn, insisted that all Israeli forces quit the territory and that all its border crossings be reopened. The UN resolution envisaged a cease-fire that would result in the full withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza and an unhindered flow of humanitarian aid shipments to the Palestinians, as demanded by <u>Hamas</u> and an end to all rocket attacks and to the smuggling of arms and ammunition into the territory from Egypt.

After night fell Friday, Israel pressed its current offensive, firing salvos of phosphorous shells into Gaza. This created hazy conditions that may make it easier for its ground forces to operate safely.

Ceasefire plan fails to halt bloodshed; Israel contemplates expanded offensive in Gaza

After meetings in Tel Aviv on Friday, the UN announced it would reopen humanitarian corridors in Gaza in the near future after receiving fresh assurances of safe passage from Israel for its workers and vehicles. Humanitarian aid deliveries had been suspended on Thursday after two truck drivers were killed by what the UN said was an Israeli tank attack.

Against most expectations, demonstrations against the Israeli offensive in the West Bank had been fairly muted until Friday when thousands of worshippers left Friday prayers across the larger and more prosperous of the two Palestinian territories. However, the protests were marred by clashes between supporters of <u>Hamas</u> and Fatah, which continues to run the West Bank.

The death toll in Gaza since fighting began on Dec. 27 surpassed 784 on Friday, with <u>women</u> and children making up about 40 per cent of the dead, according to Reuters, which cited health officials in the enclave. Thirteen Israelis have died, including 10 soldiers.

Three <u>Hamas</u> leaders went to Cairo on Friday to discuss a Franco-Egyptian peace proposal that had been discussed 24 hours earlier by a senior Israeli official in the Egyptian capital.

Israeli newspapers have speculated that the joint proposal by Paris and Cairo was foundering over Egypt's refusal to accept international forces on its territory to monitor smuggling tunnels into Gaza.

Graphic

Colour Photo: David Silverman; Getty Images; A large explosion rocks the northern Gaza Strip during an Israeli air attack against the Palestinian town of Beit Hanoun Friday.;

Load-Date: January 10, 2009



<u>Feature - View From Israel - Moral insanity and slaughter; How Israel's</u> propaganda has conned its own leadership

Morning Star January 12, 2009 Monday

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Length: 2001 words **Byline:** Uri Avnery

Body

Nearly 70 years ago, in the course of World War II, a heinous crime was committed in the city of Leningrad.

For more than 1,000 days, a gang of extremists called the Red Army held millions of the town's inhabitants hostage and provoked retaliation from the German Wehrmacht from inside the population centres. The Germans had no alternative but to bomb and shell the population and to impose a total blockade, which caused the death of hundreds of thousands.

Some time before that, a similar crime had been committed in England. The Churchill gang hid among the population of London, misusing the millions of citizens as a human shield. Germany was compelled to send its Luftwaffe and reluctantly reduce the city to ruins. They called it the Blitz.

This is the description that would now appear in the history books if nazi Germany had won the war. Absurd? No more than the daily descriptions in Israel's media, which are being repeated ad nauseam. The <u>Hamas</u> terrorists use the inhabitants of Gaza as "hostages" and exploit the <u>women</u> and children as "human shields." They leave us no alternative but to carry out massive bombardments in which, to our deep sorrow, thousands of <u>women</u>, children and unarmed men are killed and injured.

In this war, as in any modern war, propaganda plays a major role. The disparity between the forces, between the Israeli army, with its aeroplanes, gunships, drones, warships, artillery and tanks, and the few thousand lightly armed <u>Hamas</u> fighters, is one to a thousand, perhaps one to a million. In the political arena, the gap between them is even wider. But in the propaganda war, the gap is almost infinite.

Almost all the Western media initially repeated the official Israeli propaganda line. They almost entirely ignored the Palestinian side of the story, not to mention the daily demonstrations of the Israeli peace camp.

The rationale of the Israeli government - "the state must defend its citizens against the Qassam rockets" - has been accepted as the whole truth. The view from the other side, that the Qassams are a retaliation for the siege that starves the 1.5 million inhabitants of the Gaza Strip, was not mentioned at all.

Only when the horrible scenes from Gaza started to appear on Western TV screens did world public opinion gradually begin to change.

True, Western and Israeli TV channels showed only a tiny fraction of the dreadful events that appear 24 hours every day on al-Jazeera's Arabic channel, but one picture of a dead baby in the arms of its terrified father is more

Feature - View From Israel - Moral insanity and slaughter How Israel 's propaganda has conned its own leadership

powerful than 1,000 elegantly constructed sentences from an Israeli army spokesman. And that is what is decisive in the end.

War - every war - is the realm of lies. Whether called propaganda or psychological warfare, everybody accepts that it is right to lie for one's country. Anyone who speaks the truth runs the risk of being branded a traitor.

The trouble is that propaganda is most convincing for the propagandist himself. And, after you convince yourself that a lie is the truth and falsification reality, you can no longer make rational decisions.

An example of this process surrounds the most shocking atrocity of this war so far - the shelling of the UN Fakhura school in Jabaliya refugee camp.

Immediately after the incident became known throughout the world, the Israeli army "revealed" that <u>Hamas</u> fighters had been firing mortars from near the school entrance. As proof, it released an aerial photo which indeed showed the school and the mortar. But, within a short time, the official army liar had to admit that the photo was more than a year old. It was a falsification.

Later, the official liar claimed that "our soldiers were shot at from inside the school." Barely a day passed before the army had to admit to UN personnel that this was a lie too. Nobody had shot from inside the school and no <u>Hamas</u> fighters were inside the school, which was full of terrified refugees.

But the admission made hardly any difference any more. By that time, the Israeli public was completely convinced that "they shot from inside the school" and TV announcers stated this as a simple fact.

So it went with the other atrocities. Every baby metamorphosed, in the act of dying, into a <u>Hamas</u> terrorist. Every bombed mosque instantly became a <u>Hamas</u> base, every apartment building an arms cache, every school a terror command post, every civilian government building a "symbol of <u>Hamas</u> rule." Thus the Israeli army retained its purity as the "most moral army in the world."

The truth is that the atrocities are a direct result of the war plan. This reflects the personality of Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak, a man whose way of thinking and actions are clear evidence of what is called "moral insanity," a sociopathic disorder.

The real aim, apart from gaining seats in the coming elections, is to terminate the rule of <u>Hamas</u> in the Gaza Strip. In the imagination of the planners, <u>Hamas</u> is an invader which has gained control of a foreign country. The reality is, of course, entirely different.

The <u>Hamas</u> movement won the majority of the votes in the eminently democratic elections that took place in the West Bank, east Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip.

It won because the Palestinians had come to the conclusion that Fatah's peaceful approach had gained precisely nothing from Israel - neither a freeze of the settlements, nor release of the prisoners, nor any significant steps toward ending the occupation and creating the Palestinian state.

<u>Hamas</u> is deeply rooted in the population not only as a resistance movement fighting the foreign occupier, like the Irgun and the Stern Group were for Jews, but also as a political and religious body that provides social, educational and medical services.

From the point of view of the population, the <u>Hamas</u> fighters are not a foreign body, but the sons of every family in the Gaza Strip and the other Palestinian regions. They do not "hide behind the population." The population views them as their only defenders.

Therefore, the whole operation is based on erroneous assumptions. Turning life into living hell does not cause the population to rise up against *Hamas*. On the contrary, it unites behind *Hamas* and reinforces its determination not

Feature - View From Israel - Moral insanity and slaughter How Israel 's propaganda has conned its own leadership

to surrender. The population of Leningrad did not rise up against Stalin any more than the Londoners rose up against Churchill.

Those who gave the order for such a war with such methods in a densely populated area knew that it would cause dreadful slaughter of civilians. Apparently that did not touch them. Or they believed that its victims "will change their ways" and "it will sear their consciousness," so that in future they will not dare to resist Israel.

A top priority for the planners was the need to minimise casualties among the soldiers, knowing that the mood of a large part of the pro-war public would change if reports of such casualties came in. That is what happened in Lebanon wars I and II.

This consideration played an especially important role because the entire war is a part of the election campaign. Barak, who gained in the polls in the first days of the war, knew that his ratings would collapse if pictures of dead soldiers filled the TV screens.

So a new doctrine was applied - to avoid losses among our soldiers by the total destruction of everything in their path. The planners were not only ready to kill 80 Palestinians to save one Israeli soldier, as has happened, but also 800. The avoidance of casualties on our side is the overriding commandment, which is causing record numbers of civilian casualties on the other side. That means the conscious choice of an especially cruel kind of warfare. This is its Achilles heel.

A person without imagination such as Barak - his election slogan is "Not a nice guy, but a leader" - cannot imagine how decent people around the world react to actions like the killing of whole extended families, the destruction of houses over the heads of their inhabitants, the rows of boys and girls in white shrouds ready

TURN TO PAGE 8

7a [BX] FROM PAGE 7

for burial, the reports about people bleeding to death over days because ambulances are not allowed to reach them, the killing of doctors and medics on their way to save lives, the killing of UN drivers bringing in food.

The pictures of the hospitals, with the dead, the dying and the injured lying together on the floor for lack of space, have shocked the world. No argument has any force next to an image of a wounded little girl lying on the floor, twisting with pain and crying out: "Mama! Mama!"

The planners thought that they could stop the world from seeing these images by forcibly preventing press coverage.

The Israeli journalists, to their shame, agreed to be satisfied with the reports and photos provided by the army as if they were authentic news, while they themselves remained miles away from the events. Foreign journalists were not allowed in either, until they protested and were taken for quick tours in selected and supervised groups.

But, in a modern war, such a sterile manufactured view cannot completely exclude all others - the cameras are inside the strip, in the middle of the hell and cannot be controlled. Al-Jazeera broadcasts the pictures around the clock and reaches every home.

The battle for the TV screen is one of the decisive battles of the war.

Hundreds of millions of Arabs from Mauritania to Iraq, more than a billion Muslims from Nigeria to Indonesia, see the pictures and are horrified.

This has a strong impact on the war. Many of the viewers see the rulers of Egypt, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority as collaborators with Israel in carrying out these atrocities against their Palestinian brothers.

The security services of the Arab regimes are registering a dangerous ferment among the people.

Feature - View From Israel - Moral insanity and slaughter How Israel 's propaganda has conned its own leadership

Egyptian President Hosny Mubarak, the most exposed Arab leader because of his closing of the Rafah crossing in the face of terrified refugees, started to pressure the decision-makers in Washington, who, until that time, had blocked all calls for a ceasefire. They, in turn, began to understand the menace to vital US interests in the Arab world and suddenly changed their attitude, causing consternation among the complacent Israeli diplomats.

People with moral insanity cannot really understand the motives of normal people and must guess their reactions. "How many divisions has the Pope?" Stalin sneered. "How many divisions have people of conscience?" Barak may well be asking.

As it turns out, they do have some. Not numerous. Not very quick to react. Not very strong and organised. But, at a certain moment, when the atrocities overflow and masses of protesters come together, that can decide a war.

The failure to grasp the nature of <u>Hamas</u> has caused a failure to grasp the predictable results. Not only is Israel unable to win the war, <u>Hamas</u> cannot lose it.

Even if the Israeli army were to succeed in killing every <u>Hamas</u> fighter to the last man, even then <u>Hamas</u> would win. The <u>Hamas</u> fighters would be seen as the paragons of the Arab nation, the heroes of the Palestinian people, models for emulation by every youngster in the Arab world. The West Bank would fall into the hands of <u>Hamas</u> like a ripe fruit, Fatah would drown in a sea of contempt, the Arab regimes would be threatened with collapse.

If the war ends with <u>Hamas</u> still standing, bloodied but unvanquished, in the face of the mighty Israeli military machine, it will look like a fantastic victory, a victory of mind over matter.

What will be seared into the consciousness of the world will be the image of Israel as a blood-stained monster, ready at any moment to commit war crimes and not prepared to abide by any moral restraints. This will have severe consequences for our long-term future, our standing in the world, our chance of achieving peace and quiet.

In the end, this war is a crime against ourselves too, a crime against the state of Israel.

- Uri Avnery is an Israeli journalist, peace activist and former Knesset member. He is one of the founders of Gush Shalom, a broad-based Israeli peace group.

Load-Date: January 12, 2009



Israeli troops flood Gaza

Herald Sun (Australia)

January 13, 2009 Tuesday

2 - SECOND Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 22

Length: 302 words

Body

ISRAELI infantry clashed with Islamist militants across Gaza as the death toll in the war on *Hamas* passed 900.

Israel sent reservists to boost its ground forces while talks on ending the 17-day-old war plodded on in Egypt.

At least six people were reported killed, medics said.

Israeli troops pushed deeper into Gaza's main city as planes carried out nearly 60 strikes to combat Palestinian rocket fire, which has continued despite the offensive.

Israeli TV said the army had begun sending in some of the thousands of reservists called up when the war began, and an army spokesman said they would be increasingly ``integrated" into combat units.

<u>Hamas</u> fired three rockets and mortars that crashed inside Israel without causing injuries, the army said.

Civilians again fell victim yesterday. Two <u>women</u> and four children were killed in a strike on a house in Beit Lahiya, medics said.

Israeli officials suggested the offensive might be approaching its end despite the rejection of a United Nations Security Council resolution calling for a ceasefire.

"The decision of the Security Council doesn't give us much leeway," Deputy Defence Minister Matan Vilnai said.

Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said Israel was nearing its goals, but fighting would continue for now.

`Israel is approaching these goals, but more patience and determination are required," he told Cabinet.

Hamas, which also ignored the Security Council resolution, has vowed to fight on.

Egypt yesterday ramped up pressure on Israel by summoning its ambassador to demand it comply with the Security Council resolution and open humanitarian corridors.

It also held talks with <u>Hamas</u>, which agreed ``on the importance of . . . stopping the shedding of Palestinian blood as soon as possible".

[&]quot;Thus it would seem that we are close to ending the operation altogether."

Israeli troops flood Gaza

Load-Date: January 13, 2009



Israeli forces set for Gaza ground assault

Northern Territory News (Australia)

December 30, 2008 Tuesday

1 - Edition

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Section: WORLD; Pg. 11

Length: 246 words

Body

GAZA CITY: Israel has widened its deadliest-ever air offensive against Gaza's <u>Hamas</u> rulers, bombarding smuggling tunnels and a central prison, sending more tanks and artillery toward the Gaza border and approving a reserves call-up for a possible ground invasion.

Israeli leaders said they would press ahead with the Gaza campaign, despite enraged protests across the Arab world and Syria's

decision to break off indirect peace talks with the Jewish state.

Israel's foreign minister said the goal was to halt Gaza rocket fire on Israel for good, but not to reoccupy the territory.

With the two-day death toll climbing above 300, crowds of Gazans breached the border wall with Egypt in an apparent attempt to escape the chaos. Egyptian forces, some firing in the air, tried to push them back into Gaza and an official said one border guard was killed. *Hamas*, in turn, fired missiles deeper than ever into Israel, near the Israeli port city of Ashdod, and continues to command some 20,000 fighters.

Israel's military intelligence chief said <u>Hamas</u>' ability to fire rockets had been reduced by 50 per cent. Indeed, <u>Hamas</u> rocket fire dropped off sharply, from more than 130 on Saturday to just over 20 on Sunday.

Israel's intense bombings wreaked unprecedented destruction in Gaza. Late on Sunday Israeli aircraft attacked a building in the Jebaliya refugee camp next to Gaza City, killing a 14-month-old baby, a man and two <u>women</u>, Gaza Health Ministry official Dr Moaiya Hassanain said.

Load-Date: December 29, 2008



<u>Grieving families fear new casualties; Hospital morgues overflow, prisoners</u> escape as rockets strike new targets

The Toronto Star

December 29, 2008 Monday

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Section: WORLD AND COMMENT; Pg. AA01

Length: 589 words

Byline: Ibrahim Barzak, ASSOCIATED PRESS

Body

GAZA CITY

Terrified prisoners fled a Gaza City jail bombed by Israeli warplanes yesterday, their faces white with dust and red with blood as they stumbled over huge piles of rubble.

Across the territory, grieving families pitched traditional mourning tents of green tarp outside their homes. Yet the rows of chairs inside these tents remained largely empty, as residents cowered indoors for fear of new strikes. Plumes of grey smoke rising into the sky marked the site of the latest Israeli attacks.

Even for war-weary Gazans, who've lived through countless Israeli incursions, air attacks and months of bitter Palestinian infighting, the surprise Israeli air offensive was unusually traumatic. In all, more than 300 people - mostly *Hamas* police, but also 20 children - were killed in some 300 Israeli air attacks over two days.

On Saturday, shortly after Israel unleashed the deadliest ever offensive against <u>Hamas</u> and its rocket squads, hospital morgues quickly overflowed. In the initial chaos, the dead were wrapped in blankets and lined up on the ground, as frantic relatives searched for loved ones.

Yesterday, 25 unclaimed bodies still lay in the morgue of Gaza's largest hospital, Shifa, their faces disfigured beyond identification. In the southern town of Rafah, residents held a mass funeral for 14 people, including two brothers, and a father and son, all of them members of the *Hamas* security forces.

The shelling began at 11: 30 a.m. Saturday, a workday in Gaza, as children returned home from school, **women** shopped in local markets and police directed traffic.

At that moment, Israeli warplanes unleashed scores of bombs and missiles simultaneously at <u>Hamas</u> security installations. Residents described a veil of dust, smoke and rubble covering one world, and lifting to reveal another filled with horror. <u>Women</u> were running, carrying their children, uniformed students screamed and cars crashed into each other as panicked drivers tried to get away.

The dead and wounded were rushed to hospitals in cars. Some carried blankets filled with body parts. "I have a head here," one man yelled as he rushed into the crowded reception area of Shifa Hospital.

Grieving families fear new casualties Hospital morgues overflow, prisoners escape as rockets strike new targets

Police directed them to the hospital morgue, opposite the maternity ward, but it was full by Saturday afternoon. Men searching for relatives smacked their heads against the floor in grief and helplessness.

Inside Shifa, some of the floors were slick with blood. Wounded people sat in corridors, shooing away doctors, telling them to treat more urgent cases first.

Israeli strikes hit a new series of targets yesterday: a fuel tanker, a <u>Hamas</u> television station, smuggling tunnels and a central prison in a main <u>Hamas</u> security compound.

The bombing of the prison freed dozens of prisoners, who rushed away, carrying clothes and blankets as they scrambled over rubble, fleeing *Hamas* police. One man, pinned under rubble, shouted: "Wait for me! Pull me out!"

Kilometres away, on Gaza's southern border with Egypt, the ground shook yesterday afternoon. In a matter of four minutes, Israeli aircraft destroyed 40 smuggling tunnels running under the border. The tunnels are used to smuggle goods and weapons into Gaza.

Hundreds gathered at the border wall, trying to get across. Egyptian border guards opened fire above the crowds, trying to scatter them. Instead, residents manned a bulldozer and tried to knock down the wall. When that didn't work, they set an explosive device beside it, knocking what appeared to be a small hole. Dozens clambered over it, but were eventually returned.

Load-Date: December 29, 2008



Israel says no to truce but offers Gaza aid; Parliament building among the targets in 6th day of air assault

The International Herald Tribune
January 2, 2009 Friday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1

Length: 1034 words

Byline: Ethan Bronner - The New York Times Media Group

Dateline: JERUSALEM

Body

Taghreed El-Khodary contributed reporting from Gaza; Steven Erlanger from Cairo; Mark Landler from Washington; Robert Pear from Crawford, Texas; Alan Cowell from London; and Graham Bowley from New York.

*

As Israel sought to fend off growing international pressure over civilian casualties from its military assault on Gaza, its air force kept up attacks for a sixth day on Thursday, bombing the Parliament building among other targets.

Alongside the military offensive, officials said Israel would work with its allies to build a durable, long-term truce and would seek to expedite and increase humanitarian aid. But it would not agree to a proposed 48-hour cease-fire.

Rather, the government said it would push ahead with its air, sea and ultimately ground operation, which one senior military official described as "making *Hamas* lose their will or lose their weapons."

Strikes on Thursday morning hit government buildings and the Parliament, while militants fired at least three rockets at locations in southern Israel, including the city of Beersheba, news agencies reported.

During the days of combat, Israeli warplanes have been destroying buildings once considered off limits, including mosques and government and university compounds, with officials asserting that rocket launchers and ammunition were made, stored and even operated from there. They were also hitting militants' homes, smuggler tunnels and even money exchange shops to choke off *Hamas* from its suppliers.

The senior military official said that Gaza was limited in size and cut off from the outside and that Israel could win if it stopped future supplies and destroyed enough of what <u>Hamas</u> had. He added, however, that targets were running short and that a limited ground operation aimed at destroying remaining sites was likely once the wet weather cleared.

Meanwhile, overwhelmed hospital officials in Gaza said that of the more than 390 people killed by Israeli fighter planes since Saturday, 38 were children and 25 <u>women</u>. The United Nations, which has estimated the number of dead to be between 320 and 390, said 25 percent of those killed were civilians. Israel said that it was still checking the numbers.

Israel says no to truce but offers Gaza aid Parliament building among the targets in 6th day of air assault

In the Jabalya Refugee Camp north of Gaza City on Wednesday, hundreds lined up for hours in the rain for bread and other staples as F-16 jets menaced overhead. At one point, two rockets were launched from within the camp - among about 60 shot into Israel on Wednesday - and an Israeli missile then hit the launcher.

The rockets that have been sent some 32 kilometers, or 20 miles, into the Israeli cities of Ashkelon, Ashdod and Beersheba in recent days are known as grads. They are about three meters, or nine feet, in length with warheads that weigh 30 to 40 pounds, or about 14 to 18 kilograms; they were not manufactured in Gaza but were bought abroad and smuggled through tunnels from Egypt, Israeli officials said.

A senior Israeli official said the country was seeking ways to increase humanitarian aid so that its military endeavor could continue without further pressure to stop. It permitted a dozen wounded and ill Gazans into Israel on Wednesday for treatment at hospitals in Jerusalem and allowed in some 100 trucks of food and medicine.

The official also said that one limitation on the aid was that crossing points had come under attack by <u>Hamas</u>. A second, he said, is that donors are not bringing enough goods. Of the donations so far, some come from UN agencies, but most are from private donors.

Israeli officials say their goals for a truce include a complete cessation of rocket and mortar fire from Gaza, a ban on armed men approaching the border with Israel, full Israeli control over the border crossings and a mechanism to ensure that *Hamas* is meeting its commitments.

The <u>Hamas</u> leader, Ismail Haniya, told Israel that there would be no talk of a truce until it ended its attack and all the crossings into Gaza from Israel and from Egypt were opened to full commercial traffic. He did not mention the rockets that Israel considers the central cause of its campaign.

On Thursday, the Israeli foreign minister, Tzipi Livni, was heading to Paris to meet with Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner and President Nicolas Sarkozy, who are seeking ways to promote a cease-fire.

Mahmoud Abbas, president of the Palestinian Authority, which is based in the West Bank, appealed to the United Nations Security Council for a cease-fire. Abbas, whose troops were forcibly ejected from Gaza by <u>Hamas</u> 18 months ago, is in a delicate position of not wishing <u>Hamas</u> to triumph but not wishing Palestinians to suffer.

In a speech delivered Wednesday, Abbas reiterated that <u>Hamas</u> was responsible for the Israeli invasion because it ended the cease-fire between it and Israel 12 days ago. But he called what Israel was doing "the bloodiest massacre and systemic destruction of all forms of life; it is an aggression that does not target Gaza only but the entire Palestinian people and their cause and future and their most basic human rights."

In Cairo, Arab countries appeared deeply divided over how to respond to the latest escalation in fighting between Israel and *Hamas*, with sharply differing comments from foreign ministers at the opening of an emergency Arab League meeting.

Moderate Arab states generally allied with the United States blamed Palestinian disunity for the crisis, and more radical states, some of whom did not attend, urged collective action to defend the Palestinians against Israel.

In the most striking comments, the Saudi Arabian foreign minister, Prince Saud al-Faisal, criticized the Palestinians for their inability to remain united behind Abbas and Fatah - an implicit condemnation of <u>Hamas</u>, which took over Gaza entirely in 2007 in a brief but violent civil war with Fatah. Normally, during periods of Israeli-Palestinian fighting, Arab leaders condemn only Israel.

"This terrible massacre would not have happened if the Palestinian people were united behind one leadership, speaking in one voice," Saud said at the league meeting's opening. "We are telling our Palestinian brothers that your Arab nation cannot extend a real helping hand if you don't extend your own hands to each other with love."

Load-Date: January 2, 2009



Israel is confronting an enemy bent on destroying it

Canberra Times (Australia)
January 6, 2009 Tuesday
Final Edition

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Section: A; Pg. 14 Length: 600 words

Byline: The Canberra Times

Body

It's all very well pontificating about Zionism, Islam and US-backed dictatorships (John Passant, Letters, January 3) but the immediate problem has to be addressed. Israel is confronted by an enemy bent on destroying it. It eventually attacked *Hamas* because the situation had become intolerable.

In the ACT, each year we complain bitterly at the noise, inconvenience and destruction caused by the misuse of fireworks. What if we had to contend with military hardware deadly rockets and daily? We'd be demanding action from the Government very quickly.

Zillah Williams, Latham Greg Rose, apologist for Israel, ("Israel's attacks are not extreme", January 1, p9) asks us to believe that by applying a strict military definition of the term, Israeli retaliation against *Hamas* has not been disproportionate.

Even if one accepts this ethically bankrupt equation we are left with the depressing realisation that the Israeli Government is no better or worse than the terrorist organisation it is fighting.

There were those of us who once had higher hopes for Israel but we can see now it has exactly the same contempt for ordinary Palestinians that *Hamas* has for the ordinary Israelis.

I guess when <u>Hamas</u> eventually does succeed in murdering 420 people in two days we can expect the Rudd Government to respond with similar indifference to the death of Israelis it has shown in response to the appalling deaths of so many Palestinians. Perhaps Rose will then point out true to the strict legal definition that <u>Hamas</u>'s response was likewise just fine too.

Greg Ellis, Griffith Alan J. Winters (Letters, January 3) and Israeli Defence Forces spokespeople are telling only part of the story when they say the civilian deaths of Palestinians caused by the IDF lie in the practice by <u>Hamas</u> of storing weapons and military installations in and near homes and public institutions.

In an email from one of the Israeli <u>Women</u> in Black on August 12, 2006, Gila Svirsky wrote that "a huge number of Israel's military installations are also in or near our populated areas".

Marjam Hadar Meerschwam of the New Profile organisation says she has a military plant at the foot of her road, and Gelilot army base a short walk away. Rela Mazali, also of New Profile, writes, "My own house, in quiet suburbia just north of Tel Aviv, is 15 minutes walk from a major intelligence base in one direction and a major munitions plant

Israel is confronting an enemy bent on destroying it

in the other. And did we mention that Israel's Ministry of Defence [our Pentagon] is in the heart of crowded, downtown Tel Aviv?"

Rose Costelloe, Cook Israel's demand that the occupants of an overcrowded ghetto for despised Palestinians (known as the Gaza Strip) must recognise Israel's right to exist invites the question to exist on whose land? Most of the land known as Israel was taken from Palestinian families by force of US-supplied arms or by a one- sided UN armistice. Force and trickery enabled Jewish people to settle on Palestinian land leaving thousands of Palestinians destitute and homeless.

Until the land that both Jewish and Palestinian people call home is more equitably divided by the UN (into two contiguous states) there can be no peace in the Middle East.

Israel and America can't solve the problem. They are the problem.

Graham Macafee, Latham It has not got through yet to Brian Haill (Letters, January 4) that Israeli pilots are trying to take out the rocket launchers, the places used for storing the rockets (including mosques), and the <u>Hamas</u> members who fire the rockets. The Israeli pilots' aim is not to bombard houses and destroy civilian infrastructures.

Henk Verhoeven, Beacon Hill, Vic

Load-Date: January 5, 2009



CIVILIAN DEATHS WILL BREED MORE VIOLENCE

St. Petersburg Times (Florida)

January 8, 2009 Thursday

4 State / Suncoast Edition

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Section: NATIONAL; Pg. 10A; YOUR LETTERS

Length: 950 words

Body

Gaza hostilities

Israel has turned a just war, defense from rocket attacks, into an unjust war, indiscriminate attacks on civilians. Collective punishment is not the answer. It will only create more victims, and is unlikely to subvert the <u>Hamas</u> regime.

Israeli officials say they are just attacking <u>Hamas</u> targets, but heavy civilian casualties seem to belie this. Are Israeli lives worth more than Palestinian lives? Apparently so.

Western media are barred from Gaza so the facts cannot be learned. Transparency is necessary for truth and reasoned opinions. The same spokespersons say necessary humanitarian aid is being permitted to cross the border into Gaza, but on-site reports say otherwise. Traumatizing civilians only bolsters <u>Hamas</u> and breeds future violence.

As Israel is the largest recipient of U.S. aid, the United States should use its influence to broker a cease-fire in conjunction with other countries seeking a cessation of hostilities.

Paul McCarthy, Largo

Reconciling differences

While the relentless renewal of conflict between Israelis and Palestinians again dominates the news, buried in the A section Sunday was an article about Kenyan villagers of different tribes who had butchered each other after the disputed December 2007 presidential elections, a conflict that quickly escalated to include disputes over land and natural resources (Kenyans forgive, ask to be forgiven).

The government's response was to create a commission to address tribal issues, but it remains bogged in bureaucratic stages of formation.

So the tribes decided to take matters into their own hands, reluctantly socializing and focusing on ending the violence. As one <u>female</u> member who overcame considerable intrafamily conflict to be involved said: "We are all here for the right reasons: to forgive and to be forgiven."

Maybe the Israelis and Palestinians could benefit from listening to the poor tribes of Kenya.

CIVILIAN DEATHS WILL BREED MORE VIOLENCE

Bill Ackerman, Homosassa

Wider war in Gaza not the answer - Jan. 6, editorial

Israel only seeks to protect its citizens

The goal of the Israeli military operation in Gaza is to prevent <u>Hamas</u> from continuing to launch rockets into southern Israel. The objective is not to remove <u>Hamas</u>, but to protect Israel's citizens. Nine hundred thousand Israelis live in the "emergency area" where they have a 15-second warning to go to a shelter when sirens go off.

<u>Hamas</u> has put thousands of innocent Palestinians in harm's way, but Israel is trying to do its best to avoid civilian casualties. The Israel Defense Forces have made more than 100,000 phone calls, sent text messages, and dropped leaflets to warn citizens to move out of the area. But still, <u>Hamas</u> is using schools, mosques and hospitals to store rockets.

As to the issue of proportionality, <u>Hamas</u> rockets have for years put Israel's citizens in mortal danger. The fact that Israel has been successful at limiting the casualties from these rocket attacks is not something for which Israel needs to apologize.

Judith Keltan, Tallahassee

End the killing

There should be no doubt that all human life is sacred. The fact that as many as 600 fellow human beings, including more than 100 <u>women</u> and children, have lost their lives in the past week due to the attacks in Gaza should be an outrage to anyone.

Israel needs to stop punishing the entire 1.4-million people of Gaza because of the actions of a select few. The Israeli government needs to do more to allow medical supplies and food to enter Gaza. Considering the United States is the only country that has the influence to discontinue the massacre taking place in Gaza, President Bush and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice need to immediately negotiate a cease-fire so that we can prevent the continued loss of innocent human lives.

Bilal Farooqi, Tampa

One-sided pacifism

I have long been active in the peace movement both locally and nationally, and the advance into Gaza by the Israel Defense Forces with its unacceptably high numbers of noncombatant civilian casualties is certainly not something I approve of.

That said, neither can I in good conscience stand with those - some of them good friends - who are protesting Israeli actions but will not take a concomitant stand against Palestinian terrorism.

It was indeed the rocket-bombs of <u>Hamas</u> killing Israeli civilians that provoked the Israeli military response. Some of my friends in the local peace movement will undoubtedly want to decry my saying this, but genuinely peace-loving people must stop indulging the moral hypocrisy of a one-sided pacifism. <u>Hamas</u> is an aggressive militant movement openly committed to the destruction of Israel, so it raises the question whether a pacifist who does not oppose terror in the same breath that she or he opposes military invasion can be called authentic.

For my own part, it is difficult to be unduly critical of a government that views itself as taking steps deemed necessary for its self-defense without also being critical of Islamic extremists who continue to advance their agenda at the point of a gun.

John Feeney, Tampa

A perilous pick

CIVILIAN DEATHS WILL BREED MORE VIOLENCE

Do you feel safe, America? The answer should be a resounding "No" in view of Barack Obama's nomination of Leon Panetta to be head of the CIA.

Sacrificing national security for political correctness, Obama has is appeasing the "loony left" with this appointment of a man totally inexperienced in the intelligence field. Even Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., certainly no hawkish conservative, was surprised by Obama's pick, saying an "intelligence professional" would be her choice for the agency.

Terrorists worldwide who seek to destroy us must be rubbing their hands in glee with a neophyte as U.S. president and a greenhorn as CIA chief.

Anne M. Lossing, Spring Hill

Load-Date: January 8, 2009



The Sunday Times (London)

January 11, 2009

Edition 1

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 24,25

Length: 3065 words

Byline: MARIE COLVIN

Body

In the emergency room of Al Shifa hospital in Gaza City, Dr Raed al-Arayni was entering his 12th day of nonstop work and was preparing for yet another operation when his worst nightmare came true.

The bloodied little boy being carried into the room by a neighbour was screaming at him. "Baba, baba [daddy, daddy]," the child cried.

"I did not recognise my own child because of his injuries," recalled Arayni. "For a few seconds I couldn't move, my knees became weak. I could barely stand at the sight of my child halfway between life and death." Running over he realised that both his sons - Hathifa, 7, and Abdul Rahman, 5 - were lying in his emergency room, severely wounded.

Tears streaming down his face, Arayni began working feverishly on Hathifa, who had the worst injuries. A chunk of shrapnel had pierced his chest, his right leg was broken and blood poured from his wounds.

A colleague began treating Abdul Rahman. The nerves in his broken left arm had been severed and he had no feeling in his hand. They were able to stabilise the two boys.

"I just thank God my children didn't arrive to me in bits and pieces, missing body parts as the <u>women</u> and children I see arriving daily," said Arayni, standing by Hathifa's bedside, his face showing the exhaustion of almost two weeks of back-to-back operations. The slight, bearded surgeon had not returned home for 12 days, grabbing a nap or a meal at the hospital when he could.

When the Israelis launched a massive attack against <u>Hamas</u>, the Islamic extremist group that rules Gaza, to stop it launching rockets against Israel's southern cities, he had moved his family from their home in Jabaliya, a crowded refugee camp just north of Gaza City. They took refuge with a relative in the more central Fakhura district, believing they would be safer..

The surgeon pushed aside the thought of his own children as the wounded poured in, sometimes so many that the operating floors were slick with blood. Injured men, <u>women</u> and children were piled in the corridors and surgeons commandeered the recovery room.

On Tuesday Um Mustafa, his wife, and their boys had gone up on the roof of the building, desperate for some fresh air after almost a week inside while Israeli jets screamed overhead and missiles, tank and artillery rounds pounded the coastal strip day and night.

The boys had been playing for about an hour when Um Mustafa sent them downstairs for a bottle of water. Moments later a huge explosion rocked the building, followed by a second.

Two missiles had slammed into the girls' primary school next door run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, where Gazans fleeing the fighting had been given refuge. Some 40 people, many of them <u>women</u> and children, were killed.

A controversy still rages over the strike on the school, one of three bombed by the Israelis within 24 hours. Israel claimed militants had fired mortars from near the school. UN officials insisted their security guards kept militants out of their compounds and that they had even given the Israeli military the GPS co-ordinates for their 23 schools, refuge for some 15,000 Gazans, to avert such a tragedy.

As soon as Hathifa and Abdul Rahman were stabilised, Arayni went back to operating on the casualties from the school bombing. As he left their room on Friday, leaving the boys in the care of their weeping mother, Abdul Rahman woke from a feverish sleep and began calling out for his father.

"I want my daddy. Where is he? Is he hurt?" he cried His older brother, the shrapnel still in his chest because it is too dangerous to remove, reassured him. "No, he's treating other kids who got hurt like us," Hathifa said..

By the standards of the past fortnight in Gaza, the Arayni boys were lucky. At the last count 830 Palestinians had been killed and some 3,000 wounded, according to health officials in Gaza. The Hamasrun health ministry said at least a third were children.

Israeli troops were dug in on the outskirts of Gaza City and hunkered down in Palestinian homes they had seized.

<u>Hamas</u>'s security forces had been driven from the streets, but struck back in hit-and-run attacks from tunnels, sniped from rooftops and continued to launch rockets into Israel.

Northern Gaza was a wasteland.

Whole blocks of the concrete apartment buildings and small homes of the refugee camps of Jabaliya, Beit Hanoun and Beit Lahiya were devastated, hit by missiles or demolished by military bulldozers.

Aid officials warned of a humanitarian disaster. The UN said two-thirds of Gazans were without electricity and half had no water. Food and medical supplies were running low.

On Wednesday Israel relented slightly, announcing it would stop firing between the hours of 1pm and 4pm to allow aid agencies to deliver supplies.

Nevertheless, it showed no sign of ending its operations any time soon. From Israel's perspective it is fighting a crucial battle, backed by nearunanimous popular support, against an enemy committed to its ultimate destruction and which has continued to target its citizens in the south.

There was more evidence of that yesterday as at least 10 <u>Hamas</u> rockets were fired at Israeli targets. One hit a block of flats in the city of Ashkelon, wounding two people.

"Israel has acted, is acting and will act only according to its considerations, the security needs of its citizens and its right to self-defence," Tzipi Livni, the foreign minister and the ruling Kadima party's candidate for prime minister, said on Friday.

How close is Israel to achieving its goals? What has the bloodshed achieved and is there any sign of it stopping? ISRAEL launched Operation Cast Lead on December 27, little more than a week after <u>Hamas</u> refused to renew a six-month truce that had largely held and resumed its rocket attacks on southern Israel.

The operation's aims were to stop <u>Hamas</u>'s rocket launches into southern Israeli cities and end the smuggling of weapons through tunnels under Gaza's southern border with Egypt.

Israeli intelligence repeatedly warned that <u>Hamas</u> was stockpiling increasingly sophisticated long-range Grad rockets, manufactured in China but passed to <u>Hamas</u> by Iran, along with its home-made Qassam rockets. Israel believed that unless it acted soon, <u>Hamas</u>'s ability to strike would present a grave danger..

That prediction proved accurate.

As soon as the Israeli missiles began landing in Gaza, <u>Hamas</u> launched rockets that reached further than before, hitting the cities of Ashkelon, Ashdod and Beersheba.

Last week a Grad rocket landed on Gedera, a town 28 miles from Gaza and less than a mile from the Israeli air force base at Tel Nof, where nuclear weapons are believed to be stored.

The wider strategic aim of the operation is the need to confront Iranian-sponsored bellicosity.

The supply of Grad rockets to <u>Hamas</u> followed Tehran's sponsorship of Hezbollah, the Lebanese-based Shi'ite militant group which had fired rockets at Israel's northern cities and fought a war with Israel in the summer of 2006.

The threat of a nucleararmed Iran, the rising power in the region, is foremost in Israel's thoughts. Last week in Washington, Sallai Meridor, Israel's ambassador to the United States, warned in an interview that Iran would have enough enriched uranium this year to manufacture a nuclear bomb.

If Israel is to address such a threat militarily in the future, it will need to have subdued the immediate threats on its borders.

The timing of the attack on Gaza was also influenced by the Israeli general election, due on February 10. As rockets terrorised southern Israel, the ruling coalition, led by Kadima, was increasingly open to accusations of being soft on defence and trailed the right-wing Likud party, led by Benjamin Netanyahu, in the polls.

The arithmetic of Israeli politics is fiendishly complicated, but the effect of the Gaza operation is revealed in the fortunes of the Labour party headed by Ehud Barak, the defence minister.

Two weeks ago, before the attack, it was struggling in third or fourth place in the polls with only nine or 10 expected parliamentary seats (out of 120)

after the elections. After a week of operations that figure had risen to 16 seats.

Likud is still leading the race with an expected 32 seats and Kadima is likely to win 27 or so seats, but the centre-left block is closing fast.

A decisive victory over <u>Hamas</u> may pull the rug from under the right-wing bloc and possibly allow a Barak-Livni coalition. But if <u>Hamas</u> can claim victory, it will strengthen Likud and its allies and Israel will probably get Netanyahu as its next prime minister.

There could be no doubt that Israel had the upper hand after two weeks of fighting, but the operation, which Barak described as one of "shock and awe", had reached a difficult point by this weekend.

Israeli pundits all agreed that the government needed a "clear win", such as an assurance of quiet on the southern front, to withdraw with any semblance of victory and to justify the high price of international opprobrium.

That was not even on the horizon. On Friday, Palestinian sources said <u>Hamas</u>'s weapons caches had been decimated and scores of the tunnels it used to import weapons had been destroyed in the bombings. But with its leadership hiding in underground bunkers or holding talks in Egypt, and only about 400 of its 15,000 officers and foot soldiers killed, the organisation was largely intact.

For Israelis this provided two starkly different choices. One was to declare victory and withdraw, either unilaterally or with a semblance of a ceasefire brokered by the international community.

The other was to implement "stage three" of Operation Cast Lead, following the initial bombing and subsequent ground assault, and continue into the crowded neighbourhoods of Gaza City and refugee camps. Here <u>Hamas</u> has created a virtual underground city of tunnels and the warren of alleys and narrow streets make it far more difficult for Israeli forces to manoeuvre.

Ehud Olmert, the outgoing prime minister, was said to be advocating going even further and aiming to topple *Hamas*.

The organisation had won elections in 2006 and 18 months ago ousted Fatah, led by Mahmoud Abbas, the moderate president who runs the rival Palestinian Authority, from Gaza.

Avigdor Ben-Gal, a decorated and influential retired Israeli general, said this weekend: "We need to conquer the Gaza Strip and put the <u>Hamas</u> military and political leaders on a French ship to leave Gaza for good, just as we did with [the former Palestinian leader Yasser] Arafat in Beirut 1982. We've already conquered a bigger Arab city than Gaza [namely, Beirut], our army is trained and fit for the mission. The politicians should give the order." Some Fatah officials have even privately expressed the hope that Israel would rout <u>Hamas</u>, so stung were they by being forced out of Gaza.

Expanding the incursion would carry high risks. So far the Israeli population has supported the operation: a poll on Friday showed 91% of Israelis in favour. But that could change dramatically if casualties start piling up, as they did when an operation was launched against Hezbollah in Lebanon in 2006 to stem the flow of missiles on Israel's northern cities.

Israel did not then secure the crushing victory to which its people were accustomed.

For *Hamas*, however battered, the equation is far simpler.

All it has to do to declare victory is survive. The leadership is certain to reap the kudos from having stood up to the most powerful army in the Middle East without jets, tanks or sophisticated weaponry.

<u>Hamas</u> appeared to be regrouping after, incredibly, being shocked at the original Israeli attack. This was despite the tanks that had been massing on its borders for days and Israel's public warnings that it would not tolerate rockets being launched on its soil.

"Hamas actually believed that firing rockets into Israel would force it to open the Rafah crossing [into Egypt]," said a senior Palestinian who has negotiated with them..

"They were shocked at the massive Israeli response. They are very naive." However, Izzedine al-Qassam, <u>Hamas</u>'s military wing, was said still to have high morale and other extremist groups in Gaza were fighting side by side with <u>Hamas</u>.

WHATEVER the Israelis decide to do - and there were reports that leaflets had been dropped on Gaza yesterday warning the residents to expect a dramatic escalation in hostilities - they have to do it quickly.

Israeli soldiers stationed on lines at the edge of Gaza City were increasingly becoming sitting targets. The thousands of reservists who had been called up finished a week's training on Friday and could not be kept in the camps indefinitely; they have civilian jobs and families at home.

In addition, the Israeli government was well aware that international pressure was building, fuelled by horrific images that have emerged from Gaza despite Israel's refusal to allow foreign journalists to enter the coastal strip.

International diplomatic efforts to end the conflict were grinding slowly forward. Both Israel and <u>Hamas</u> rejected a UN security council resolution that had called for an "immediate ceasefire". Olmert called the resolution "unworkable" and <u>Hamas</u> rejected the resolution on the grounds that it had not been consulted.

Crucially, the Americans, Israel's superpower sponsor, abstained from the vote, preferring to back an Egyptianbrokered ceasefire. These efforts appeared to be moving ahead. General Amos Gilad, a senior Israeli official, visited Cairo last week and will do so again today, and a *Hamas* delegation, both from Gaza and its Damascus-based politburo, travelled to Cairo yesterday.

A senior Palestinian source who had seen the proposal said it contained four points and put Egypt as the sole broker between the two sides.

The first point, he said, called for an agreement between both "factions" on an immediate ceasefire; the second point was the opening of the Gaza border crossings to allow humanitarian aid and "Egypt to continue its efforts" the third point was a vague provision for an international element, presumably to monitor the border; and the fourth point provided for Egypt to oversee talks between <u>Hamas</u> and Fatah to end their bitter dispute and form a united leadership.

Despite fighting talk from <u>Hamas</u> members, those dealing with them say that although they are still insisting they will not stop fighting until the Rafah crossing into Egypt is open - their key demand and their own litmus test of a real victory - they want a ceasefire.

In the longer term, both Israelis and moderate Palestinians realise that the only way forward is a political solution.

Israel would love to see Abbas retake power in Gaza. Should he replace <u>Hamas</u> on the back of an Israeli invasion, however, he would be perceived as an Israeli stooge.

"There is no eliminating *Hamas*. They are part of the Palestinian people whether we like it or not," said Ghassan Shaqa'a, a senior Palestinian politician and an adviser to Abbas.

"You have to talk to them." Everyone is waiting for the US presidency of Barack Obama, who will be sworn in on January 20. Despite the economic crisis, sources in his administration said that he knew he would have to engage in the Middle East crisis, although he was hoping that there would be a ceasefire by the time he took office.

"God knows he will have enough on his plate, but he has to work from day one on this or the only options left will be bad ones," said Martin Indyk, a Middle East adviser to Hillary Clinton, the incoming secretary of state.

Indyk, the author of a new book, Innocent Abroad, based on his experience as an American ambassador to Israel, reiterated the US policy that the only solution was a two-state solution, with some special provision for Jerusalem, the city holy to Jews, Muslims and Christians.

Obama indicated last week that he could open contacts with *Hamas*, a first for an American president.

He is likely to begin a complicated three-way chess game involving talks with Syria and contacts of some sort with Iran.

A diplomatic breakthrough with Syria could isolate Iran, a bonus in the campaign to stop it from going nuclear, and encourage other Arab states to come to the negotiating table.

"Obama won't be able to do it alone," Indyk said. "He'll need leaders in the region like Anwar Sadat [the late Egyptian president and the first Arab leader to make peace with Israel in the 1970s]. The president will need to be ready to grab the moment when it arises." FOR the citizens of Gaza it cannot come too soon. Of all the suffering among Gazan civilians, few endured worse than the Samouni clan. Last week four young boys from the extended family were rescued after three days of being trapped in a home with the bodies of their mothers and relatives.

Their emaciated condition horrified aid workers who had spent days trying to get permission from the Israelis to rescue them.

Their ordeal began last Sunday, shortly after Israel invaded. Troops ordered families to gather in one large house while they searched the Zeitoun neighbourhood. On Monday morning, with about 90 men, <u>women</u> and children inside, three Israeli missiles slammed into the house, according to the survivors.

Sixteen were killed in the strike - seven <u>women</u>, six children including a baby found curled up under its dead mother's arm, and three men.

Ahmed Samouni, 15, told his tale from his hospital bed, a tube snaking out of his nose and his hands still black with blood and grime.

"Some of their heads were exploded," he said, still shaking from the experience. "The door was open. A chicken came in and started to eat the brains from their heads. I pulled off the chicken, crawled to the door and closed it with my feet." Down the hall are his brother Yaqub, 10, and cousin Abdullah, 8, so badly wounded that they can barely speak. Another cousin is in intensive care.

Yesterday more horrors visited Gaza. Eight members of a family, including two <u>women</u> and two children, were killed in Jabaliya when an Israeli tank shell hit them as they sat out in their garden to bask in the unseasonable winter sun.

The neighbour who took them to hospital did so in the boot of his car because their bodies were mangled together.

Amid all the uncertainty about Israel's intentions and the search for a ceasefire, human tragedy seems to be the only thing guaranteed.

Additional reporting: Sara Hashash; Uzi Mahnaimi in Tel Aviv; Sarah Baxter in Washington

Graphic

The Israeli attacks have left large areas of northern Gaza devastated. Troops have fought house to house battles, right

Lama Hamdan, four, is buried after she and her sister were killed in an Israeli strike on Gaza

Dr Raed al-Arayni comforts his son Hathifa, 7, who was wounded by shrapnel

BAZ RATNER/MOHAMMED SALEM/AP

Load-Date: January 11, 2009



Rockets fired from Lebanon hit northern Israel

Guardian.com January 8, 2009

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Length: 620 words

Highlight: Israeli forces return fire after four rockets land near Nahariya, raising fears Gaza conflict could spread

Body

At least four rockets were fired from Lebanon into northern Israel today, leading the Israeli army to return fire and raising fears that the conflict in Gaza could spread.

The exchanges came as Israeli air strikes destroyed several houses in the town of Rafah, on Gaza's southern border, today after what Palestinians said was one of the heaviest nights of bombing since the conflict began 13 days ago.

Intense artillery strikes, along with waves of aerial bombardment, were reported across the Gaza Strip.

Israeli tanks were seen moving in southern Gaza and leaflets were dropped near the border with Egypt warning residents to leave the area "because *Hamas* uses your houses to hide and smuggle military weapons".

Around 5,000 Palestinians fled their homes and took refuge in two UN schools that had been set up as shelters.

For the first time, the conflict widened to northern Israel, where four katyusha rockets fired from southern Lebanon landed near the town of Nahariya, injuring two people.

The Israeli military fired back at the point from which the rockets were launched.

Military officials said they were concerned about attacks by the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah. Two years ago, Israel fought a heavy, month-long war in Lebanon that claimed hundreds of lives.

As international negotiations to bring about a ceasefire in Gaza continued haltingly, the death toll among Palestinians rose to at least 688, with around 3,000 injured.

Palestinian health officials were reported as saying that around one-third of the dead were civilians, with 219 children and 89 <u>women</u> killed. Ten Israelis, three of them civilians, have died. Heavy fighting was reported near Khan Yunis, in southern Gaza, and in Jabalia, to the north, earlier today. At least one person was killed and 10 injured.

Despite days of intensive Israeli attacks, Palestinian militants were still able to fire rockets, hitting the city of Be'er Sheva overnight and Ashkelon and Ashkod this morning.

Rockets fired from Lebanon hit northern Israel

The Israeli military said it had captured 120 suspected <u>Hamas</u> fighters and had bombed the houses of two <u>Hamas</u> militants, in Rafah and Khan Yunis, overnight.

A total of around 60 sites were hit overnight, including, the military said, a mosque used to store weapons, 15 smuggling tunnels in the south, several rocket-launching areas and buildings housing weapons. It said several gunmen were also hit.

The UN security council has yet to reach an agreement on a ceasefire resolution, although the US has supported an initial deal outlined by France and Egypt. Although the French president, Nicolas Sarkozy, said both Israel and the Palestinian Authority - which is based in the occupied West Bank and is run by <u>Hamas</u>'s bitter rival, Fatah - had accepted the deal, Israel said there was agreement on broad principles but there had yet to be an agreed plan for practical action.

Israel wants <u>Hamas</u> to halt all rocket firing into southern Israel and has called for an international arms embargo on the Islamist movement.

<u>Hamas</u>, which did not seem to be part of the French deal, wants an end to Israel's months-long economic blockade of Gaza.

The British foreign secretary, David Miliband, who was at the UN in New York, said: "I have seen the first glimmerings of the possibility of a ceasefire ... it's far too early to say we can get a breakthrough."

Yesterday, the Israeli cabinet agreed to continue with the fighting at the same time as it considered the ceasefire proposals.

Military planners have prepared for even more intense operations in Gaza in which Israeli soldiers would push deep into the crowded urban areas of the strip to attack *Hamas* gunmen.

Thousands of Israeli reservists have been called up and would be ready by Friday, Israeli defence officials said.

Load-Date: January 8, 2009



Must Israel meekly put up with rocket attacks?

The Herald (South Africa)

December 31, 2008 Wednesday

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THE HERALD

Section: OPINION & EDITORIAL

Length: 494 words

Byline: Philippa Armstrong

Body

Must Israel meekly put up with rocket attacks?

ISRAELI citizens have been under the threat of daily attack from Gaza for years. In the week before the justified Israeli anti-terror incursion into Gaza hundreds of missiles and mortar shells were fired at Israeli civilian communities, including the firing of 80 missiles on a single day.

When Israeli children were killed by <u>Hamas</u> rockets the world was silent. Once again those who would like to see Israel destroyed and its people subjected to genocide are falling over themselves to join in the racist hyena chorus against Israel, using as excuse the fact that she finally responded to thousands of rockets launched by <u>Hamas</u> and Islamic Jihad aimed at Israel's men, <u>women</u> and children.

<u>Hamas</u> rains rockets down on Israel, targeting Jewish men, <u>women</u> and children for death, in accordance with their charter which calls for the killing of all Jews, which is what led to these Israeli air strikes on <u>Hamas</u> in the first place. On the hundreds of rockets that have rained down on Israel they have nothing to say.

<u>Hamas</u> are responsible for the Israeli response, since if they did not target Jews with terrorist rocket attacks, there would be no Israeli response at all.

One marvels how in a world filled with enormous evils, such as totalitarian states that make their countries into large prison camps (Iran and North Korea), that massacre and enslave millions of citizens (Sudan), that wage deadly war against their own populations (Zimbabwe and Myanmar), that destroy entire cultures (as China is doing in Tibet), it would seem a puzzle as to why the Jewish state and America are the two most vilified countries in the world.

Where were all these hysterical hyenas when thousands of Jewish <u>women</u> and children were incinerated by **Hamas** and Islamic Jihad? When hundreds of Jewish children were shot in their beds by Arab murderers?

We will never again walk quietly to the gas chambers. We will react when our men, <u>women</u> and children are killed in cold blood, and we will hold on to what belongs to us.

Even though the Palestianists will continue to work towards our destruction, they will not succeed. Bless Israel forever.

Must Israel meekly put up with rocket attacks?

Gary Selikow, Johannesburg

WHY is it acceptable for Gaza to shoot hundreds of rocket missiles which kill Israeli civilians and children and make their lives untenable, but Israeli retaliation is branded as war crimes? Neither Bishop Desmond Tutu nor the ANC would live next to neighbours bent on their destruction without fighting back.

In 60 years Israel has become a sophisticated, industrialised country with excellent health care and a very high literacy rate - a democracy unequalled in the Middle East. All Israelis, including Palestinians who are citizens, enjoy the same rights and privileges.

Israel wants to be left in peace, but will never accept constant attacks intent on its obliteration. A little fairness in judging the situation, please.

, Newton Park, Port Elizabeth

Load-Date: January 22, 2009



Lebanese rockets fire on Israel

The Australian
January 9, 2009 Friday
3 - All-round Metro Edition

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Byline: John Lyons, Middle East correspondent

Body

ISRAEL last night faced a war on a second front after rockets fired from Lebanon slammed into the Jewish state, only a day after Hezbollah warned it had kept ``all options open" in response to the 13-day offensive against *Hamas*.

The attack, to which Israel immediately replied with artillery fire, came after it yesterday conducted 60 strikes on <u>Hamas</u> targets in the Gaza Strip, where the Palestinian death toll from Operation Cast Lead passed 700.

Hezbollah denied it was responsible for the attack, but it followed leader Hassan Nasrallah on Wednesday raising for the first time the possibility of a renewed conflict with Israel since the air, naval and land operation against <u>Hamas</u> began on December 27. "We have to act as though all possibilities are real and open and we must always be ready for any eventuality," Nasrallah said.

Hezbollah, which claims to have up to 40,000 rockets in southern Lebanon, ruined Israel's reputation as the Middle East's military strongman in the month-long Lebanese war of 2006. The exchange of fire yesterday echoed that conflict, which began against the backdrop of Israel's last major offensive in Gaza.

No other group claimed responsibility for the attack, but sources suggested the three Katyushas might have been fired by the Syrian-backed Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command, which has warned it may open other fronts against Israel if the attacks on Gaza continue.

Two <u>women</u> were wounded in the attack on the northern Israeli town of Nahariya. The rockets, one of which struck the roof of a nursing home, were fired from north of the coastal village of Naqoura. The five Israeli mortar shells crashed near a village 3km north of the border. Residents started to flee, fearing a new front.

Defence Minister Ehud Barak admitted the prospect of Israel facing a second front. "We are following events in the north, we are alert and will know how to respond," he said.

Israel renewed its offensive in Gaza only minutes after the expiry at 4pm Wednesday (1am yesterday AEDT) of the first of its daily three-hour bombardment pauses of the Palestinian enclave.

Before the pause went into effect for the second time last night, to allow the delivery of more aid through a humanitarian corridor opened on Wednesday by Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, jets conducted mass strikes on tunnels used to smuggle arms under the border between Gaza and Egypt. Troops have also rounded up 150

Lebanese rockets fire on Israel

suspected <u>Hamas</u> fighters. Tanks entered southern Gaza and an officer was killed by anti-tank fire, bringing to eight the Israeli soldiers killed.

Two Israelis were seriously wounded when <u>Hamas</u> rockets fired from Gaza hit a building near a kibbutz in the Negev desert about 5km from Gaza border.

As it escalated its attacks, Israel's security cabinet welcomed a French-Egyptian proposal for a ceasefire. The cabinet decided that while it would consider the proposal, it would continue to dismantle *Hamas*'s ability to launch rockets into southern Israel.

"Israel welcomes the initiative being considered for sustainable quiet," government spokesman Mark Regev said. But he said Israel required two conditions -- a cessation of firing into Israel and an arms embargo on <u>Hamas</u> that received international support.

Last night's humanitarian pause was marred by UN claims that one of its drivers had been killed when his truck was hit by Israeli fire. The UN said earlier that only 36 trucks carrying fuel, food, water and medicines had got into Gaza on the first day of the corridor's operation on Wednesday. Works and Relief Agency spokesman Chris Gunness said this was ``a drop in the ocean", adding it would have helped only 10,000 people out of a population of 1.5 million. At least 500 trucks around the clock were needed.

Israeli, <u>Hamas</u> and Palestinian Authority representatives opened separate talks in Cairo on the plan presented on Tuesday by Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and his French counterpart, Nicolas Sarkozy. Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Abul Gheit said Cairo was aiming for a ceasefire within three days. ``We're talking about 48 to 72 hours at the most, because I cannot imagine the Israeli killing machine continuing this operation," he told the Saudiowned al-Hayat newspaper.

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Israel pushes on as cabinet meets

The Australian

January 12, 2009 Monday

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Byline: John Lyons, Middle East Correspondent

Body

ISRAELI troops charged deeper into the Gaza Strip last night as its cabinet met to decide whether to implement the third and final phase of Israel's 16-day offensive against *Hamas*.

Infantry and tanks advanced further into Gaza City after helicopters dropped thousands of letters over the Palestinian enclave warning that Israel was preparing to escalate its military offensive.

Clutching babies and toddlers and carrying hurriedly packed bags, residents of Gaza City's Tal al-Hawa district left their houses shortly after dawn.

They fled after Israeli armoured and infantry units moved into the adjacent neighbourhood of Sheik al-Ajlin. Pushing into Tal al-Hawa the Israelis encountered roadside bombs, mortar and gunfire from Palestinian fighters.

Twelve bodies, 10 them *Hamas* fighters, were found in the rubble of bombarded houses in Tal al-Hawa and Sheik al-Ajlin, medics said last night after the Israeli troops withdrew at daybreak.

As the Palestinian death toll reached 850, the Israeli cabinet met to consider implementing the offensive's final stage, which would involve deploying thousands of Israeli reservists and an assault on Gaza City, which is likely to lead to even heavier civilian casualties.

The cabinet was meeting for the third time on the issue after the first two meetings failed to reach a decision.

It is understood Defence Minister Ehud Barak is opposed to an escalation of the offensive, while Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni are in favour.

Speaking at the start of last night's meeting, Mr Olmert said Israel was nearing achievement of the goals it had set, but would continue the offensive against *Hamas* for the time being.

[&]quot;This is a time to translate our achievements into the goals we have set," he said.

[&]quot;Israel is approaching these goals, but more patience and determination are required in order to reach these goals in a manner that will change the security reality in the south in a

Israel pushes on as cabinet meets

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way that will allow our citizens to live in security and stability over a long period of time.

``We must not let what has been achieved through unprecedented national effort slip through our fingers."

<u>Hamas</u> fired about 13 rockets into Israel yesterday, injuring several people in Ashkelon, and Israel made about 60 air strikes.

One of the Israeli missiles hit a house in the northern city of Beit Lahiya, killing two women and four children.

After Israel and <u>Hamas</u> both rejected on Friday a UN Security Council resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire, Israeli spokesman Ygal Palmer said yesterday an intensification of the offensive against Gaza was ``definitely an option".

Khaled Meshaal, <u>Hamas</u>'s leader in exile, said on Saturday the Islamic group would not negotiate a ceasefire while Gaza was still under attack.

"I can say with full confidence that on the military level the enemy has totally failed -- it has not achieved anything. Has it stopped the rockets?" Meshaal said on a video broadcast from Damascus.

Demonstrations against the Israeli attacks were held around the world at the weekend, including in Washington, London, Paris and Canberra. And for the first time a demonstration was held in Israel as anti-war protesters marched in Tel Aviv holding up pictures of dead children that they said had not been shown in the Jewish state.

A doctor at Gaza's Nasser hospital said he had seen people whose bodies were burnt by phosphorous shells fired by the Israeli forces. Yusef Abu Rish said he had seen at least 55 people whose injuries were caused by such shells -- a claim denied by the Israeli military. The shells are banned as weapons under international law, with their use allowed only as smokescreens.

Medical sources said that of the 854 Palestinians killed, 270 were children, 93 <u>women</u> and 12 paramedics. On the Israeli side, 13 people have died since the offensive began on December 27 -- 10 soldiers and three civilians.

On the diplomatic front, talks continued in Egypt as Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas met Egyptian leader Hosni Mubarak. *Hamas* officials and Israeli officials separately met Egyptian officials to discuss a ceasefire.

Israel is seeking US guarantees to back an Egyptian proposal on how to stem <u>Hamas</u> smuggling into Gaza as a way to end the Israeli offensive, called Operation Cast Lead.

UN aid resumed yesterday after it was suspended three days ago when a UN driver was killed in an Israeli attack.

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'War to the bitter end'; Israel vows more attacks and, as death toll rises, residents in Gaza huddle in fear and darkness

The Toronto Star December 30, 2008 Tuesday

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Byline: Ibrahim Barzak and Diaa Hadid, Associated Press

Dateline: GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip

Body

Israel's four-day aerial bombardment of the Gaza Strip has killed dozens of civilians, along with <u>Hamas</u> fighters, and has paralyzed life in a territory already battered by blackouts and supply shortages during 18 months of border closings.

Israel has stressed that most of the deaths and injuries were <u>Hamas</u> fighters and says it's careful to avoid harm to bystanders. But the non-stop attacks have caused widespread power outages, terrified residents and left aid agencies unable to feed thousands of needy people.

By early today, the death toll rose to more than 360, with some 1,400 reported wounded, according to Palestinian medical officials. The United Nations reported that at least 62 of the dead were *women* and children.

Four Israelis, including a soldier, were killed and eight wounded as Palestinian militants sent a deadly barrage of missiles flying deep into Israel yesterday.

Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak said the country is engaged in a "war to the bitter end" against <u>Hamas</u> in Gaza.

"This operation will be extended and deepened as we find necessary," Barak told a special session of the Knesset, or parliament. "Our goal is to strike *Hamas* and to stop the attacks on Israel."

Early today, Israeli warplanes killed 10 Palestinians in attacks that targeted <u>Hamas</u> government buildings and other symbols of the Islamist group.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon demanded an immediate ceasefire in Gaza. But Gabriella Shalev, Israeli ambassador to the UN, said Israel would not accept a return to terms of a recent truce, which she charged was used by <u>Hamas</u> to restock its arsenal. "What we want this time is a commitment and assurances that <u>Hamas</u> will not shoot any rockets and will not fire on Israeli citizens any more."

Israel launched its campaign, the deadliest against Palestinians in decades, on Saturday in retaliation for rocket fire aimed at civilians in southern Israeli towns.

'War to the bitter end' Israel vows more attacks and, as death toll rises, residents in Gaza huddle in fear and darkness

Israel, which has allowed limited humanitarian supplies into the territory, is attacking <u>Hamas</u>-run organizations, homes of activists and security posts - all in densely populated areas. Gazans say most strikes come without warning.

However, Israeli forces offered a general warning by dropping leaflets and recording brief announcements that interrupt radio broadcasts. They also reached other homes by telephone, telling Gaza residents to flee their homes if they were hiding weapons or militants.

The White House backed Israel's attacks, calling for a lasting ceasefire. "Right now the people of southern Israel are not able to live in peace," White House spokesperson Gordon Johndroe said in Crawford, Tex., where U.S. President George W. Bush is at his ranch.

Aides to President-elect Barack Obama said Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and her likely successor, Hillary Rodham Clinton, had been in contact, and that Obama would discuss the situation with Clinton and James Jones, his incoming national security adviser.

Smoke from the attacks on Islamic University in Gaza City, said to be a *Hamas* stronghold, blanketed the area with a thick veil of smoke.

"It was crazy," Amani Abu-Ramadan, a Canadian living in Gaza City, told the Star's Oakland Ross. "You couldn't see one metre ahead of you. It covered Gaza like a fog."

Throughout Gaza, 16-hour blackouts are common because Israel allows only limited amounts of fuel and power into the area - part of its 18-month campaign to pressure Gaza's militant rulers <u>Hamas</u> into halting rocket barrages at Israel.

Without electricity, people don't have light or water, and sewage does not get treated, said Karen Abu Zayd, commissioner of the UN Relief and Works Agency. Most people have electricity only for a few hours a day and water "only every other day, or every few days," she said.

On Sunday, Israeli planes bombed tunnels used to smuggle goods under Gaza's border with Egypt. Israel has blockaded the territory, making it difficult to obtain items such as chocolate, computers and livestock. Militants also used the passages to smuggle guns.

UN humanitarian chief John Holmes said as much as 80 per cent of Gaza's 1.5 million people "are more or less dependent on food aid from the outside."

The UN halted food distribution to 800,000 Gazans on Dec. 18 because a tightened border closing prevented many goods from reaching the territory. Since the airstrikes began, Israel allowed in almost 100 trucks carrying humanitarian aid, but the UN said it's not enough to resume distribution.

On the streets of Gaza, dust from bombed-out buildings lingers, and neighbourhoods are mostly empty except for fleeing residents and motorists driving the wounded and dead to hospitals. In recently shelled areas, the smell of gunpowder and blood hangs in the air.

Hospitals are the few hives of activity. The World Health Organization reported early Sunday that since the airstrikes began, around 900 people have been sent to Gaza hospitals, and more than 100 people remained in critical condition.

Medics speaking to the Associated Press described 18-hour days and changing out of blood-spattered uniforms without time to shower.

Hundreds of people fled their homes in the border area after the tunnel bombings, residents said.

'War to the bitter end' Israel vows more attacks and, as death toll rises, residents in Gaza huddle in fear and darkness

Majda Abu Taha, 29, left her home in the Brazil refugee camp close to Gaza's border with Egypt on Sunday afternoon, a full day after Israel had shelled nearby tunnels. She took her three children and a dozen members of her extended family to her sister's home in Rafah.

Abu Taha wavered for a day as her neighbours fled, but made up her mind after planes dropped leaflets from the Israeli army warning the tunnels would be bombed again.

Abu Taha said she did not have a tunnel opening in her home - unlike many nearby residents. But, fearing her cinder-block house would collapse on her family, she fled to her sister's home, where refugees lined the floor with mattresses to house dozens of people.

"When the bombings happened (on Sunday) it was like a giant grabbed my house and shook it. If they shell any closer, we'll all die," Abu Taha said.

Graphic

NAAMAN OMAR bloomberg news Palestinians gather at a destroyed mosque after an Israeli air strike in the Jabalya refugee camp in northern Gaza Strip yesterday. Israel's four-day bombardment has killed dozens of civilians, as well as *Hamas* fighters, caused widespread power outages and kept aid agencies from distributing food.

DAN BALILTY ap Palestinian <u>women</u> cross a street in the Shulafat refugee camp on the outskirts of Jerusalem yesterday while, nearby, Israeli troops clashed with demonstrators protesting Israel's military attacks on Gaza. Israel launched its campaign, the deadliest against Palestinians in decades, on Saturday.

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