

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

Job Number: 223445919

Documents (100)

1. <u>Tunnels, traps and martyrs: the Hamas strategy to defeat Israel The underground army says it is better</u> prepared than many expected. Report by Azmi Keshawi in Gaza City, Martin Fletcher and Sheera Frenkel

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. <u>Israel denies Hamas claim tanks destroyed, soldiers killed; Olmert slams global media for telling one-sided</u> story

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. Foreign residents flee Gaza amid continuing Israeli air assaults Mosque and Hamas activists' homes hit on sixth day of attacks

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. As it buries its dead, Gaza echoes to the impact of more bombs falling Protests across Middle East as Israel drives Hamas off streets

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

5. <u>Israel 's plan: Keep pressure on Hamas Official call 48-Hour Cease-Fire unlikely, but say they're open to increasing aid</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

6. Youths taking painkiller to cope with life under Hamas

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. For Israel, it's about deterrence; Hamas 'still has the ability to launch 100 rockets a day,' but having them and not firing them may be good enough to allow Israel to declare victory 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

8. <u>Unravelling of the clans A war has been raging inside the Gaza Strip. Fought with vehemence and brutality, it</u> pits the Islamist newcomers of Hamas against a much older order - that of Gaza's clans. Tobias Buck reports

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>Israelis hit school, Ottawa blames Hamas; Israel poised to set up humanitarian corridor New cabinet minister</u> speaks out as tank fire kills huddled civilians

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. No refuge: UN school comes under attack; Israel says its troops 'shot back to save their own lives' after

Hamas fighters fired mortars

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. <u>That's enough pointless outrage about Gaza The trouble is that we have no idea what the arguments inside</u>
Hamas are or how they are affected by Israeli actions

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. <u>Comment & Debate: Gaza after a Hamas rout will be an even greater threat to Israel: Amid the rubble there</u> would be a leadership vacuum, opening the door for Somali -style warlords or even al-Qaida

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

13. UN appeal for truce in Gaza is rejected Fighting unchecked as Israel and Hamas defy cease-fire 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

14. Netanyahu casts himselfas player on a world stage Right-winger calls for destruction of Hamas in defence of democracy

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. As it buries its dead, Gaza echoes to the impact of more bombs falling Gaza buries its dead as the bombs keep falling and the toll still rises Protests across Middle East as Israel drives Hamas off streets

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. Focus: Middle East Crisis: WHY ISRAEL WENT TO WAR IN GAZA: Last night Israel sent its ground forces across the border into Gaza as it escalated its brutal assault on Hamas. As a large-scale invasion of the Palestinian territory appears to be getting under way, Chris McGreal reports from Jerusalem on Israel's hidden strategy to persuade the world of the justice of its cause in its battle with a bitter ideological foe

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. <u>Hamas steps up rocket fire as Israel pours in fresh reserves; Olmert slams global media for telling one-sided story</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

18. UN appeal for Gaza truce is rejected Fighting unchecked as Israel and Hamas defy cease-fire 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

19. <u>'Definitions skew civilian casualties'</u>. <u>Israel says most of those killed in Gaza are Hamas gunmen and members</u>, while Palestinians claim exactly the opposite

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. We would have called this atrocity a war crime if Hamas had carried it out

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. Key word in Israel, Gaza war is 'Enough'

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

22. Israeli claims to be targeting only Hamas militants cast into doubt

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jan 14, 2009

23. Israeli strikes and ME peace process

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jan 14, 2009

24. Israeli troops mobilize as assault widens



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

25. Look further, think harder, don't take it at face value

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jan 14, 2009

26. Forced martyrdom

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

27. Column: Israel gave peace a chance

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

28. Day the rules of conflict changed

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

29. Israel widens Gaza 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

30. Barak warns ground war will be intensified 'as much as necessary' -- Israeli tanks roll into 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

31. Israeli tanks roll into Gaza -- Ground war to be intensified `as much as necessary'

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

32. Israeli Officials Say Main Goals in Gaza Are Still Unfulfilled

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. <u>Hard truths about the Mideast conflict; Lasting peace will only be possible once Palestinians accept that they</u> cannot prevail over Israel by use of force

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

34. Editorial: It takes two to make trouble 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

35._VANTAGE POINT Eyeless 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

36. Comment & Debate: Gaza: Gazans need to choose peace over extremism: As Operation Cast Lead enters

its eleventh day, a member of the Israeli parliament and a Hamas leader write

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

37. Column: Media skews Israeli -Palenstinian conflict to favor Hamas

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

38. Cool Gaza crisis, then push peace

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

39. GAZA'S GRIEF 227 DEAD IN BIGGEST ISRAELI RAID IN 40YRS

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

40. Foreign-passport holders flee as Gaza strikes continue

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

41. Gaza portrayed

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. Fulfilling a state's moral obligation

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

43. A Palestinian View: War crimes in Gaza put PA in awkward place

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. News: Air strikes on Gaza: 'There is a time for calm ... now is the time to fight: Ehud Barak, Israeli Defence
Minister: More than 200 people were killed and many others injured after Israel launched its most deadly
assault on the Gaza Strip in 40 years. The air strikes - in retaliation for ongoing Hamas rocket attacks - were
aimed at the Palestinian group's security assets but also caused widespread carnage

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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Jan 14, 2009

45. Israel expands assault on Gaza

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jan 14, 2009

46. Israel calls air assault just the start of offensive

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

47. Israel mobilizes troops as assault widens

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

48. Gaza offensive part of global fight against terrorism

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jan 14, 2009

49. An offer they can't refuse

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

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

Jan 14, 2009

50. GAZA'S GRIEF 205 DEAD IN BIGGEST ISRAELI RAID IN 40YRS

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

News

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

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

Jan 14, 2009

51. THE REAL WINNER IS ... IRAN

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

52. Victory through air attack? It's pie in the sky Israel imagined it could defeat Hamas though aerial bombardment. It shows it hasn't learnt the lessons of history, Correlli Barnett says

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. Gaza assault is a 'war to the bitter end': Israel; Air strikes Three-day death toll rises above 350

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

54. Israel 's War in Gaza, and the War of Words

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



55. <u>Gaza airstrikes Was Israel right to continue its bombing last week in response to Hamas rocket attacks?</u> MESSAGE BOARD The violence flared when a six-month truce ended

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

56. Israel pursues strikes on Gaza toll mounts and outcry swells

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

57. Battleground Gaza * Israeli troops in heavy fighting * UN fails to condemn attack

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

58. Israel Is Forced To Defend Itself

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

59. Getting in the way of war

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

60. ACRI protests civilian casualties

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

61. Massive strike against Gaza

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

62. Shocking cynicism or a legitimate right to defend one's homeland?

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

63. Israel threatens escalation

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

64. Israel sends negotiator to Egypt; U.S. opinion solidly behind Israel: poll

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

65. U.N. warns of crisis in 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

66. As fighting rages, Olmert says Israel 'must not miss out'

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

67. ISRAEL KEEPS UP ASSAULT ON GAZA; ARAB ANGER RISES

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. Israel warns of wider offensive in Gaza Strip

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. 200 DEAD IN GAZA RAIDS Israel in revenge attacks

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

70. Israeli Tanks and Troops Launch Attack on 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

71. Mideast violence spurs calls for a new cease-fire

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. Bush and Olmert on same page: US

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. End the cant and hypocrisy

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. ISRAEL REJECTS GAZA CEASE-FIRE, BUT OFFERS AID

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

75. Bombings a 'crime against humanity' Civilians targeted, says UN envoy

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jan 14, 2009

76. <u>Israel prepares to invade Gaza * Reservists called up and tanks mobilised as death toll rises to 298 'Save me Hazem'</u>: dying words of innocent victim

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

News

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

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

Jan 14, 2009

77. CAMPAIGN Ground forces prepare to invade Gaza Strip Israel set to throw 'iron fist'

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

78. Israeli bombs kill hundreds in Gaza's bloodiest day

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

79. Israel is an oppressor not a victim

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

80. Prof defends Israel attacks

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

81. Bangladesh: Victims of heinous crime

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

82. Israel lets hundreds flee Gaza; U.N. warns of crisis

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

83. Iran 's proxy war; Gaza's militant Palestinians marching to orders from their Middle Eastern masters

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

84. Israel defiant as Gaza toll soars

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 warns of Gaza escalation 30 Palestinians die in latest fighting as diplomacy fails

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jan 14, 2009

86. Israel to escalate assault on 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

87. Israel lets Palestinians flee; UN warns of crisis

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jan 14, 2009

88. Some Palestinians are allowed to flee

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jan 14, 2009

89. 'Medieval backwater'

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. As Gaza Battle Goes On, Israel Is Set to Negotiate With Egypt on Cease-Fire

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jan 14, 2009

91. Israeli strikes on Gaza: What are the motives?

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

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Jan 14, 2009

92. Gaza fighting is taking a heavy toll on children

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jan 14, 2009

93. Israel launches well-coordinated PR blitz to garner support for Gaza action

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jan 14, 2009

94. Israeli Attack Kills Scores Across 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

95. <u>Israeli jets kill 'more than 200' in revenge strikes on Gaza nChildren among victims nFirst test for Obama</u> The stink of death hangs over 'Black Saturday'

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jan 14, 2009

96. Letters

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

97. Israel set to widen its assault on Gaza Death toll surpasses 300 in third day of airstrikes fury rises in Arab

world

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jan 14, 2009

98. Israel 's Gaza attack leaves nearly 300 dead

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jan 14, 2009

99. LETTERS FROM READERS YOUR VIEWS

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Jan 14, 2009

100. Defeating the enemy

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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

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<u>Tunnels, traps and martyrs: the Hamas strategy to defeat Israel; The underground army says it is better prepared than many expected. Report by Azmi Keshawi in Gaza City, Martin Fletcher and Sheera Frenkel</u>

The Times (London)

January 12, 2009 Monday

Edition 2

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 32,33

Length: 1053 words

Byline: Keshawi; Martin Fletcher; Sheera Frenkel

Body

The bearded young <u>Hamas</u> fighter stood beneath a shop's awning in the centre of Gaza City as he tried to hide from Israeli drones. "Gaza will be like a volcano erupting beneath the Israelis. It will destroy the legend of their invincible army," he boasted as the street echoed to the sound of distant gunfire and explosions.

"We are soldiers who run towards death. They run away from it," he declared as the Israeli army engaged in some of the fiercest fighting yet on the city's fringes. "The Israeli leaders are gambling their future by coming into the mud of Gaza. They will leave defeated."

Mohammed achieved his childhood dream of joining the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, the military wing of <u>Hamas</u>, at the age of 18. He trained as a signaller, was taught how to fire rocket-propelled grenades and was given his own AK47. Now 24, he is married only to his cause and religion. With an easy smile that masks his fanaticism, he described some of the elaborate plans <u>Hamas</u> has laid to ensnare Israeli soldiers in Gaza's labyrinthine streets and alleys.

He spoke of a huge network of tunnels designed to enable <u>Hamas</u> fighters to attack and retreat, to ambush and kidnap, to blow up Israeli vehicles passing overhead and move undetected by aerial surveillance. He talked of mines which have been laid but are not primed until the Israelis approach.

He described how plans had been prepared to defend each part of the city, and how they were immediately changed when a fighter was captured.

If a fighter was killed, another was trained to take his place.

He said the fighters constantly changed their locations and tactics. They never attacked from the same place twice. They had secret means of communication, and spread disinformation to confuse the Israelis when speaking on their radios. They wore civilian clothes, concealed their weapons, and no longer walked around in groups.

Tunnels, traps and martyrs: the Hamas strategy to defeat Israel The underground army says it is better prepared than many expected. Report by Azmi Keshawi in Ga....

Morale was high, Mohammed insisted. <u>Hamas</u> had lost fewer fighters than expected and there was an infinite supply of eager replacements for those "martyred". It still had plenty of rockets that could be launched remotely from hidden bunkers. "We can continue as long as it takes," he said. "I tell you, even our ghosts will defeat the Israelis."

By contrast, the Israeli military suggests that *Hamas* is on the run.

Major-General Yoav Galant, the head of the Southern Command, told the Security Cabinet at the weekend that Operation Cast Lead had created a "once in a generation" opportunity to destroy <u>Hamas</u>, and called for the deployment of thousands more troops in Gaza.

A senior officer said that more than 300 <u>Hamas</u> fighters had been killed and "entire companies and battalions have been simply wiped out". Another claimed that Amir Mansi, the commander of Gaza City's rocket division, was killed on Saturday because <u>Hamas</u> fighters were running scared and he had to go out and fire mortars himself. "We are seeing people deserting and going AWOL among <u>Hamas</u>'s combat personnel. They are afraid to go out and fight," he said.

Impartial observers believe that the battle is far from over, and that Mohammed and his fellow zealots remain a very serious threat.

Ronen Bergman, an Israeli security expert and author of The Secret War with Iran, said <u>Hamas</u> had watched how Hezbollah successfully resisted the Israeli invasion of southern Lebanon in 2006, accepted training and equipment from Iran, and transformed itself into a disciplined, professional organisation that posed a real threat. "If Israel sends troops into the built-up areas of Gaza, they will find themselves facing a very formidable opponent," he said.

Ron Ben-Yishai, a senior military correspondent with the Israeli newspaper Yediot Aharonot, who travelled with Israeli troops last week, said he was "amazed" by <u>Hamas</u>'s preparations. Whole blocks, not just individual houses, had been booby-trapped and wired. "We have seen things like this before, but not of this magnitude."

A detailed, hand-drawn <u>Hamas</u> map of a neighbourhood called Al-Atatra, discovered by Israeli paratroopers last week on the body of a <u>Hamas</u> fighter, showed tunnels, sniper positions next to a mosque and numerous explosive devices planted in roads, homes and a petrol station. The neighbourhood had been divided into three, with a team of fighters allocated to each.

Mr Ben-Yishai told The Times that his unit found a mannequin filled with explosives in a hallway in the Zaytun area of Gaza City. It was dressed in a *Hamas* fighter's black uniform. Had Israeli soldiers fired on it, it would have exploded and brought down the building. In the hallway of another house, a 30-gallon container of diesel fuel had been placed on two sacks of explosives, with a detonation wire running through a tunnel to a shack 200 metres away. Instead of entering houses through doorways, Israeli soldiers now blow holes in the walls and send sniffer dogs in first.

Suicide bombers are another hazard. On Saturday a man wearing an explosives belt sprang from a side alley in Jabaliya as an Israeli patrol walked past. They shot him seconds before he could detonate himself..

Early in the ground war a suicide bomber ran up to a lone Israeli bomb dismantler and literally hugged him as he blew them both up. There have been several such attacks in the past week, two by <u>women</u>.

<u>Hamas</u> has yet to capture an Israeli soldier - a top priority - but is trying hard. Reshef, an Israeli soldier wounded during an engagement in the Jabaliya refugee camp, told The Times: "<u>Hamas</u> was playing cat and mouse, trying to lure us into the tunnels they had prepared. They were firing from the tunnels, trying to get us to engage them and follow them in. Once inside the tunnels there were dozens more waiting to ambush."

Another <u>Hamas</u> tactic, said Mr Ben- Yishai, was to spring from tunnels concealed beneath floors, or behind sinks in houses where Israeli troops were sheltering, and open fire.

Tunnels, traps and martyrs: the Hamas strategy to defeat Israel The underground army says it is better prepared than many expected. Report by Azmi Keshawi in Ga....

In many ways it is far easier for <u>Hamas</u> to achieve "victory". All it must do is to survive as international pressure on Israel grows, keep firing rockets across the border, and erode Israeli support for the war by picking off soldiers. Mohammed already claims victory. "We have stood in the face of the strongest army in the region for two weeks," he bragged.

Pictures and video from the front line timesonline.co.uk/middleeast Online

Graphic

YOAV LEMMER / AFP / GETTY IMAGES A mosque stands in stark silhouette after an Israeli air strike in the northern Gaza Strip. The area was the scene yesterday of some of the fiercest fighting yet between <u>Hamas</u> and Israeli forces

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<u>Israel denies Hamas claim tanks destroyed, soldiers killed; Olmert slams</u> global media for telling one-sided story

Edmonton Journal (Alberta)
January 13, 2009 Tuesday
Final Edition

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Length: 533 words

Byline: Matthew Fisher, Canwest News Service; With files from Montreal Gazette

Dateline: SDEROT, Israel

Body

Israeli troops and Palestinian gunmen fought fierce nighttime clashes around the Gaza Strip earlier today, as a war on *Hamas* that had killed more than 900 Palestinians entered its 18th day.

<u>Hamas</u>'s armed wing claimed its forces had used rocket-propelled grenades to destroy two Israeli tanks in the Gaza City neighbourhood of Zeitun. They also said a number of soldiers were killed in Khuzaa village, east of Khan Yunis near the Israeli border.

An Israeli army spokesman denied any tanks had been knocked out and said there was no report of Israeli casualties.

<u>Hamas</u> responded to Israeli suggestions that its forces in Gaza were near their breaking point by more than doubling the number of rockets that it fired at the Jewish state from the Palestinian enclave on Sunday.

Much as Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert had predicted a day earlier, <u>Hamas</u>'s leader in Gaza, Ismail Haniyeh, said on Monday that his group was "approaching victory."

In his first public comment in days, Haniyeh, who has been in hiding, told the <u>Hamas</u>-run television station: "I tell you that after 17 days of this foolish war, Gaza has not been broken and will not collapse."

Olmert decried "the global media" for what he felt was its unbalanced coverage of the war while visiting the southern town of Be'ersheva, which was hit by several rockets fired from Gaza on Monday.

"Now they only speak of Israel's brutality," Olmert said. "For some reason, they do not speak of the Palestinians' incessant murderousness towards us, as well as towards other Palestinians, or of the use of civilians in Gaza as human shields."

Israel took strong military action in Gaza after facing seven years of rocket fire, Olmert said.

"In this context, I would like to add that we have not declared war on the residents of Gaza," he said. "We do not want to hurt them. Every civilian, every child who has been hurt as a result of our operations in recent days is a victim whom we regret and would like to have avoided."

Israel denies Hamas claim tanks destroyed, soldiers killed; Olmert slams global media for telling one-sided story

Meanwhile, Israeli forces, backed by fresh reserves, continued to slowly advance into densely populated areas of Gaza City in a military operation designed to stop rocket fire from the Palestinian territory. But an all-out Israeli ground assault on Gaza, which has 1.5 million residents, clearly had not yet begun.

Israeli warplanes attacked several dozen targets within the coastal enclave and Gazans responded by launching at least 25 rockets toward Israel. Three of the homemade projectiles exploded within a few seconds of each other near where a group of foreign journalists were observing the conflict.

The death toll in Gaza since fighting erupted on Dec. 27 rose to at least 910, including 367 **women** and children, Palestinian sources said. Israel said 13 of its citizens, including three civilians, have died.

During a daily three-hour lull in the fighting proposed by Israel and generally observed by both sides, Israel permitted 165 truckloads of food and medicine to enter the territory Monday.

In other developments, Canadian officials are looking into evacuating more Canadians from the Gaza Strip.

Last week, Ottawa helped 48 Canadians escape the area. With the assistance of the Red Cross, they were taken by bus to Jordan.

Graphic

Colour Photo: Reuters; An Israeli reservist brandishes his weapons before crossing into the northern Gaza Strip on Monday.;

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Foreign residents flee Gaza amid continuing Israeli air assaults; Mosque and Hamas activists' homes hit on sixth day of attacks

The Western Mail

January 3, 2009 Saturday

First Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 3

Length: 943 words **Byline:** Robert Dex

Body

ISRAEL allowed hundreds of Palestinians with foreign passports to leave besieged Gaza after mounting international pressure.

But it kept up attacks for a sixth day, including bombing a mosque it said was used to store weapons and destroying the homes of more than a dozen *Hamas* operatives.

Yesterday's death toll included three children - two brothers and their cousin - out playing, two teenagers, and in a separate attack, a man in a house believed to belong to a *Hamas* activist.

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 cease-fire have been growing, and French President Nicolas Sarkozy is expected in the region next week.

There was no slowdown in violence, as Israel attacked new targets and Palestinians fired at least 30 rockets into southern Israel.

But amid the violence, 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 <u>women</u> married to Palestinians and their children. Spouses who did not hold foreign citizenship were not allowed out.

Israel launched the air attacks last Saturday in what it said was a bid to halt weeks of intensifying Palestinian rocket fire from Gaza.

It has dealt a heavy blow to <u>Hamas</u>, but failed to halt the rockets. New rocket attacks yesterday struck homes in the southern Israeli city of Ashkelon, wounding four Israelis.

After destroying <u>Hamas</u>' security compounds, Israel turned its attention to the group's leadership. Planes hit about 20 houses believed to belong to <u>Hamas</u> militants and members of other armed groups.

The Israelis either warned nearby residents by phone or fired a warning missile to try to reduce civilian casualties.

Foreign residents flee Gaza amid continuing Israeli air assaults Mosque and Hamas activists' homes hit on sixth day of attacks

Israeli planes also dropped leaflets east of Gaza giving a 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.

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 young 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 attacks, Gaza health officials said. The number of combatants and civilians killed is unclear, but <u>Hamas</u> has said about half of the dead were 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 on Thursday when Israel dropped a one-ton bomb on his home.

While keeping up the military pressure, Israel has offered a small opening for the 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.

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 Grand 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.

"We condemn these measures, and we believe they contradict the principle of freedom of worship," he said.

Demonstration today as stars call on Obama to intervene

Former model Bianca Jagger and singer Annie Lennox joined human rights campaigners yesterday to call on American president elect Barack Obama to speak up against the Israeli bombardment of the Gaza Strip.

Former Mayor of London Ken Livingstone and the comedian Alexei Sayle also added their support to the campaign to end the violence.

At a press conference in central London, Ms Jagger said: "I would like to make an appeal to president elect Obama to speak up. People throughout the world were hopeful when he was elected and we must appeal to him to ask for the immediate cessation of the bombardment of the civilian population in the Gaza Strip."

The press conference was called ahead of a demonstration today that is expected to see thousands of people rally along the Embankment in London before marching to Trafalgar Square to demand an immediate end to the Israeli attacks.

Annie Lennox spoke of her shock at watching scenes of the bombing on television.

Foreign residents flee Gaza amid continuing Israeli air assaults Mosque and Hamas activists' homes hit on sixth day of attacks

She said: "A few days after Christmas I came downstairs, put the television on, and saw smoke pyres coming from buildings and I was shocked to the core because I was thinking as a mother and as a human being, 'How was this going to be the solution to peace?'"

Comedian Alexei Sayle said he was speaking out because it was important for Jewish voices to be heard.

He said: "I want to feel proud of Israel, I want to be proud of my people but I am ashamed."

Also present were Tariq Ali, Lib-Dem MP Sarah Teather, Labour MP Jeremy Corbyn and Respect MP George Galloway.

Graphic

MOURNING: Palestinians carry the bodies of the children of <u>Hamas</u> senior leader Nizar Rayan during their funeral yesterday in Jabalia, Gaza. Rayan was killed with fifteen others from his family PICTURE: Abid Katib/Getty Images)

Load-Date: January 3, 2009

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As it buries its dead, Gaza echoes to the impact of more bombs falling; Protests across Middle East as Israel drives Hamas off streets

The Daily Telegraph (London)

December 29, 2008 Monday

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The Daily Telegraph

Section: NEWS; ATTACK ON GAZA; Pg. 3

Length: 906 words

Byline: Tim Butcher in Jerusalem

Body

THE Gaza Strip resembled a mass funeral yesterday as those who died in the opening salvoes of Israel's air assault were buried.

Funeral tents were set up outside houses, each with a large number of plastic chairs for well-wishers, relatives and friends to sit on while paying their respects.

Wailing echoed across the <u>Hamas</u>-run enclave as men, <u>women</u> and children braved continuing air raids to mourn the dead.

In the southern town of Rafah relatives gathered around the body of Tawfiq Jaber, the <u>Hamas</u> police chief killed when warplanes attacked a police passing-out ceremony.

"He was a defender of the Palestinian cause," one of the <u>women</u>, clad in a long black dress, said in a whisper as his body, bedecked in a Palestinian flag, dominated the bare living room.

"He lived as a fighter and he is now dead," she added.

Prayers for the departed gave way to calls for revenge as hundreds of people joined a funeral procession that formed outside the house.

The body was taken to Rafah's "Martyr's Cemetery" to angry chants of "vengeance, vengeance, oh Izzedine al-Qassam", a reference to *Hamas*'s military wing.

At a stadium in Rafah, thousands of Palestinians bowed before 15 bodies placed on the grass. Most of those victims were members of the armed wing of *Hamas*, the Izzedine al-Qassam Brigades.

"It is a slaughter . . . Young people killed in cold blood. They were taken by surprise and mowed down by the missiles as they were at their headquarters," said Hamdan Hamuda.

As it buries its dead, Gaza echoes to the impact of more bombs falling Protests across Middle East as Israel drives Hamas off streets

A member of his clan, Hamuda Hamuda, 20, was among those found buried in the rubble of a building targeted in the Israeli blitz.

Across the impoverished coastal strip the same slogan has been taken up by angry crowds. "Death to Israel, death to America."

The anger is also directed at Arab states which are perceived to have failed to do anything to protect the 1.5 million Gazans.

"I am saddened by the state of the Arab world. Our people are dying and are not defended," said Hassan, a prayer leader in Gaza City, as he looked on to his mosque that has been destroyed in one of the Israeli air strikes.

Around Gaza, Israel's Operation Cast Lead had one very immediate, visible effect, forcing members of *Hamas* underground.

Since taking power in June 2007 when it drove out Fatah security forces, <u>Hamas</u> has made a point of having armed members of its 20,000-strong security force deployed publicly at major intersections and outside government buildings.

The threat of attack by Israeli warplanes has forced those men to disappear overnight.

"You cannot see a single <u>Hamas</u> security officer on the streets here, especially in Gaza City," Hazem Balousha, a local journalist, said.

"The risk is too much for them to even come out onto the streets, so they have all disappeared."

The fallout on the Arab "street" from Israel's unprecedented air assault on Gaza, which killed around 300 people, reached right across the Middle East.

All afternoon smoke from a rubbish skip set alight by angry Arab teenagers choked the Mount of Olives overlooking the Old City of Jerusalem as mounted Israeli police waving batons clashed with protesters.

The scene was repeated across the occupied West Bank as divisions between Fatah and <u>Hamas</u>, so violent a year ago that the two sides fought a quasi-civil war, were forgotten in fury.

In Hebron, an Israeli child was injured when she was hit by flying glass after protesters threw rocks at the car she was travelling in.

In the West Bank village of Ni'lin a 22-year-old Palestinian, Arafat Rateb Khawje, died after being shot when Israeli police used live rounds at a protest rally.

Witnesses said he was shot in the back while a second demonstrator, who was shot in the face, was taken to Ramallah hospital where his condition was described as critical.

Elsewhere in the Arab world there were massive public demonstrations to condemn Israel's tactics.

The Syrian government, meanwhile, announced the suspension of its indirect peace talks with Israel in the light of the attacks. In Lebanon, police fired tear gas to stop dozens of demonstrators from reaching the Egyptian embassy.

Some in the crowd hurled stones at the embassy compound. Egypt, which has served as a mediator between Israel and the Palestinians as well as between <u>Hamas</u> and its rival Fatah, has been criticised for joining Israel in closing its borders with Gaza.

In Amman, Jordan, about 5,000 lawyers marched toward parliament to demand the Israeli ambassador's expulsion and the closure of the embassy. "No for peace, yes to the rifle," they chanted.

As it buries its dead, Gaza echoes to the impact of more bombs falling Protests across Middle East as Israel drives Hamas off streets

The prime minister of Turkey, one of the few Muslim countries to have relations with Israel, called its air assault a "crime against humanity".

France also called for the truce to be renewed and rallied European nations to use "all their weight" to stop the fighting between Israel and *Hamas*. A protest outside the Israeli Embassy in west London descended into chaos as demonstrators clashed with police. Dozens were handcuffed and dragged off by officers in Kensington, and there were 10 arrests.

The spontaneous eruption of protests across the West Bank reminded many Palestinians of the First Intifada in the late 1980s and the Second Intifada, which ran for five years from 2000, when Palestinians rose in support of armed militants.

Khaled Meshaal, the <u>Hamas</u> leader who is based in Damascus, is demanding a third Intifada. It was still to early to say whether Israel's operation

will prove a sufficiently strong catalyst.

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Israel's plan: Keep pressure on Hamas; Official call 48-Hour Cease-Fire unlikely, but say they're open to increasing aid

The International Herald Tribune January 1, 2009 Thursday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1

Length: 1212 words

Byline: Ethan Bronner and Taghreed El-Khodary - The New York Times Media Group

Dateline: JERUSALEM

Body

Taghreed El-Khodary reported from Gaza. Mark Landler contributed reporting from Washington.

*

Israel was expected Wednesday to reject a proposal for a 48-hour cease-fire in its military onslaught in Gaza, saying it would keep up pressure on *Hamas* but was open to ways of increasing humanitarian aid.

Israel's punishing air attacks on Gaza stretched into their fifth day, while 10 more rockets fired by *Hamas* militants landed in southern Israel, three of them in the city of Beersheba.

Mark Regev, the spokesman for Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, said the country's leaders "view it as important to keep up the pressure on *Hamas*."

"We cannot give them a respite to rearm and regroup," he said. "We need a real, sustainable solution, not a Band-Aid."

He and other officials said Israel was continuing to talk to U.S. and European leaders on ways to build a longer-term cease-fire to end the fighting.

The idea of a 48-hour cease-fire emerged from a conversation between Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner of France and Defense Minister Ehud Barak of Israel. It was supposed to establish at least a temporary pause in the fighting that would allow humanitarian relief to be delivered to the besieged coastal strip. Aides to Barak said he was interested in exploring it with Olmert and the rest of the cabinet at a security meeting Wednesday.

"The leading option right now is still a ground invasion, but the target of this operation is an improved cease-fire, and if that can come without the invasion, fine," a close aide to Barak said Tuesday, speaking on the condition of anonymity because he was not Barak's authorized spokesman. "But, of course, *Hamas* has to agree, and there has to be a mechanism to make it work."

In Paris, Kouchner met Tuesday with his European Union colleagues over the Gaza crisis and called publicly for a permanent cease-fire. A similar call came from the so-called quartet of powers focused on the region -- the United Nations, the European Union, the United States and Russia.

Israel 's plan: Keep pressure on Hamas Official call 48-Hour Cease-Fire unlikely, but say they're open to increasing aid

President George W. Bush and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice made phone calls to Israeli and Arab leaders to explore prospects for halting the fighting. They emphasized that any cease-fire should be "durable and sustainable," compelling *Hamas* to end its rocket attacks, a U.S. State Department spokesman said.

"That is different from the cease-fire that existed in the last six months," said the spokesman, Gordon Duguid, noting that *Hamas* had routinely violated the previous agreement by firing rockets into southern Israel.

The flurry of diplomacy appeared to be mostly byplay in Jerusalem and Gaza, as Israeli officials spoke of a continuing and expanding military operation, and <u>Hamas</u> vowed to step up its resistance. Israeli warplanes attacked tunnels used to smuggle supplies in southern Gaza and destroyed the home of a top militant leader.

Olmert told the Israeli president, Shimon Peres, that the airstrikes were the first of several planned phases, according to spokesmen for the officials. It was also clear that the number of targets available from the air was declining, making the likelihood of a ground offensive greater.

In Gaza, <u>Hamas</u> militants issued a taped statement vowing revenge for those killed in the Israeli air raids since Saturday and warning that a ground invasion would prove painful for Israel. Palestinian officials say that more than 370 people have been killed. Among them, the United Nations says, are at least 62 <u>women</u> and children and an unknown number of civilian men.

Two sisters, 4 and 11 years old, were killed in a strike in the north as concern grew around the world that the assault was taking a terrible toll on civilians.

The statement from the military wing of <u>Hamas</u> said, "It would be easier to dry the sea of Gaza than to defeat the resistance and uproot <u>Hamas</u>, which is in every house of Gaza." The statement was played on <u>Hamas</u>'s television station, which had been shut down by an Israeli missile but which went back on the air by broadcasting from a mobile van. The statement added that if there was a ground invasion, "the children of Gaza will be collecting the body parts of your soldiers and the ruins of tanks."

<u>Hamas</u> continued to fire longer-range rockets at Israel, shooting deep into the city of Ashdod for a second day, as well as into Beersheba, a major city in the south of Israel. One rocket landed in an empty kindergarten classroom in Beersheba. There was a report of light injuries, as well as of a number of people in shock.

Israeli warplanes, returning repeatedly to the same section of Gaza City overnight, pummeled the main government complex with about 20 missiles, residents said Tuesday. The building had been evacuated since the start of the operation Saturday. Airstrikes also hit nearly all of <u>Hamas</u>'s security complexes, its university and other symbols of its sovereignty and power.

Members of the Nakhala family, who live next to the compound, were inspecting the damage Tuesday morning and recounting the utter fear and panic they had all felt as the missiles hit.

"We have no shelters in Gaza," said the father, Osama Nakhala. "Where shall we go? I also have to worry about my mother, who is 80 years old and paralyzed."

His 13-year-old son, Yousef, was with him. When asked his view of the situation, Yousef took an unusual stand for someone in Gaza, where Israel is being cursed by most everyone. "I blame <u>Hamas</u>. It doesn't want to recognize Israel. If they did so there could be peace," he said. "Egypt made a peace treaty with Israel, and nothing is happening to them."

His brother Amjad, 16, disagreed and blamed the Palestinian president in the West Bank, Mahmoud Abbas, saying that Abbas had sided with Israel.

Gaza City was entirely without electricity for the first time, the result of an air attack that hit the system's infrastructure. Repair workers said they were afraid to work because of the possibility of more raids.

Israel 's plan: Keep pressure on Hamas Official call 48-Hour Cease-Fire unlikely, but say they're open to increasing aid

The few open bakeries and grocery stores had lines stretching outside as people tried to stock up. But essentials -- like diapers, baby food, bread, potatoes and fresh vegetables -- were in short supply and more expensive than normal.

Israel sent in about 100 trucks with emergency supplies of food and medicine, the military reported.

At the Hassouna Bakery near Shifa Hospital, about 100 men and 50 <u>women</u> waited in separate lines to buy bread. Amal Altayan was telling others in the line that she kept her cellphone in her pocket so that if an Israeli missile destroyed her house she would be able to phone for help. The other <u>women</u> mocked her, saying that if a missile hit her house, she would be gone.

Showing familiarity with the kind of knowledge circulating in Gaza these days, Altayan replied, "It depends. If it is an F-16, I will turn into biscuits, but, if it is an Apache, I may have a chance."

Osama Alaf, 41, said he spent four hours waiting in line to buy bread. "I bought flour until now," he said. "I don't have cooking gas, but I make a fire out of cartons and paper and make bread that way." Asked whom he blamed, he said, "Israel, which is slaughtering us, and whoever is cooperating with Israel, like Egypt."

Anger at Egypt has grown across the Arab and Muslim worlds because it has declined to open its border with Gaza and is seen as cooperating with Israel.

Load-Date: January 4, 2009

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Youths taking painkiller to cope with life under Hamas

The New Zealand Herald December 15, 2008 Monday

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Section: NEWS; World

Length: 592 words

Body

GAZA CITY - The new drug overtaking the Gaza Strip doesn't stimulate hallucinations or boost endurance at the dance club. It merely chills you out, which is exactly what many Gazans say they need.

Ruled by Islamic hardliners from <u>Hamas</u> and locked in by Israel, Gazans can't travel outside the strip, have few places to go for fun and are faced with a failing economy. Thus the boom in the popularity of Tramadol, a painkiller known here by a common brand name, "Tramal".

Growing numbers of Gazans have begun using the drug to take the edge off life since <u>Hamas</u> seized Gaza in June 2007 as living conditions have plummeted as Israel and the international community isolated Gaza, pharmacists and residents say.

This worries medical personnel, who say the drug can cause dependence. It is a prescription drug in many countries, and the *Hamas*-run Health Ministry banned its sale without a prescription in February. Since then, the ministry says inspectors have destroyed \$250US,000 worth of the drug and closed a number of pharmacies for flouting the ban. But it seems such efforts have had little success.

Tramadol is especially popular among young men. Some down the pills with coffee or dissolve them in tea. Others pop them freely when hanging out with friends. Grooms have been seen passing them out at weddings.

"You feel calmness through your whole body, absolute quiet," said one regular user, 27-year-old Bassem, in describing the drug's effect. He refused to give his last name for fear of being arrested as a drug user.

Tramadol is an opioid painkiller, related to morphine and heroin, though much milder, said Marta Weinstock, professor of pharmacology at the Hadassah Medical Centre in Jerusalem. Users who stop after taking it regularly could get flu-like withdrawal symptoms, she said, though other long-term negative effects are rare.

Other than in Gaza, it does not seem to have wide use as a recreational drug. Dyaa Saymah, mental health officer with the World Health Organisation in Gaza, said the drug's availability encourages its popularity; large quantities have been smuggled through tunnels under the Gaza-Egypt border.

"You can get it easily on the black market," Saymah said.

The booming black market sales also have sent prices down to as little as one shekel (47 cents) a pill, the cost of two cigarettes.

Youths taking painkiller to cope with life under Hamas

Mazen el-Sakka of the Drug Abuse Research Centre in Gaza estimates that up to 30 per cent of men between 14 and 30 take it regularly. Fewer **women** take it for fear of being seen as promiscuous.

"We're talking about a huge slice of the population, a big group of the youth and others who are using this drug," said Health Ministry spokesman Hammam Nasman.

Tramadol first appeared here about five years ago, marketed as a non-addictive painkiller with few side effects, said Hani Saker, owner of four Gaza pharmacies.

Some who took it for pain noticed unintended - but appreciated - side effects, such as mild euphoria and delayed ejaculation. The drug also spread because it lacked the social stigma of other drugs like hashish, Saker said.

GAZA'S LITTLE HELPER

- * Tramadol is an opioid pain killer.
- * It was developed by the German company Grunenthal in the 1970s to treat moderate to severe pain.
- * Tramadol is now sold under different brand names around the world, such as Zydol, Topalgic, Nobligon and Ultram.
- * Most countries do not treat it as a controlled substance.
- * The United States Drug Enforcement Administration has named it a drug "of concern" because it may cause dependence.
- * Heavy doses have also been linked to seizures.

- AP

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For Israel, it's about deterrence; Hamas 'still has the ability to launch 100 rockets a day,' but having them and not firing them may be good enough to allow Israel to declare victory in Gaza

The Vancouver Sun (British Columbia)

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Final Edition

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Byline: David Blair, The Daily Telegraph

Body

As Israel's assault on Gaza enters its fifth day, much of <u>Hamas</u>'s military machine remains intact, including about two-thirds of its stock of missiles.

A briefing for Israel's national security cabinet assessed that <u>Hamas</u> "still has the ability to launch perhaps 100 rockets a day," according to Mark Regev, spokesman for Ehud Olmert, the prime minister. Of an arsenal of about 3,000 missiles in Gaza, Israeli reports suggest that some 2,000 remain.

Israel's planners face a crucial problem: they must achieve their military objective before the government succumbs to outside pressure to halt the offensive. The more ambitious their goal, the harder this will be.

Ehud Barak, the defence minister, has raised expectations by pledging "all-out war" on <u>Hamas</u> to the "bitter end." This brand of fighting talk gives the impression that Israel's central aim is to topple <u>Hamas</u> from power in Gaza. If so, this would entail a full-scale invasion and probably a campaign lasting for months. If <u>Hamas</u> survived in power -- or returned to government after an Israeli withdrawal from Gaza -- the war would be deemed a failure.

So Israeli officials are carefully lowering expectations. Regev said that "regime change" was not Israel's goal and denied any intention to "reoccupy" Gaza. Instead, the campaign's only aim was to end the rocket attacks on southern Israel and bring a "sustainable situation of quiet." Just as Israel's northern border has been quiet for two years, despite the presence of Hezbollah in Lebanon, so the same can be done with Gaza.

Regev said this "peace and quiet" would be "based on deterrence and that will only be achieved if we continue to inflict painful and surgical blows on the *Hamas* military machine."

The crucial word here is "deterrence." Israel does not aim to destroy <u>Hamas</u> or overthrow its government in Gaza, nor even eliminate its ability to fire rockets. Instead, the aim is to drive home the cost of bombarding Israel. This campaign is designed to deprive *Hamas* of the will -- not necessarily the means -- to fire its missiles.

As war aims go, this is relatively modest. The question is whether Israel's armed forces will have enough time to achieve it.

For Israel, it's about deterrence; Hamas 'still has the ability to launch 100 rockets a day,' but having them and not firing them may be good enough to allow I....

"A lot depends on what we do and how we do it. If we continue to be as surgical as possible, that gives us more time," said Regev.

Israel has targeted <u>Hamas</u> targets, such as offices, weapons storage facilities, military wing buildings and bomb factories. But often these are close to civilian structures -- and Israel accuses <u>Hamas</u> of deliberately shielding military targets with civilians.

No-one can say for certain how many civilians have been among the 360 Palestinians killed so far. About 60 were <u>women</u> or children. Scores of police have also been killed -- and many question how they can be called military targets.

If one attack kills a large number of civilians, the entire operation may become untenable, just as the deaths of 106 refugees under Israeli shellfire in Qana, southern Lebanon, forced the end of Operation Grapes of Wrath in 1996.

But whenever this does end, <u>Hamas</u> likely will still be in power in Gaza. Israel hopes it will by then be deterred from launching any more rockets. Then Israel would declare victory.

If, however, <u>Hamas</u> promptly fires another salvo, having become still more radical and won greater popular support, Israel's campaign will have failed.

Load-Date: December 31, 2008



Unravelling of the clans; A war has been raging inside the Gaza Strip.

Fought with vehemence and brutality, it pits the Islamist newcomers of
Hamas against a much older order - that of Gaza's clans. Tobias Buck
reports

Financial Times (London, England)

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Body

As night fell on Gaza on August 2, the leaders of the Hilles clan realised they could resist the enemy no longer. Their men had battled for more than 13 hours, since dawn, in a futile attempt to stop the security forces of the *Hamas* government from overrunning the family compound in the Shajaiyeh neighbourhood of Gaza City. As machine gun fire pounded Hilles homes and rocket-propelled grenades rained down, the men surveyed their losses. Nine members of the family had been killed and more than 100 wounded, including six *women* and 17 children.

<u>Hamas</u> gunmen were now swarming into the neighbourhood; what had been the family stronghold was becoming a deathtrap. Ahmed Hilles, the chief of the clan and a veteran power broker in the Gaza Strip, saw only one way out. Along with more than 180 gunmen and senior family members, he made a dash across an open field of scrub towards the wire-mesh fence that marks the border between Gaza and a different enemy's territory: Israel.

The startled Israeli soldiers eventually allowed the men to enter but not before blindfolding them, stripping them to their underpants and searching for weapons. Pictures of the half-naked fugitives, humiliated but alive, appeared the following day, confirming what everyone in the Gaza Strip already knew: that the Hilles, until recently one of the biggest, strongest and most combative of the traditional Gaza clans, were defeated. The 500 gunmen that formed something of a private militia for the Hilles proved no match for the tough, disciplined fighters of <u>Hamas</u>. The new masters of the Gaza Strip had razed one of the last enemy outposts.

When the fighting was over, the humbling of the proud clan continued, as <u>Hamas</u> security forces arrested scores of family members, searched their homes and collected their weapons. It marked the decisive, though not final, blow in a war that has been raging inside the Gaza Strip since the territory fell to <u>Hamas</u> in June last year. Fought with vehemence and brutality, it pitted the Islamist newcomers of <u>Hamas</u> against a much older order - that of Gaza's clans.

Extended families, or *hamulas*, have played a key role in Gaza's social and political fabric for centuries. Some trace their roots back hundreds of years, while others settled in Gaza as refugees from the villages and towns that became part of Israel in 1948. The biggest *hamulas* boast thousands of members from hundreds of individual families, yet still manage to operate as close-knit units, answering to their *mukhtar*, the headman, and a small group of elders who advise him.

Tensions between <u>Hamas</u> and the Hilles clan, which supports the rival Fatah political party, had been brewing from the first day of Islamist rule in the Gaza Strip. The two sides had already clashed once before, in a shoot-out that left several people dead, but then agreed a truce. Now, more than a year after <u>Hamas</u> ousted Fatah and the Palestinian Authority from the coastal territory, that ceasefire was over.

Months later, the cinderblock maze of narrow lanes and unpaved streets that forms the heart of Shajaiyeh bears witness to the ferocity of the fighting. Several houses are burnt out, dozens are riddled with bullet holes and the craters left behind by grenades. Staring down from many walls in the neighbourhood are haunting photographs of the young men who died in the clashes. Martyrs' posters are normally reserved for fighters or civilians killed by Israeli troops, and are often put up by <u>Hamas</u>. Here, however, it is the victims of <u>Hamas</u> who are being mourned. One of the posters depicts a young man, clean-shaven and brandishing a huge machine gun. The dedication reads: "The Hilles family mourns the lion of the battle of dignity, Adhan Bassam Taleb Hilles / Let the machine gun sing the melody of our memory / We are the men of Shajaiyeh, and everyone is afraid of us."

A few days before the assault, a car bomb had exploded outside a beachside café in Gaza City, killing five <u>Hamas</u> security officers and a girl. <u>Hamas</u> investigators quickly concluded that the bombers were members of the Hilles family and demanded the handover of 11 people. At first the clan rejected the order, fearing that the men would be killed or tortured. But eventually Abu Osama Hilles, who runs a paint factory and was acting as the clan's interlocutor with <u>Hamas</u>, won assurances that his relatives would be treated fairly. "The night before the attack," he says, "I met again with the 11 wanted men and asked them to surrender themselves." All agreed. But even as the men were getting ready to do so, Abu Osama heard worrying news. "There was a build-up of <u>Hamas</u> forces coming into the area," he says. "At 5.30 in the morning, the fighting began."

Many people had predicted that <u>Hamas</u> would sooner or later take on the Hilles and other big Gaza clans. Few, however, thought the conflict would be quite so bloody. Most of the clans were, and remain, reluctant to meddle in politics and function largely as a social safety net, helping members who fall on hard times. Yet others developed into powerful political actors, running neighbourhoods and villages like private fiefdoms and even dabbling in national politics. Their powers reached a new pinnacle in the mid-1990s after the creation of the Palestinian Authority, the quasi-government set up to prepare for self-rule in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Several clans hitched their fate to a particular political faction, more often than not Yassir Arafat's Fatah party. Others turned to violent crime, exploiting and accelerating Gaza's descent into lawlessness and making a fortune from smuggling, kidnappings, extortion and robbery. The most powerful hamulas ended up not only with excellent political connections but were also able to rely on hundreds of gunmen ready to do a family's bidding.

For these clans, the events of June last year marked the beginning of a harsh new era. After years of tension between <u>Hamas</u> and Fatah, the conflict between the two biggest Palestinian political groups turned violent. <u>Hamas</u>, which had won a surprise victory in the 2006 parliamentary elections but was unable to translate its triumph into a lasting government, fought bloody street battles with Fatah. The Islamists won, taking control of the territory in which the movement was born two decades earlier.

<u>Hamas</u> moved quickly to consolidate its grip on power. After eliminating the direct political threat from Fatah, it turned up the heat on other groups. It targeted critical newspapers, battled with the judiciary and put pressure on universities and non-governmental organisations to support Islamist rule. Clans such as the Hilles, with a strong militia and equally strong ties to the Fatah party, represented a particular challenge, which <u>Hamas</u> took on with a vengeance. Today, not even the families doubt that the conflict, at least for the moment, has been won by <u>Hamas</u>. As Abu Osama says, "All the big families have vanished."

As the Islamist group ponders its next moves, and amid fears that it may make a bid for power in the West Bank as well, the story of how <u>Hamas</u> defeated the clans of Gaza offers a glimpse at the workings of the divisive group. While Israel, the US and Europe shun <u>Hamas</u> as a terrorist organisation, Palestinians and most Arabs see it as a legitimate resistance movement. And despite its harsh rule in the Gaza Strip, <u>Hamas</u> continues to enjoy deep roots and a vast following among Palestinians. But as the clans were made to learn over the past 18 months, it is a group

that, fired by a keen sense of ideological and religious righteousness, will move ruthlessly to crush opposition from within.

The Gaza Strip is not an area where opponents are easily ignored. It is 40km long, 10km wide, and its fast-growing population of more than 1.5m makes it one of the most densely populated territories in the world.

The strip has been under a strict Israeli embargo since <u>Hamas</u> took control of the territory in June last year. Even basic supplies disappear from the shelves for weeks at a time - making Gaza City one of the last places on earth where a host will try to impress his guests by serving bottles of Coca-Cola. The sanctions are designed to undermine <u>Hamas</u> and discourage militants from firing rockets at nearby Israeli towns. Until June this year, when Israel and <u>Hamas</u> agreed an uneasy ceasefire, the economic sanctions were supplemented by frequent military incursions and aerial attacks, claiming the lives of 399 Gazans this year alone.

Inside this pressure cooker, the battle between the clans and <u>Hamas</u> ebbed and flowed according to the fortunes and political needs of the Islamist group. One of the first clans targeted by <u>Hamas</u> was the al-Bakr family, which controls much of the strip's fishing fleet. Known as Fatah loyalists, they came under attack during the clashes between <u>Hamas</u> and Fatah in June last year; after suffering heavy casualties, more than 200 al-Bakr gunmen surrendered to the <u>Hamas</u> fighters. The al-Masri family in the northern town of Beit Hanoun was also targeted during the June fighting. And one month after the assault on the Hilles, the compound of the powerful and notorious Doghmush family came under attack, leaving 11 people dead, including two children. Few Gazans felt pity for the Doghmush, a clan with a fearsome reputation for violent crime, including the abduction and four-month incarceration of BBC journalist Alan Johnston last year.

At its most basic, the conflict is over individual loyalty. Unlike other political groups such as Fatah or Islamic Jihad, *Hamas* demands that its members place their political affiliation above all else - even above family and kinship. As Ghazi Hamad, a senior *Hamas* official, says: "Here in Gaza, the political affiliation is very strong. A man who is a member of *Hamas* will be loyal to the organisation more than to his own family."

The Hilles learnt that this even applied to the more than 100 family members who defied clan tradition to join <u>Hamas</u>. "In the first clashes [between the Hilles and <u>Hamas</u> last year], most stood with the family against <u>Hamas</u>. In the second round they were neutral," says Abu Osama.

Abu Mohammed Hilles, a burly 24-year-old with a thick beard and piercing eyes, embodies the dilemma. He has served in the <u>Hamas</u> military wing for six years, and while he was not asked to take part in the assault on his own family in August, he did not rush to defend his relatives either. "I cannot give up the movement - it is Islam - and I cannot give up the family," he says.

Abu Mohammed and dozens of other family members are gathered on a blustery autumn day close to the Erez crossing. Almost three months have passed since the battle of Shajaiyeh, and the first of the Hilles men who fled across the border are returning today.

A small crowd of flag-waving and cheering family members and friends has gathered to greet the men, who approach their fathers and brothers, shake hands, exchange kisses and then collapse into a tight embrace.

I approach one of the youngsters, who reluctantly agrees to talk. He is pale and worried, and doesn't want to give his name. Did he take part in the August battle with fighters from <u>Hamas</u>? He shakes his head. What does he think of the Islamist group now? As he searches for words, his father steps in, grabs him by the jacket and drags him away. <u>Hamas</u> had promised not to arrest or harm the Hilles men when they returned but one still has to be careful about railing against a group that, at the height of the battle with Fatah, threw enemies, alive and handcuffed, from the rooftops of Gaza skyscrapers.

Not far from the scenes of reunion stands the house of Rafik al-Masri, who combines his daytime post as a professor of sociology with the rather more archaic role as an elder of the al-Masri clan. A distinguished looking man of 50 years, he wears a thin moustache and an easy smile.

The al-Masris trace their roots back to four brothers who arrived here from Egypt more than 300 years ago. Today, the family counts up to 5,000 members. Its status rests not only on tradition, numbers and the wealth of its leading members, but also on its ability to fight. Al-Masri says he can call upon at least 600 armed men to defend the family compound against attack. Another source of prestige lies with the family's contribution to the Palestinian struggle against Israel. "The family has given 20 martyrs," he states, pointing out that seven al-Masris have died in "martyrdom operations" - the term used by many Palestinians to describe suicide attacks.

The al-Masris and the other big Gaza clans that have dominated the territory's political and economic life for decades, if not centuries, know how to survive regime change. To help each other through the bad times, the clan-like many others - operates a welfare fund: every male above the age of 16 is required to contribute at least five shekels a month. Rafik al-Masri, who manages the fund, says this gives him an annual budget of about 60,000 shekels (\$15,000) to spend on funerals, weddings and study grants for needy family members.

The support of a large family became even more vital as the power of the Palestinian Authority declined after Arafat's death in 2004 and Gaza descended into lawlessness. Along with the decline of the authority's status came a gradual escalation in the stand-off between Fatah and *Hamas*.

The al-Masris backed the losing side. And they now have a foe that some family members believe to be more menacing even than the hated Israelis. "*Hamas*," Rafik tells me, stressing every syllable, "is worse than the Israeli occupation."

I ask him to explain the ferocity of the family's animosity, so he tells me the story of his nephew, Louai al-Masri, who served as a bodyguard for the Palestinian Authority. Just days before <u>Hamas</u> finally took over the Gaza Strip, the young man was stopped at a <u>Hamas</u> checkpoint and dragged from the car. "He was stopped while coming back from work. They shot him in the legs and left him in the street."

Vowing revenge, the young man's father and brothers went in search of <u>Hamas</u> gunmen. In a shoot-out on Beit Hanoun's main market square, they killed one <u>Hamas</u> security officer and injured three more, setting off a bloody cycle of killings that reached its nadir just outside the town's only hospital. More than 100 <u>Hamas</u> men laid siege to the hospital where doctors were treating the injured al-Masri men. Eventually <u>Hamas</u> stormed the clinic, hauled out one of the attackers and shot him. In total, "they assassinated three members of the family - my brother and two nephews," Rafik al-Masri says.

<u>Hamas</u> today is at pains to stress that it does not seek all-out war with Gaza's leading families. Unlike other, more radical Islamist groups, <u>Hamas</u> has often shown a tendency towards pragmatism. Keen to prove that it could govern as well or even better than Fatah, the group in principle had little interest in antagonising powerful players such as the Hilles or the al-Masris. In this case, however, moderation lost out to a mix of vulnerability, rigidity and the desire to crush even small signs of defiance - before they could escalate into a full-blown challenge to its authority.

Fawzy Barhoum, the ever-cheerful spokesman for <u>Hamas</u>, works hard to present the calm, acceptable face of the Islamist group. It does not always work (he recently blamed the global financial crisis on the "Jewish lobby") but his appearance and manner are certainly a world away from the image of the gun-toting fanatic. He is dressed meticulously in a dark suit, grey shirt and tie.

"The clans are a victim of Fatah," he insists, turning the conventional wisdom on its head. "When Abu Amar [Yassir Arafat] came back to Palestine, he came to depend on the clans for support. Fatah and its security apparatus gave the families guns and money." In the years after Arafat's death, as the power of the Palestinian Authority began to crumble, the clans used their new-found power to further their own - often criminal - interests, Barhoum says. Some clans kidnapped foreign journalists, erected roadblocks and terrorised the civilian population. "These families committed crimes, and even killings."

Even independent observers acknowledge that Fatah was instrumental in politicising, and arming, a select group of powerful Gaza clans and promoting family elders to top positions in the PA's intelligence and security apparatus. Both the Hilles and the al-Masris saw leading members elevated to high offices under Fatah rule.

After the <u>Hamas</u> takeover in Gaza, the Islamists vowed to put an end to the general state of lawlessness. Barhoum explains the rules governing the Gaza Strip today: "No one is above the law. No family is allowed to give shelter to people who committed a crime or carry weapons. We are not against any family - but everything has to be done according to the law."

<u>Hamas</u> made it clear that it would not tolerate any rival power inside the Gaza Strip - and soon set out to prove that defiance, even for a family as strong as the Hilles, would come at a bloody price.

In an unpaved lane not far from the main Hilles compound in Shajaiyeh, I find Mohammed Redda and his sons huddled over a motorbike. Dressed in a smart blue shirt and ironed jeans, the unemployed Redda introduces himself as a member of the extended Hilles clan. He relates the events of August with a mixture of resignation and pride: "We were sitting here when the clashes started," he says, gesturing to a plastic chair standing just outside his three-floor home. Several rocket-propelled grenades slammed into a small plot of land in front of the house, blasting holes into the iron gate right next to where we stand.

The men brought the <u>women</u> and children to safety before fetching their guns and firing back. The family lost the battle but, as I am told by everyone here, not their honour. The Hilles, Redda says, held their own against the famously disciplined fighters of <u>Hamas</u> for 13 hours, inflicting several casualties on the Islamist forces. "We engaged with <u>Hamas</u> to protect our dignity and honour, and our dignity and honour are still intact," he says.

And there is always revenge. "We lost 18 men. As soon as the situation changes, we will fight against <u>Hamas</u> again," says Redda. One of his sons interrupts. "We always said we would never allow <u>Hamas</u> men into our houses unless they step over our corpses. We are going to break into their homes and make their families suffer what we suffered here." The small group of Hilles men that has gathered around us nod their approval.

Back in Beit Hanoun, the al-Masris are also thinking about revenge - just not at the moment, while <u>Hamas</u> is strong and in power. "For the time being, they can arrest us, they can detain us, but we will not be lured out on to the battlefield," says Rafik al-Masri. "But we will never accept the principle of forgiveness. We will never let bygone be bygone. In Islam we say that every time has its own judge." Justice, he adds solemnly, can "take hours, or can take years".

Abu Osama Hilles, sitting in the office of his paint factory, told me earlier that the families had "vanished" under the <u>Hamas</u> onslaught. A moment later, he corrects himself. "But they can come back. <u>Hamas</u> cannot rule the Gaza Strip forever."

Tobias Buck is the FT's Jerusalem bureau chief

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Israelis hit school, Ottawa blames Hamas; Israel poised to set up humanitarian corridor; New cabinet minister speaks out as tank fire kills huddled civilians

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Body

JERUSALEM

Canada blamed <u>Hamas</u> yesterday for endangering civilians in the Gaza Strip after at least 42 Palestinians - including children - were killed by Israeli tank fire while taking shelter in a UN-operated school.

"<u>Hamas</u> bears a terrible responsibility for this and for the wider deepening humanitarian tragedy," Peter Kent, the new minister of state for foreign affairs, told Reuters in response to the attack.

"The burden of responsibility is on *Hamas* to stop its terrorist rocketing of Israel."

Hamas, a radical Islamist group, has ruled Gaza since June 2007.

While adding that Ottawa did not yet know much about the incident, Kent said: "*Hamas*'s record is to use civilians - the population and civilian infrastructure - as shields and it would seem quite possible that this is yet another tragic instance."

As international pressure mounted for an end to Israel's all-out Gaza offensive, Kent said in another interview, "Until (*Hamas*) commit to a permanent ceasefire - a truly permanent ceasefire, a durable ceasefire - and don't use it as a break to rearm and resume rocketing, the fighting will go on."

His comments are Ottawa's strongest to date on the ongoing crisis.

Foreign Affairs Minister Lawrence Cannon recently had used a slightly more moderate tone, urging both sides to avoid civilian casualties. He called for diplomatic efforts to achieve a ceasefire, although he pointedly noted Canada views the rocket attacks on Israel as the cause of the crisis, and supports Israel's right to defend itself.

Israel blamed Palestinian fighters for the hit on the school yesterday, in which at least 55 people were wounded. A preliminary Israel Defense Forces report last night said Palestinian militants had used the school grounds as a cover to fire mortar rounds at Israeli soldiers, who returned fire.

"We face a very delicate situation where <u>Hamas</u> uses the citizens of Gaza as a protective shield," said IDF spokesperson Brig.-Gen. Avi Benayahu.

Israelis hit school, Ottawa blames Hamas; Israel poised to set up humanitarian corridor New cabinet minister speaks out as tank fire kills huddled civilians

He said the bodies of two <u>Hamas</u> militants, Imad Abu Askar and Hassan Abu Askar, were found among the dead at the school, located in the Jabaliya refugee camp.

At the local hospital where dozens of the injured were treated, Dr. Basam Warda said many of the casualties were **women** and children who had gathered at the school because they considered it safe. At the time of the attack, people were standing outside the gate of the school, where hundreds of families had sought shelter.

"The wounded arrived with multiple fractures, ripped stomachs, amputated limbs," he said. "The bodies were ripped apart."

The Israeli offensive entered its 12th day today, pitting Israel against Palestinian militants in Gaza, who persist in firing rockets at populated areas of southern Israel.

In other developments early today, Israel announced it will set up a "humanitarian corridor" for the Gaza Strip as aid agencies complain of a mounting crisis for the enclave's 1.5 million Palestinians.

The corridor had been recommended by Israel's military chiefs and would entail granting periodic access to various areas of the strip to allow Palestinians to stock up on vital goods, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's office said in a statement.

Olmert spokesperson Mark Regev described the measure as a "special status to allow the transfer of people, foodstuffs and medicines" and said it could be implemented as early as today.

Israeli leaders will debate today whether to order their armed forces to storm the Gaza Strip's urban centres, political sources told Reuters. Israeli troops have so far kept to the outskirts of the city of Gaza or other densely populated areas.

Israel called the initial ground sweep the "second stage" of the operation, without saying what could follow.

The Israeli operation is aimed at stopping the missiles, but militants in Gaza succeeded yesterday in firing 30 rockets toward Israel, one of which crashed in the town of Gedera, 30 kilometres south of Tel Aviv.

So far, four Israeli civilians have been killed in rocket attacks since the start of the Israeli offensive. Yesterday, a sixth Israeli soldier lost his life in ground fighting that began late Saturday.

Meanwhile, the Palestinian death toll rose past 600, with nearly 3,000 more wounded.

In addition to those killed at the UN school yesterday, at least 20 Palestinians lost their lives in Israeli shelling up and down the narrow coastal strip, according to Palestinian reports. Most of them appeared to be civilians, the reports said.

As the bloody conflict ground on in Gaza, world leaders continued to seek a so-far elusive formula for bringing an end to the killing.

French President Nicolas Sarkozy continued a whirlwind tour of the region, meeting yesterday with political leaders in Egypt, Lebanon, and Syria.

"I'm convinced that there are solutions," he said in the Egyptian resort of Sharm el-Sheikh, where he spoke with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

The pair proposed a plan that would bring together the main parties, including the Palestinian Authority, to take "all measures" to end the conflict, French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner told a high-level meeting of the UN Security Council.

It would include the key issues of protecting Gaza's borders and reopening all crossings, he said.

Israelis hit school, Ottawa blames Hamas; Israel poised to set up humanitarian corridor New cabinet minister speaks out as tank fire kills huddled civilians

Regev said Olmert's office was holding off commenting for the time being.

Kent's position on the fighting is similar to the U.S. stance.

"The situation now taking place in Gaza was caused by <u>Hamas</u>," U.S. President George W. Bush said Monday in his first public comments on the conflict. "Instead of caring about the people of Gaza, <u>Hamas</u> decided to use Gaza to launch rockets to kill innocent Israelis. Israel's obviously decided to protect herself and her people."

British Prime Minister Gordon Brown has said the Palestinians "need humanitarian aid, but the Israelis must have some assurance that there are no rocket attacks coming into Israel."

U.S. President-elect Barack Obama broke his silence on the fighting in Gaza yesterday, calling the loss of civilian life "a source of deep concern for me."

He said he would have much more to say following his inauguration this month. "We've got plenty to say about Gaza, and on Jan. 20 you'll hear directly from me."

With files from Star wire services

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No refuge: UN school comes under attack; Israel says its troops 'shot back to save their own lives' after Hamas fighters fired mortars

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Body

Israeli mortar shells killed as many as 40 Palestinians, among them <u>women</u> and children, outside a UN school in Gaza yesterday where they were taking refuge from 11 days of fierce fighting. The Israeli military contended that <u>Hamas</u> fighters had fired mortars from the school compound, and UN officials called for an independent inquiry into the incident.

But the rising civilian death toll in crowded Gaza heightened international urgency to end the combat. U.S. and European diplomats said it was highly likely that Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel, which has said it would not end the operation until it crushed *Hamas*'s capacity to fire rockets into its civilian areas, would travel to Egypt today to discuss a ceasefire.

Meanwhile, <u>Hamas</u> continued to fire off rockets despite the large numbers of Israeli troops on the fourth day of the ground operation in Gaza. One rocket reached farther than ever into Israeli territory, only 32 kilometres from Tel Aviv, and wounded an infant.

Al-Qa'ida's No. 2 Ayman al-Zawahiri called on Muslims to attack Israeli and Western targets in revenge for the offensive.

With another day of gory news reports being repeatedly flashed around the Arab world, Israel contended that the deaths at the school demonstrated *Hamas*'s callousness to the lives of the Palestinians' own civilians: The Israeli Defence Force said it was responding to mortar shells from the school compound, in the packed and militant Jabaliya refugee camp in northern Gaza, and fired several mortar rounds near the school.

"They shot back to save their own lives," said Ilan Tal, an Israeli military spokesman and a brigadier general in the reserves.

Among the dead, the military said in a statement, were "Hamas terrorist operatives and a mortar battery cell."

The military identified two *Hamas* operatives, Imad Abu Asker and Hassan Abu Asker, as having been killed.

No refuge: UN school comes under attack; Israel says its troops 'shot back to save their own lives' after Hamas fighters fired mortars

A young witness from Jabaliya, Ibrahim Amen, 16, said that he had seen one of the militants, whom he identified as Abu Khaled Abu Asker, in the area of the school right before the attack.

Ibrahim said he saw the militant after he had responded to calls for volunteers to pile sand around the camp "to help protect the resistance fighters." Ibrahim went to pile sand near the school with his brother, Iyad, 20, who was then injured by the Israeli mortar fire.

UN officials were unable to immediately determine the accuracy of the Israeli army's statements.

Christopher Gunness, 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.

The night before, the United Nations said, three Palestinian men were killed in another Israeli attack on another UN school used for refugees in Gaza.

"These attacks by Israeli military forces which endanger UN facilities acting as places of refuge are totally unacceptable and must not be repeated," UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said in a statement.

"Equally unacceptable are any actions by militants which endanger the Palestinian civilian population."

In the school hit yesterday, UN officials initially put the death toll at 30 and said 55 were wounded, with several in critical condition. Palestinian hospital officials said 40 people were killed, among them 10 children and five **women**.

The death toll in Gaza reached around 640 yesterday, according to Palestinian health officials. The United Nations has estimated that about one-fourth of those killed were civilians, though there have been no reliable and current figures in recent days.

International efforts to halt the violence appeared to be moving into higher gear.

Graphic

Colour Photo: YANNIS BEHRAKIS, REUTERS; A mourner attends the funeral for soldier Dagan Vertman at Mount Herzl military cemetery in Jerusalem. He was killed by friendly fire.;

Load-Date: March 20, 2009



<u>That's enough pointless outrage about Gaza; The trouble is that we have no idea what the arguments inside Hamas are or how they are affected by Israeli actions</u>

The Times (London)

December 30, 2008 Tuesday

Edition 1

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Section: Pg. 18

Length: 1088 words

Byline: David Aaronovitch

Body

Let's have a pointless discussion about Gaza and begin it by talking about whether Israel's bombing is "disproportionate".

To illustrate the meaninglessness of such a debate let us attempt to agree what "proportionate" would look like.

Would it be best if Israel were to manufacture a thousand or so wildly inaccurate missiles and then fire them off in the general direction of Gaza City? There is a chance, though, that since Gaza is more densely packed than Israel, casualties might be much the same as they are now, so although the ordnance would be proportionate, the deaths would not. Of course, if one of Gaza's rockets did manage to hit an Israeli nursery school at the wrong time (or the right time, depending upon how you look at it), then the proportionality issue would be solved in one explosion. Would you be happy then? This is not about proportionality.

Let us instead express outrage and, perhaps, illustrate it with pictures of crowds of similarly outraged protesters in Damascus, Amman or Indonesia. Let half of us concoct round-robins of suddenly active professors, Gallowegian politicians and unthinking actors, expressing hyberbolic rage at "genocide", describing Gaza as Israel's Guernica and demanding sanctions, while the other half wonders why no petitions ever get launched against the funders and organisers of, say, the suicide bomber in Khost at the weekend, who blew up his vehicle beside a group of passing Afghan schoolchildren; or against the Taleban cleric threatening last week to kill <u>female</u> students in Pakistan for their un-Islamic desire to learn.

This is not about outrage. We could then, perhaps, from the other side, attempt to suggest Israel's moral superiority on the basis that, unlike the careless firers of Qassam rockets, any civilian casualties caused by Israel's bombs were the unintended victims of its actions, however many of them there are. Israel takes care with its targeting, they don't. But the eight students killed by a bus stop in Gaza are just as dead, their families just as bereft, and their feelings towards the originators of the bombs just as compounded of hate and regret.

That's enough pointless outrage about Gaza The trouble is that we have no idea what the arguments inside Hamas are or how they are affected by Israeli actions

So this is not about moral superiority. Perhaps we could now try to have a discussion with a point.

Will the Israeli action advance or hinder any movement towards a long-term solution in the area, or have we all given up on that (in which case expressions of anything very much seem not just irrelevant, but irritating)? Will it, in the long term, relieve Israeli citizens from the threat of arbitrary extinction? I'm pretty sure it will help in the short term. I cannot easily see what it accomplishes in the longer run.

While we debate the gap between Israeli policy intentions and their outcomes, it is worth stopping for a moment to consider what the calculations of <u>Hamas</u> may have been in recent months. When <u>Hamas</u> refused to renew the Egyptianbrokered ceasefire ten days ago, and then when it allowed a series of rocket attacks on Israel, what did its leadership think was likely to happen? We know that it was warned by both Egypt and its Fatah rivals that there would be an Israeli reaction, but did <u>Hamas</u> believe such warnings were exaggerated, or did it want there to be such an attack? Unlike the Israeli Government, whose representatives have been all over the media in the past two days, at the time of writing not one **Hamas** bigwig had put himself up for interrogation.

This is the great lacuna in our conversation about Gaza and Palestine. We simply have no idea what the arguments inside <u>Hamas</u> are, and how they are affected by Israeli actions. It is as possible to believe that the bombing of Gaza will strengthen hardliners as it is that they will be sufficiently weakened to allow a ceasefire. We just don't know.

What we shouldn't do is fall into the easy analytical trap of designating <u>Hamas</u> as an al-Qaeda equivalent, however much its anti-Jewish propaganda and dedication to martyrdom disgusts us.

In any long-term solution a large section of *Hamas*'s current support, and a not insignificant part of its membership, would have to be won over to the side of peace.

The historian Tom Segev, writing in the Israeli newspaper, Haaretz, yesterday reminded readers that "all of Israel's wars have been based on yet another assumption that has been with us from the start: that we are only defending ourselves", but that "no military operation has ever advanced dialogue with the Palestinians". He wasn't saying that Israel hadn't the right to stop the rockets from being fired from Gaza, but that it would get the larger process precisely nowhere.

Adamant though I am about the need to combat Islamist violence, it is hard not to see Western and Israeli policy towards Gaza since Israel's unilateral withdrawal in 2005 as one huge strategic error. There was the refusal to deal with the <u>Hamas</u> Government elected in January 2006, the siding with Fatah in the subsequent internal dispute, the imposition of an effective blockade on Gaza that amounted to collective punishment. The capacity of <u>Hamas</u> to govern, or fail to govern, in the eyes of the Palestinians was thus never tested.

In some ways this policy towards <u>Hamas</u>, though wrong, was understandable. But the failure of Israel to proceed in any substantial way with easing the conditions for Palestinians on the Fatah-controlled West Bank, or the commencement of a policy of dismantling West Bank settlements before an agreement, meant that no encouragement was given to the opponents of <u>Hamas</u> either.

The message that has been given out to Palestinians, time and again, is that there is no clear advantage to be gained from being moderate. It has been all stick and no carrot, to the frustration of those, such as Tony Blair, who have tried to create some impetus towards peace.

But why speak about such things when we can hold up placards equating Jews with Nazis, emote over dead babies or talk tough about defending Israeli citizens? It was Shimon Peres, the Israeli President, who said that, far from there being no light at the end of the Middle East tunnel, there was indeed light.

The trouble was that there was no tunnel. Bit by bit, inducement by bribe and ceasefire by restraint, we have to construct one.

That's enough pointless outrage about Gaza The trouble is that we have no idea what the arguments inside Hamas are or how they are affected by Israeli actions

If we are to do this then the friends of the Palestinians would be best advised to put pressure on <u>Hamas</u> never to launch another of its bloody rockets and to stop its death-laden rhetoric, and the friends of Israel well placed to cajole it into making a settlement seem worthwhile. All else is verbiage.

Graphic

Rage: protesters outside the Israeli Embassy in London on Sunday

Load-Date: December 30, 2008



Comment & Debate: Gaza after a Hamas rout will be an even greater threat to Israel: Amid the rubble there would be a leadership vacuum, opening the door for Somali-style warlords or even al-Qaida

The Guardian - Final Edition January 7, 2009 Wednesday

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Section: GUARDIAN COMMENT AND DEBATE PAGES; Pg. 29

Length: 1249 words

Byline: Jonathan Freedland

Body

The scenes of calamity just get worse. Yesterday Guardian readers awoke to an image that will haunt many for years to come: three young children, their eyes closed as if in sleep, laid out dead on a hospital floor. One was no bigger than a baby; next to him, a toddler wearing junior tracksuit trousers, the kind your own son might wear. Except these were dyed red with blood.

Somehow, and quickly, even that horror was surpassed with the news yesterday that a UN school, used as a shelter, had been hit, killing more than 40 Palestinians, more than half of them <u>women</u> or children. Israel says <u>Hamas</u> fighters were launching mortar shells from the UN facility, which is why Israel hit back. Either way, Operation Cast Lead seems designed to leaden the heart with sorrow.

Still, Britons and Americans have no cause for self-righteousness. The scale of the Israeli offensive is shocking, and yet the killing is not of a greater order than that of the two wars, in Iraq and Afghanistan, in which our very own British troops are taking part. I spoke yesterday with one foreign diplomat based in Jerusalem who recalled how, during an earlier posting in Afghanistan, he had seen the remains of an entire village razed to the ground by American fighter jets in pursuit of a couple of Taliban commanders. "All that was left was rubble and body parts," he says now. Seen in the context of the last seven years, the grim truth is that Israelis are not guilty of a unique crime in Gaza.

When and how will this end? "The sooner, the better," says Ehud Olmert, the accidental prime minister whose tenure began with the pounding of southern Lebanon and will end with the pummelling of Gaza. He told Ha'aretz last night he is in touch with world leaders seeking a diplomatic way out - but he did not sound like a man in a hurry.

The conventional wisdom suggests crises like this conclude when the international community finally says enough is enough. But in the Middle East, the international community is a fiction. The only pressure that counts is Washington's and nothing is coming from that direction. George Bush fully endorses Israel's action and Barack Obama is sticking to the protocol that a president-elect keeps his mouth shut till he has sworn the oath on January 20.

Comment & Debate: Gaza after a Hamas rout will be an even greater threat to Israel: Amid the rubble there would be a leadership vacuum, opening the door for So....

That leaves the only pressure that can divert Israeli governments: Israeli public opinion. If the fathers and mothers of Israel's soldiers turn on this operation, then its days will be numbered. For that to happen, the Israel Defence Forces would have to sustain serious casualties. Support for the 2006 war in Lebanon melted once too many Israeli families were burying their dead.

But that does not seem to be about to happen. For one thing, the IDF is currently winning plaudits from the Israeli press for proceeding gingerly, pushing its ground troops forward with caution as if they have learned some of the operational lessons of 2006. More importantly, <u>Hamas</u> is not staging anything like the opposition mounted by Hezbollah in Lebanon, when Israeli fatalities reached triple figures.

It lacks the resources of Hezbollah, with its open border and supply lines to Syria. <u>Hamas</u> is in tiny, sealed-off Gaza. True, it is backed by Iran - which partly explains the strength of support for Cast Lead from an Israeli public long fearful of an Iranian proxy on its southern border - but relying on smuggled kit is not the same as having a powerful patron across the border.

Unless, of course, this is all a fiendish plot by the <u>Hamas</u> leadership. On this theory, they are not really cowering in their underground bunkers - too scared to resist, saving their own skins, as the uncle of those dead toddlers accusingly told the Guardian yesterday. Instead they are waiting to lure the IDF in, enticing Israeli troops deep into Gaza's cities where they will be most vulnerable. But in the absence of such a lethal <u>Hamas</u> fightback, the ending of this conflict will be in Israel's hands. The Israelis won't end it now, not when they are still finding weapons caches or other <u>Hamas</u> military capacity to be degraded. It is too tempting to press on, to crush the enemy. That way Israel gets to claim what it could not in 2006: a clear and total victory.

But there is a massive risk here. Such a victory will not just achieve Cast Lead's original stated aim, namely altering <u>Hamas</u>'s calculus - reducing its incentive to fire rockets at civilian targets inside Israel - but could topple the <u>Hamas</u> government altogether.

Israeli officials deny that regime change in Gaza is either likely to happen or the goal of their mission. But that may end up being the result: intelligence reports suggest the organisation has been eviscerated, its ability to govern all but destroyed.

Israeli leaders will crow at that; their poll numbers will surge. But it will surely prove a pyrrhic victory. For what would be the consequences of crippling the <u>Hamas</u> administration in Gaza? Israel would be confronted with a sharp dilemma. Either it would have to stay, resuming the occupation it sought to end in 2005 - a notion with zero popular appeal in Israel. Or it would have to withdraw, leaving behind a huge and dangerous question mark.

For Gaza could become a vacuum, rapidly descending into Somalia, a lawless badland of warlords and clans. A new force could seek to replace *Hamas*. Most likely it would be even more radical: al-Qaida has long been pushing at the edges of Gaza, eager to find a way in.

Would either of those options appeal to Israel? Of course they wouldn't. As one Israeli commentator put it yesterday: "In this context the IDF is afraid of being too successful."

Israel's preferred scenario, having pushed <u>Hamas</u> out of the way, is for the pro-western moderates of Fatah to take over. But Fatah knows that to return to Gaza

on the back of an Israeli tank is the kiss of death: they would for ever be branded collaborators with the enemy.

Israel may try to dump responsibility for Gaza on a coalition of moderate Arab states and others, including the Fatah-led Palestinian Authority. But would any of them be willing to take it on? Analyst Ahmad Khalidi notes that the "amount of aid, reconstruction and psychological nursing is of such intensity" that surely no one would step in. Israel may be left recalling what Colin Powell once called the Pottery Barn rule: "You break it, you own it".

And from the rubble of Gaza, the attacks on Israel will surely resume. <u>Hamas</u> is too deeply rooted to disappear. New cells will arise, more filled with hatred and bent on revenge than ever. Already there are warnings of a return to

Comment & Debate: Gaza after a Hamas rout will be an even greater threat to Israel: Amid the rubble there would be a leadership vacuum, opening the door for So....

suicide bombing, inside Israel and beyond. And, warns Khalidi, there would be no <u>Hamas</u> leadership - with undeniable discipline over its forces and the pragmatism to see the benefits of a ceasefire - to rein in these new, angry fighters. The great irony is that Israel may well decapitate <u>Hamas</u> - only to regret the passing of a Palestinian administration with sufficient stature to bring order.

Perhaps Israel's leadership will see this danger and hold back, pushing for a ceasefire that would be robust and externally supervised but would ultimately, if indirectly, amount to a deal with <u>Hamas</u>. If that is the outcome, it will be a strange kind of victory. For Israel could have got that through diplomacy, without causing the death, mayhem and damage to its international reputation now unfolding before our eyes. If it goes further, it will have removed one danger - only to have replaced it with one far greater.

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Load-Date: January 7, 2009



UN appeal for truce in Gaza is rejected; Fighting unchecked as Israel and Hamas defy cease-fire call

The International Herald Tribune
January 10, 2009 Saturday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1

Length: 1360 words

Byline: Ethan Bronner - The New York Times Media Group

Dateline: JERUSALEM

Body

Reporting was contributed by Neil MacFarquhar from the United Nations; Rachel Donadio from Rome; Isabel Kershner and Steven Erlanger from Jerusalem; Taghreed El-Khodary from Gaza; and Alan Cowell and Caroline Brothers from Paris.

*

Israel and <u>Hamas</u> rebuffed a United Nations call for a cease-fire in the 14-day Gaza war on Friday, with Israel saying continued barrages of rocket fire from its adversaries made the UN resolution "unworkable."

In a statement after a cabinet meeting, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said the Israeli military would "continue acting to protect Israeli citizens and will carry out the missions it was given," according to news reports.

Officials from <u>Hamas</u> dismissed the UN resolution, according to news reports, although one official said it was being studied.

As the war continued unchecked on Friday, the Israeli military said its forces attacked more than 50 targets in overnight despite the UN vote on Thursday night calling for "an immediate, durable and fully respected cease-fire."

Israeli warplanes attacked launching sites and missile-manufacturing facilities, the military said, while witnesses reported seeing rockets fired out of Gaza into southern Israel. The casualty toll was not immediately known. One Israeli airstrike destroyed a five-story building, killing at least seven people, <u>Hamas</u> security officials told The Associated Press.

The developments came as international aid groups lashed out at Israel, saying that access to civilians in need was poor, relief workers were being hurt and killed and Israel was woefully neglecting its obligations to Palestinians who were trapped, some among rotting corpses, in a nightmarish landscape of deprivation.

On Thursday, the United Nations declared a suspension of its aid operations after one of its drivers was killed and two others were wounded, despite driving UN-flagged vehicles and coordinating their movements with the Israeli military. The United Nations secretary general, Ban Ki Moon, called a second time for an investigation by Israel of the more than 40 deaths near a United Nations school from Israeli tank fire on Tuesday.

UN appeal for truce in Gaza is rejected Fighting unchecked as Israel and Hamas defy cease-fire call

The International Committee of the Red Cross, based in Geneva, reported finding what it called shocking scenes, including four emaciated children next to the corpses of their mothers, on Wednesday. In a rare and sharply critical statement, it said it believed that "the Israeli military failed to meet its obligation under international humanitarian law to care for and evacuate the wounded."

Israeli officials said that they were examining all the allegations, that they did not aim at civilians and that they were not certain that the source of fire that killed or wounded the United Nations drivers was Israeli.

"We do our utmost to avoid hitting civilians, and many times we don't fire because we see civilians nearby," said Major Avital Leibovich, chief army spokeswoman for the foreign news media. "We are holding meetings with UN officials to try to work out a mechanism so that their work can go forward."

She said the army had learned of the Red Cross allegations in a media report, and that the committee had not yet presented the evidence of what she called "these very serious allegations" to the army.

Anne-Sophie Bonefeld, a spokeswoman for the International Committee of the Red Cross, said Thursday that when the children and others were rescued in Gaza on Wednesday, workers had to leave behind a number of bodies. On Thursday, she said, 100 civilians were rescued from the same Gaza City neighborhood. They were not wounded, but they were weakened because of being without food or water for two days.

At the United Nations itself, 14 nations approved the Security Council resolution urging a cease-fire, with the United States abstaining. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said the United States abstained from voting on the resolution, which left unclear how a cease-fire would be enforced, because it wanted to see whether mediation efforts undertaken by President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt succeed. The United States did not veto the resolution because Washington supports its overall goals, she said.

The resolution called for a cease-fire that would lead to the "full withdrawal" of Israeli forces from Gaza, the passage of humanitarian aid to the Palestinians and an end to the trafficking of arms and ammunition into the territory.

Some Arab ambassadors expressed disappointment that the measure did not specifically call for a lifting of the Israeli blockade of Gaza, and some Western ambassadors acknowledged a long history of UN resolutions that led nowhere. "We are all very conscious that peace is made on the ground, while resolutions are written in the United Nations," said David Miliband, the British foreign secretary.

The Gaza authorities said that the death toll passed 750, with <u>women</u> and children making up about 40 percent of the dead. Israel held its fire for three hours Thursday afternoon, the second day in a row, to allow in aid. It was during that pause that local ambulance crews and the Red Crescent found dozens of bodies under a collapsed building. Three Israeli soldiers were killed in combat; seven other soldiers have died during the military campaign, which is aimed at stopping *Hamas* rocket fire, and three civilians have been killed by rockets.

More rockets flew into Israel and, for the first time since the operation against <u>Hamas</u> began, three Katyusha rockets were shot from Lebanon into northern Israel on Thursday. Hezbollah, which fought a war with Israel in 2006 that included thousands of rockets, said it was not responsible.

But attention was increasingly focused on the growing humanitarian crisis and on the increasing anger abroad.

Israel condemned a high-ranking Vatican official for comparing Gaza to "a concentration camp."

"Look at the conditions in Gaza: more and more, it resembles a big concentration camp," Cardinal Renato Martino, the head of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, said in an interview published Wednesday in II Sussidiaro.

He defended his comments in the center-left Italian daily La Repubblica on Thursday. While noting that <u>Hamas</u> rockets into Israel were "certainly not sugared almonds," he called the situation in Gaza "horrific."

UN appeal for truce in Gaza is rejected Fighting unchecked as Israel and Hamas defy cease-fire call

Israel sharply condemned the cardinal's use of World War II imagery. "We are astounded that a spiritual dignitary would have such words that are so far removed from truth and dignity," said Yigal Palmor, a spokesman for the Israeli Foreign Ministry.

John Holmes, a United Nations emergency relief coordinator, said in New York that the three-hour daily pause in the fighting permitted by Israel in Gaza was insufficient. He said the Gaza authorities counted 758 fatalities, among them 257 children and 56 *women*. The injured totaled 3,100. Of these, 1,080 were children and 465 *women*.

Holmes added that the Gaza authorities reported that 20,000 were displaced but that conditions prevented officials from helping them properly. "The continuing violence is making humanitarian aid increasingly difficult and almost impossible," he said.

Antoine Grand, head of Red Cross operations in Gaza, said his group's workers came under Israeli fire on Thursday. He said a convoy of two trucks, one clearly marked as Red Cross and the other from the Ministry of Health, was taking medical equipment to the southern city of Khan Yunis, followed by 13 ambulances heading to the Egyptian border.

He said the convoy's movement was "fully coordinated with Israel. I did it myself." It was during the three-hour lull, at 3:30 p.m., he said, when they stopped in front of the checkpoint that the Red Cross vehicle was shot at from a tank.

Israeli officials said they were investigating.

The Jerusalem Post's Web site quoted an Israeli medical worker as saying that the killing of the United Nations driver that contributed to the suspension of aid delivery was the work of a *Hamas* sniper.

John Ging, who heads United Nations relief operations in Gaza, said by telephone that he was unaware of any information suggesting that the driver had been shot by <u>Hamas</u>. "If they have evidence, let them present it," he said.

Load-Date: January 11, 2009



Netanyahu casts himselfas player on a world stage; Right-winger calls for destruction of Hamas in defence of democracy

The Independent (London)

January 14, 2009 Wednesday

First Edition

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Section: WORLD; Pg. 20

Length: 765 words

Byline: Donald Macintyre IN JERUSALEM

Body

At any other time there would be nothing notable about Benjamin Netanyahu reminding everyone that he thinks that "at the end of the day" there is "no alternative" but to "bring down" <u>Hamas</u>. But at a time when the ostensible aims of the war Israel has waged for 18 days have fallen rather short of that, it can hardly fail to have an impact. The leader of the right-wing opposition party Likud, and the man the polls predict could become prime minister in less than a month's time chose to do it, moreover, during a fluent session with foreign journalists in which - for much of the time at least - he cast himself as a statesman comfortable on the global stage and determined to remain above party politics at a time of war.

He said he was looking forward, if elected, to working with Senator Hillary Clinton as US Secretary of State, without the slightest hint of the friction that existed between him and her husband, President Bill Clinton, when the Likud leader was prime minister in the Nineties.

Justifying a vote by a Knesset committee this week to ban two Arab parties from contesting the elections, he smoothly quoted a remark by the rationalist philosopher Baruch Spinoza that "democracy allows all the freedoms except the freedom to destroy democracy". And even at his most bellicose, he eschewed the rhetoric his main rival, Tzipi Livni, has unashamedly used about Israel "going wild". Instead he declared at one point of the many hundreds of Palestinian casualties: "We grieve for every one of them; we genuinely do," before adding, inevitably: "But a responsible government does not give immunity to criminal terrorists who fire at us while using civilians as a human shield."

But this is not the whole story. Mr Netanyahu was aiming yesterday at an overseas audience. Indeed he spoke explicitly about the need to start "rolling back" the attacks from abroad on Israel's conduct of the war - attacks which he said have a "dual feature". One is "that they distort the truth and the second is that they distort morality. It is not true that Israel is targeting civilians. It does everything in its power to minimise civilian casualties but these are inevitable in a war in which the terrorists embed themselves in the civilian population ... what would you do if your country was rocketed for a full eight years with thousands of rockets?"

Netanyahu casts himselfas player on a world stage Right-winger calls for destruction of Hamas in defence of democracy

He knows that he does not have to convince the large majority of Israelis still undeterred from their support for the war by a Palestinian death toll in Gaza which could, after only two and a half weeks, overtake the one incurred in Lebanon in five weeks in 2006, and included by Monday night 292 boys and girls under 18, and 75 <u>women</u>. And fully accepting of the military's explanation reported in the Israeli press that it has put its own soldiers' safety first and that of Palestinian civilians second. For an Israeli audience, Mr Netanyahu's task is to retain his appeal to just that supportive majority when - unlike two of his political rivals, Ms Livni and Ehud Barak, the Defence Minister - he is not actually running the war most of them so approve of.

But the long shadow of his own popularity, as the leading politician who has most consistently advocated the removal of <u>Hamas</u>, certainly hangs over this bloody campaign. For now he is choosing his words carefully, saying that Israel must achieve over <u>Hamas</u> "a victory which will cripple its capability to perpetrate terrorist attacks against us and restore deterrence throughout the region. It must stop the smuggling corridors that enable <u>Hamas</u> to smuggle thousands of rockets into Gaza ... The government has had and will continue to have my support to achieve this objective. I also said that <u>Hamas</u>, a terror organisation that is committed to our destruction, must ultimately be removed from Gaza. Should the government decide to seek that objective, it will also have our support."

Which leaves, as Ms Livni, Mr Barak and Ehud Olmert, the outgoing Prime Minister, know only too well, plenty of room in the interval - assuming there is one - between the end of the war and the election to criticise the basis on which it ends if it fails to meet his requirements, and to take some of the credit if it does. Towards the end of his news conference yesterday, he was asked if he thought the government might not have embarked on the operation if he hadn't been advocating it from an electorally threatening position. "I haven't any idea," he said crisply. It was a reply that strictly adhered to the ban on electioneering imposed during Operation Cast Lead. But it was hardly a denial.

Load-Date: January 13, 2009



As it buries its dead, Gaza echoes to the impact of more bombs falling Gaza buries its dead as the bombs keep falling and the toll still rises; Protests across Middle East as Israel drives Hamas off streets

The Daily Telegraph (London)
December 29, 2008 Monday

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The Daily Telegraph

Section: NEWS; Pg. 2 Length: 906 words

Byline: Tim Butcher in Jerusalem

Body

THE Gaza Strip resembled a mass funeral yesterday as those who died in the opening salvoes of Israel's air assault were buried.

Funeral tents were set up outside houses, each with a large number of plastic chairs for well-wishers, relatives and friends to sit on while paying their respects.

Wailing echoed across the <u>Hamas</u>-run enclave as men, <u>women</u> and children braved continuing air raids to mourn the dead.

In the southern town of Rafah relatives gathered around the body of Tawfiq Jaber, the <u>Hamas</u> police chief killed when warplanes attacked a police passing-out ceremony.

"He was a defender of the Palestinian cause," one of the <u>women</u>, clad in a long black dress, said in a whisper as his body, bedecked in a Palestinian flag, dominated the bare living room.

"He lived as a fighter and he is now dead," she added.

Prayers for the departed gave way to calls for revenge as hundreds of people joined a funeral procession that formed outside the house.

The body was taken to Rafah's "Martyr's Cemetery" to angry chants of "vengeance, vengeance, oh Izzedine al-Qassam", a reference to *Hamas*'s military wing.

At a stadium in Rafah, thousands of Palestinians bowed before 15 bodies placed on the grass. Most of those victims were members of the armed wing of *Hamas*, the Izzedine al-Qassam Brigades.

"It is a slaughter . . . Young people killed in cold blood. They were taken by surprise and mowed down by the missiles as they were at their headquarters," said Hamdan Hamuda.

As it buries its dead, Gaza echoes to the impact of more bombs falling Gaza buries its dead as the bombs keep falling and the toll still rises Protests across M....

A member of his clan, Hamuda Hamuda, 20, was among those found buried in the rubble of a building targeted in the Israeli blitz.

Across the impoverished coastal strip the same slogan has been taken up by angry crowds. "Death to Israel, death to America."

The anger is also directed at Arab states which are perceived to have failed to do anything to protect the 1.5 million Gazans.

"I am saddened by the state of the Arab world. Our people are dying and are not defended," said Hassan, a prayer leader in Gaza City, as he looked on to his mosque that has been destroyed in one of the Israeli air strikes.

Around Gaza, Israel's Operation Cast Lead had one very immediate, visible effect, forcing members of *Hamas* underground.

Since taking power in June 2007 when it drove out Fatah security forces, <u>Hamas</u> has made a point of having armed members of its 20,000-strong security force deployed publicly at major intersections and outside government buildings.

The threat of attack by Israeli warplanes has forced those men to disappear overnight.

"You cannot see a single <u>Hamas</u> security officer on the streets here, especially in Gaza City," Hazem Balousha, a local journalist, said.

"The risk is too much for them to even come out onto the streets, so they have all disappeared."

The fallout on the Arab "street" from Israel's unprecedented air assault on Gaza, which killed around 300 people, reached right across the Middle East.

All afternoon smoke from a rubbish skip set alight by angry Arab teenagers choked the Mount of Olives overlooking the Old City of Jerusalem as mounted Israeli police waving batons clashed with protesters.

The scene was repeated across the occupied West Bank as divisions between Fatah and <u>Hamas</u>, so violent a year ago that the two sides fought a quasi-civil war, were forgotten in fury.

In Hebron, an Israeli child was injured when she was hit by flying glass after protesters threw rocks at the car she was travelling in.

In the West Bank village of Ni'lin a 22-year-old Palestinian, Arafat Rateb Khawje, died after being shot when Israeli police used live rounds at a protest rally.

Witnesses said he was shot in the back while a second demonstrator, who was shot in the face, was taken to Ramallah hospital where his condition was described as critical.

Elsewhere in the Arab world there were massive public demonstrations to condemn Israel's tactics.

The Syrian government, meanwhile, announced the suspension of its indirect peace talks with Israel in the light of the attacks. In Lebanon, police fired tear gas to stop dozens of demonstrators from reaching the Egyptian embassy.

Some in the crowd hurled stones at the embassy compound. Egypt, which has served as a mediator between Israel and the Palestinians as well as between <u>Hamas</u> and its rival Fatah, has been criticised for joining Israel in closing its borders with Gaza.

In Amman, Jordan, about 5,000 lawyers marched toward parliament to demand the Israeli ambassador's expulsion and the closure of the embassy. "No for peace, yes to the rifle," they chanted.

As it buries its dead, Gaza echoes to the impact of more bombs falling Gaza buries its dead as the bombs keep falling and the toll still rises Protests across M....

The prime minister of Turkey, one of the few Muslim countries to have relations with Israel, called its air assault a "crime against humanity".

France also called for the truce to be renewed and rallied European nations to use "all their weight" to stop the fighting between Israel and *Hamas*. A protest outside the Israeli Embassy in west London descended into chaos as demonstrators clashed with police. Dozens were handcuffed and dragged off by officers in Kensington, and there were 10 arrests.

The spontaneous eruption of protests across the West Bank reminded many Palestinians of the First Intifada in the late 1980s and the Second Intifada, which ran for five years from 2000, when Palestinians rose in support of armed militants.

Khaled Meshaal, the <u>Hamas</u> leader who is based in Damascus, is demanding a third Intifada. It was still to early to say whether Israel's operation

will prove a sufficiently strong catalyst.

Load-Date: December 29, 2008



Focus: Middle East Crisis: WHY ISRAEL WENT TO WAR IN GAZA: Last night Israel sent its ground forces across the border into Gaza as it escalated its brutal assault on Hamas. As a large-scale invasion of the Palestinian territory appears to be getting under way, Chris McGreal reports from Jerusalem on Israel's hidden strategy to persuade the world of the justice of its cause in its battle with a bitter ideological foe

The Observer (London) (England)

January 4, 2009

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The Observer

Section: OBSERVER FOCUS PAGES; Pg. 19

Length: 2144 words **Byline:** Chris McGreal

Body

It is a war on two fronts. Months ago, as Israel prepared to unleash its latest wave of desolation against Gaza, it recognised that blasting <u>Hamas</u> and "the infrastructure of terror", which includes police stations, homes and mosques, was a straightforward task.

Israel also understood that a parallel operation would be required to persuade the rest of the world of the justice of its cause, even as the bodies of Palestinian <u>women</u> and children filled the mortuaries, and to ensure that its war was seen not in terms of occupation but of the west's struggle against terror and confrontation with Iran.

After the debacle of its 2006 invasion of Lebanon - not only a military disaster for Israel, but also a political and diplomatic one - the government in Tel Aviv spent months laying the groundwork at home and abroad for the assault on Gaza with quiet but energetic lobbying of foreign administrations and diplomats, particularly in Europe and parts of the Arab world.

A new information directorate was established to influence the media, with some success. And when the attack began just over a week ago, a tide of diplomats, lobby groups, bloggers and other supporters of Israel were unleashed to hammer home a handful of carefully crafted core messages intended to ensure that Israel was seen as the victim, even as its bombardment killed more than 430 Palestinians over the past week, at least a third of them civilians or policemen.

The unrelenting attack on Gaza, with an air strike every 20 minutes on average, has not stopped <u>Hamas</u> firing rockets that have killed four Israelis since the assault began, reaching deeper into the Jewish state than ever before and sending tens of thousands of people fleeing. Last night Israel escalated its action further, as its troops poured

Focus: Middle East Crisis: WHY ISRAEL WENT TO WAR IN GAZA: Last night Israel sent its ground forces across the border into Gaza as it escalated its brutal assau....

across Gaza's border, part of what appeared to be a significant ground invasion. And a diplomatic operation is already in full swing to justify the further cost in innocent lives that would almost certainly result.

Dan Gillerman, Israel's ambassador to the UN until a few months ago, was brought in by the Foreign Ministry to help lead the diplomatic and PR campaign. He said that the diplomatic and political groundwork has been under way for months.

"This was something that was planned long ahead," he said. "I was recruited by the foreign minister to coordinate Israel's efforts and I have never seen all parts of a very complex machinery - whether it is the Foreign Ministry, the Defence Ministry, the prime minister's office, the police or the army - work in such co-ordination, being effective in sending out the message."

In briefings in Jerusalem and London, Brussels and New York, the same core messages were repeated: that Israel had no choice but to attack in response to the barrage of <u>Hamas</u> rockets; that the coming attack would be on "the infrastructure of terror" in Gaza and the targets principally <u>Hamas</u> fighters; that civilians would die, but it was because **Hamas** hides its fighters and weapons factories among ordinary people.

Hand in hand went a strategy to remove the issue of occupation from discussion. Gaza was freed in 2005 when the Jewish settlers and army were pulled out, the Israelis said. It could have flourished as the basis of a Palestinian state, but its inhabitants chose conflict.

Israel portrayed <u>Hamas</u> as part of an axis of Islamist fundamentalist evil with Iran and Hezbollah. Its actions, the Israelis said, are nothing to do with continued occupation of the West Bank, the blockade of Gaza or the Israeli military's continued killing of large numbers of Palestinians since the pullout. "Israel is part of the free world and fights extremism and terrorism. <u>Hamas</u> is not," the foreign minister and Kadima party leader, Tzipi Livni, said on arriving in France as part of the diplomatic offensive last week.

Earlier in the week Livni deployed the "with us or against us" rhetoric of George W Bush's war on terror. "These are the days when every individual in the region and in the world has to choose a side. And the sides have changed. No longer is it Israel on one side and the Arab world on the other," she said. "Israel chose its side the day it was established; the Jewish people chose its side during its thousands of years of existence; and the prayer for peace is the voice sounded in the synagogues."

It was a message pumped home with receptive Arab governments, such as Egypt and Jordan, which view <u>Hamas</u> with hostility. "Large parts of the Muslim and Arab world realise that <u>Hamas</u> represents a greater danger to them even than it does to Israel. Its extremism, its fundamentalism, is a great danger to them as well," said Gillerman. "We've seen the effect of that in numerous responses, in the public statements made by [Egypt's] President Mubarak and even by [Palestinian president] Mahmoud Abbas and other Arabs. This is totally unprecedented."

Indeed, the Egyptian Foreign Minister, Ahmed Aboul Gheit, said his government knew exactly what was coming: "The signs that Israel was determined to strike <u>Hamas</u> in Gaza for the past three months were clear. They practically wrote it in the sky. Unfortunately they [<u>Hamas</u>] served Israel the opportunity on a golden platter."

Also crucial was what was not said. Just a few months ago Livni was talking of wiping out <u>Hamas</u>, but that would be unpalatable to much of the outside world as a justification for the assault. So now the talk is of pressing Gaza's government to agree to a new ceasefire. Occasionally someone has got off-message. A couple of days into the assault on Gaza, Israel's ambassador to the UN, Gabriela Shalev, said it would continue for "as long as it takes to dismantle <u>Hamas</u> completely". Infuriated Israeli officials in Jerusalem warned her that such statements could set back the diplomatic offensive.

In the first hours of the attack, Israel repeated the same messages to the wider world. Livni and the Labour defence minister, Ehud Barak, were widely quoted on international TV. The government's national information directorate sought to focus foreign media attention on the 8,500 rockets fired from Gaza into Israel over the past eight years

Focus: Middle East Crisis: WHY ISRAEL WENT TO WAR IN GAZA: Last night Israel sent its ground forces across the border into Gaza as it escalated its brutal assau....

and the 20 civilians they have killed, rather than the punishing blockade of Gaza and the 1,700 Palestinians killed in Israeli military attacks since Jewish settlers were pulled out of Gaza three years ago.

Lobby groups, such as the British Israel Communications and Research Centre (Bicom) in London and the Israel Project in America, were mobilised. They arranged briefings, conference calls and interviews. The Israeli military posted video footage on YouTube. Israeli diplomats in New York arranged a two-hour "citizens' press conference" on Twitter for thousands of people. At the same time, Israel in effect barred foreign journalists from witnessing the results of its strategy.

Livni has suggested that Israel's assault is good for the Palestinians by helping to free them from the grip of *Hamas*. "She's basically trying to convince me that they're doing this for my own good," said Diana Buttu, the Palestinian Liberation Organisation's legal counsel and negotiator with the Israelis over the 2005 pullout from Gaza. "I've had some Israeli friends reiterate the same thing: 'You should be happy that we're rooting out *Hamas*. They're a problem for you, too.' I don't need her to tell me what's good for me and what's bad for me, and I don't think carrying out a massacre is good for anybody."

And when the killing started, Israel claimed that the overwhelming majority of the 400-plus killed were <u>Hamas</u> fighters and the buildings destroyed part of the infrastructure of terror. But about a third of the dead were policemen. Although the police force in Gaza is run by **Hamas**, Buttu said Israel is misrepresenting it as a terrorist organisation.

"The police force is largely used for internal law and order, traffic, the drug trade. They weren't fighters. They hit them at a graduation ceremony. Israel wants to kill anyone associated with <u>Hamas</u>, but where does it stop? Are you a legitimate target if you work in the civil service? Are you a legitimate target if you voted for <u>Hamas</u>?" she said.

Similarly, while Israel accuses <u>Hamas</u> of risking civilian lives by hiding the infrastructure of terror in ordinary neighbourhoods, many of the Israeli missile targets are police stations and other public buildings that are unlikely to be built anywhere else.

Israel argues that <u>Hamas</u> abandoned the June ceasefire that Tel Aviv was prepared to continue. "Israel is the first one who wants the violence to end. We were not looking for this. There was no other option. The truce was violated by **Hamas**," said Livni.

However, others say that the truce was thrown into jeopardy in November when the Israeli military killed six <u>Hamas</u> gunmen in a raid on Gaza. The Palestinians noted that it was election day in the US, so most of the rest of the world did not notice what happened. <u>Hamas</u> responded by firing a wave of rockets into Israel. Six more Palestinians died in two other Israeli attacks in the following week.

"They were assaulting Gaza militarily, by sea and by air, all through the ceasefire," said Buttu. Neither did the killing of Palestinians stop. In the nearly three years since <u>Hamas</u> came to power, and before the latest assault on Gaza, Israel forces had killed about 1,300 people in Gaza and the West Bank. While a significant number of them were <u>Hamas</u> activists - and while hundreds of Palestinians have been killed by other Palestinians in fighting between **Hamas** and Fatah - there has been a disturbing number of civilian deaths.

The Palestinian Centre for Human Rights says that one in four of the victims is aged under 18. Between June 2007 and June 2008, Israeli attacks killed 68 Palestinian children and young people in Gaza. Another dozen were killed in the West Bank.

In February, an Israeli missile killed four boys, aged eight to 14, playing football in the street in Jabalia. In April, Meyasar Abu-Me'tiq and her four children, aged one to five years old, were killed when an Israeli missile hit their house as they were having breakfast. Even during the ceasefire, Israel killed 22 people in Gaza, including two children and a woman.

Focus: Middle East Crisis: WHY ISRAEL WENT TO WAR IN GAZA: Last night Israel sent its ground forces across the border into Gaza as it escalated its brutal assau....

Perhaps crucial to the ceasefire's collapse were the differing views of what it was supposed to achieve. Israel regarded the truce as calm in return for calm. <u>Hamas</u> expected Israel to lift the blockade of Gaza that the latter said was a security response to the firing of Qassam rockets.

But Israel did not end the siege that was wrecking the economy and causing desperate shortages of food, fuel and medicine. Gazans concluded that the blockade was not so much about rocket attacks as punishment for voting for *Hamas*.

Central to the Israeli message has been that, when it pulled out its military and Jewish settlers three years ago, Gaza was offered the opportunity to prosper. "In order to create a vision of hope, we took out our forces and settlements, but instead of Gaza being the beginning of a Palestinian state, <u>Hamas</u> established an extreme Islamic rule," said Livni. Israeli officials argue that <u>Hamas</u>, and by extension the people who elected it, was more interested in hating and killing Jews than building a country.

Palestinians see it differently. Buttu says that from the day the Israelis withdrew from Gaza, they set about ensuring that it would fail economically. "When the Israelis pulled out, we expected that the Palestinians in Gaza would at least be able to lead some sort of free life. We expected that the crossing points would be open. We didn't expect that we would have to beg to allow food in," she said.

Buttu notes that even before <u>Hamas</u> was elected three years ago, the Israelis were already blockading Gaza. The Palestinians had to appeal to US secretary of state Condoleezza Rice and James Wolfensohn, the president of the World Bank, to pressure Israel to allow even a few score of trucks into Gaza each day. Israel agreed, then reneged. "This was before <u>Hamas</u> won the election. The whole Israeli claim is one big myth. If there wasn't already a closure policy, why did we need Rice and Wolfensohn to try to broker an agreement?" asked Buttu.

Yossi Alpher, a former official in the Mossad intelligence service and an ex-adviser on peace negotiations to the then prime minister, Ehud Barak, said the blockade of Gaza is a failed strategy that might have strengthened *Hamas*. "I don't think anyone can produce clear evidence that the blockade has been counterproductive, but it certainly hasn't been productive. It's very possible it's been counterproductive. It's collective punishment, humanitarian suffering. It has not caused Palestinians in Gaza to behave the way we want them to, so why do it?" he said. "I think people really believed that, if you starved Gazans, they will get *Hamas* to stop the attacks. It's repeating a failed policy, mindlessly."

Load-Date: January 5, 2009



Hamas steps up rocket fire as Israel pours in fresh reserves; Olmert slams global media for telling one-sided story

Edmonton Journal (Alberta)
January 13, 2009 Tuesday
Early Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A12

Length: 526 words

Byline: Matthew Fisher, Canwest News Service

Dateline: SDEROT, Israel

Body

<u>Hamas</u> responded Monday to Israeli suggestions that its forces in Gaza were near their breaking point by more than doubling the number of rockets that it fired Sunday at the Jewish state from the Palestinian enclave.

Much as Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert had predicted, <u>Hamas</u>'s leader in Gaza, Ismail Haniyeh, said Monday that his group was "approaching victory."

In his first public comment in days, Haniyeh, who has been in hiding, told the <u>Hamas</u>-run television station: "I tell you that after 17 days of this foolish war, Gaza has not been broken and will not collapse."

Olmert decried "the global media" for what he felt was its unbalanced coverage of the war while visiting the southern town of Be'ersheva, which was hit by several rockets fired from Gaza on Monday.

"Now they only speak of Israel's brutality," Olmert said. "For some reason, they do not speak of the Palestinians' incessant murderousness towards us, as well as towards other Palestinians, or of the use of civilians in Gaza as human shields."

Israel took strong military action in Gaza after facing seven years of rocket fire, Olmert said.

"In this context, I would like to add that we have not declared war on the residents of Gaza," he said. "We do not want to hurt them. Every civilian, every child who has been hurt as a result of our operations in recent days is a victim whom we regret and would like to have avoided.

"However, we will not renounce our right to defend our citizens and we will not allow them to continue suffering from the threat of rockets and terrorism."

While Olmert and Haniyeh exchanged verbal blows, Israeli forces, backed by fresh reserves, continued to slowly advance into densely populated areas of Gaza City during the 17th day of a military operation designed to stop rocket fire from the Palestinian territory. But an all-out Israeli ground assault on Gaza, which has 1.5 million residents, clearly had not yet begun.

Hamas steps up rocket fire as Israel pours in fresh reserves; Olmert slams global media for telling one-sided story

Israeli warplanes attacked several dozen targets within the coastal enclave and Gazans responded by launching at least 25 rockets toward Israel. Three of the homemade projectiles exploded within a few seconds of each other near where a group of foreign journalists were observing the conflict.

The death toll in Gaza since fighting erupted on Dec. 27 rose to at least 910, including 367 <u>women</u> and children, Palestinian sources said. Israel said 13 of its citizens, including three civilians, have died.

Israel has prevented foreign journalists from entering Gaza, making independent confirmation of these tallies impossible.

During a daily three-hour lull in the fighting proposed by Israel and generally observed by both sides, Israel permitted 165 truckloads of food and medicine to enter the territory Monday.

In other developments, Canadian officials are looking into evacuating more Canadians from the Gaza Strip.

Last week, Ottawa helped 48 Canadians escape the area. With the assistance of the Red Cross, they were taken by bus to Jordan.

The Gaza Strip is about the same size -- 360 square kilometres -- as the City of Montreal proper. Its population, at 1.5 million, is slightly smaller than Montreal's.

With files from Montreal Gazette

Graphic

Colour Photo: Reuters; An Israeli reservist brandishes his weapons before crossing into the northern Gaza Strip on Monday.;

Load-Date: January 13, 2009



UN appeal for Gaza truce is rejected; Fighting unchecked as Israel and Hamas defy cease-fire call

The International Herald Tribune
January 10, 2009 Saturday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 4

Length: 1425 words

Byline: Ethan Bronner - The New York Times Media Group

Dateline: JERUSALEM

Body

Reporting was contributed by Neil MacFarquhar from the United Nations; Rachel Donadio from Rome; Isabel Kershner and Steven Erlanger from Jerusalem; Taghreed El-Khodary from Gaza; and Alan Cowell and Caroline Brothers from Paris.

* Israel and <u>Hamas</u> rebuffed a United Nations call for a cease-fire in the 14-day Gaza war on Friday, with Israel saying continued barrages of rocket fire from its adversaries made the United Nations resolution "unworkable." In a statement after a cabinet meeting as the two sides traded fire, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said the Israeli military would "continue acting to protect Israeli citizens and will carry out the missions it was given," according to news reports. Officials from <u>Hamas</u> dismissed the United Nations resolution, according to news reports, although one official said it was being studied. As the war continued unchecked on Friday, the Israeli military said its forces attacked more than 50 targets in Gaza overnight despite the United Nations vote on Thursday night calling for "an immediate, durable and fully respected cease-fire." Israeli warplanes attacked launching sites and missile-manufacturing facilities, the military said, while witnesses reported seeing around 30 rockets fired out of Gaza into southern Israel. The casualty toll was not immediately known. One Israeli air strike destroyed a five-story building, killing at least seven people, <u>Hamas</u> security officials told The Associated Press.

The developments came as international aid groups lashed out at Israel, saying that access to civilians in need is poor, relief workers are being hurt and killed, and Israel is woefully neglecting its obligations to Palestinians who are trapped, some among corpses in a nightmarish landscape of deprivation. One of the most grisly accounts of civilian loss has revolved around an extended family of Palestinians in the Zeitoun district of Gaza city who began telling their story to a reporter last Monday after, they said, Israeli forces ordered them to leave their separate homes and gather indoors at a single dwelling. At that time, Israeli forces were in the early stages of a ground offensive in Gaza and seized several high-rise buildings on the outskirts of Gaza City commanding a field of fire into the tangled street below. From the beginning, members of the Samouni family said, they had been trying to contact the Red Cross to be evacuated but no help came. Initial reports about the incident on Monday said 11 members of the Samouni extended family were killed and 26 wounded, according to witnesses and hospital officials, with five children age 4 and under among the dead. Only on Wednesday, the International Committee of the Red Cross said in a statement on Thursday, did Israel give Red Cross representatives permission to enter Zeitoun, and what the operatives found there chilled them. Four small children, so weak they could not stand unassisted, cowered next to the corpses of their mothers, the Red Cross said Thursday. At least 12 corpses lay on mattresses and three more bodies were

found in another house. On Friday, it seemed, the carnage had been worse than at first suspected. The United Nations Office for the Coordinator of Humanitarian Affairs said a total of over 100 people had been ordered to leave their homes and gather in the single dwelling last Sunday. "The next day the house was shelled," Allegra Pacheco, a spokeswoman for the United Nations office, told BBC television, quoting unidentified witnesses. And as rescuers finally removed corpses from the rubble, the death toll rose to 30, Pacheco said Friday. It was one of the most grisly known incidents of the Gaza war. Pacheco said her organization was not making any accusations at present about who was responsible for the 30 reported deaths. Initial accounts by members of the Samouni family said they believed the house in which they gathered had been the target of an air-strike at 6 a.m. Monday. But the Red Cross said Thursday that the building had been "affected by Israeli shelling." The Zeitoun killings have ignited international outcry. In a rare and sharply critical statement, the Red Cross said it believed that "the Israeli military failed to meet its obligation under international humanitarian law to care for and evacuate the wounded." Israeli officials said that they were examining all the allegations, that they did not aim at civilians. "We do our utmost to avoid hitting civilians, and many times we don't fire because we see civilians nearby," said Major Avital Leibovich, chief army spokeswoman for the foreign media. "We are holding meetings with UN officials to try to work out a mechanism so that their work can go forward." She said that the army learned of the Red Cross allegations in a media report, and that the committee had not yet presented the evidence of what she called "these very serious allegations" to the army. Separately, the United Nations declared a suspension of its aid operations after one of its drivers was killed and two others were wounded despite driving United Nations-flagged vehicles and coordinating their movements with the Israeli military. The United Nations secretary general, Ban Ki Moon, called for an investigation by Israel for a second time in a week of the more than 40 deaths near a United Nations school from Israeli tank fire on Tuesday. The Red Cross also said it was restricting its operations on Friday after one of its trucks was hit by small arms fire. At the United Nations, fourteen nations approved the Security Council resolution urging a cease-fire, with the United States abstaining. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said the United States abstained, which left it unclear how a cease-fire would be enforced, because it wanted to see whether mediation efforts undertaken by President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt would succeed. The United States did not veto the resolution because Washington supports its overall goals, she said. The resolution called for a cease-fire that would lead to the "full withdrawal" of Israeli forces from Gaza, the passage of humanitarian aid to the Palestinians and an end to the trafficking of arms and ammunition into the territory. Some Arab ambassadors expressed disappointment that the measure did not specifically call for a lifting of the Israeli blockade of Gaza, and some Western ambassadors acknowledged a long history of UN resolutions that led nowhere. "We are all very conscious that peace is made on the ground, while resolutions are written in the United Nations," said David Miliband, the British foreign secretary. But attention was increasingly focused on the growing humanitarian crisis and on the increasing anger abroad. Israel condemned a high-ranking Vatican official for comparing Gaza to "a concentration camp." "Look at the conditions in Gaza: more and more, it resembles a big concentration camp," Cardinal Renato Martino, the head of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, said in an interview published Wednesday in Il Sussidiaro. He defended his comments in the center-left Italian daily La Repubblica on Thursday. While noting that *Hamas* rockets into Israel were "certainly not sugared almonds," he called the situation in Gaza "horrific." Israel sharply condemned the cardinal's use of World War II imagery. "We are astounded that a spiritual dignitary would have such words that are so far removed from truth and dignity," said Yigal Palmor, a spokesman for the Israeli Foreign Ministry. John Holmes, a UN emergency relief coordinator, said in New York that the three-hour daily pause in the fighting permitted by Israel in Gaza was insufficient. He said the Gaza authorities counted 758 fatalities, among them 257 children and 56 women. The wounded totaled 3,100. Of these, 1,080 were children and 465 women. Holmes added that the Gaza authorities reported that 20,000 were displaced but that conditions prevented officials from helping them properly. "The continuing violence is making humanitarian aid increasingly difficult and almost impossible," he said. Israeli officials said they were investigating. The Jerusalem Post's Web site quoted an Israeli medical worker as saying that the killing of the UN driver that contributed to the suspension of aid delivery was the work of a *Hamas* sniper. John Ging, who heads UN relief operations in Gaza, said by telephone that he was unaware of any information suggesting that the driver had been shot by *Hamas*. "If they have evidence, let them present it," he said.

Load-Date: January 11, 2009



'Definitions skew civilian casualties'. Israel says most of those killed in Gaza are Hamas gunmen and members, while Palestinians claim exactly the opposite

The Jerusalem Post January 9, 2009 Friday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 7

Length: 523 words **Byline:** SHELLY PAZ

Body

The IDF insists that the great majority of Gazan casualties have been "gunmen." The Palestinians say that at least half are "civilians."

The consistent discrepancy between the reports from the two sides could stem from a disagreement over the definition of an active combatant.

On Thursday evening, the IDF estimated the death toll in Gaza had passed 700, of whom three quarters were said to have been combatants, 290 of them identified as known *Hamas* terrorists.

Since Operation Cast Lead began, Israel has reiterated that it is not targeting civilians, only *Hamas* members.

Palestinian officials put the death toll at an estimated 750 on Thursday night. Mutasem Awad, coordinator for the Palestine Red Crescent Society told The Jerusalem Post Thursday that though its casualty count was not final, it knew for certain of 200 children and 85 **women** among the dead.

When asked whether the Red Crescent Society was capable of telling the difference between innocent civilians and gunmen, he acknowledged this could be tricky.

"But militants usually wear uniforms and carry weapons, and we don't have [large] numbers [of dead] like this," Awad said. Israeli defense sources say many *Hamas* gunmen are fighting out of uniform, however.

Awad added that, "Many of the militants have died while they were not actively involved in the fighting. According to international law these people are considered civilians if they are not involved in actively fighting, but they were targeted anyway."

Florian Westphal, head of media relations for the International Committee of the Red Cross, based in Geneva, reported that "the records provided by 14 hospitals in the Gaza Strip to the ICRC [include] 3,070 wounded persons [who] were admitted to hospitals, of whom a third were children and <u>women</u>.

Avi Bell, a professor at Bar-llan University Law School and director of the Global Law Forum at the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, said the definition of an active combatant can be vague.

'Definitions skew civilian casualties'. Israel says most of those killed in Gaza are Hamas gunmen and members, while Palestinians claim exactly the opposite

"A warrior is considered one whether he is carrying a weapon or not, if he is fighting as part of an organized force. There are certain situations in which a combatant is clearly out of the fighting, such as if he was injured or released," he said.

According to Bell, the different numbers could also stem from differing definitions of combatant that relate to whether the fighting is defined as "international" - involving two states - or regional, like the conflict in Gaza.

"Some commentators think that the definition of a combatant in [regional] fighting is much wider - for example, it can include inactive reserve forces," he said. "The gaps in the numbers could be explained by the fact that they [the Palestinians] define a combatant narrowly," he said.

"Israel considers a civilian anyone who does not belong to the armed forces - unless they are actively involved in fighting. It also considers a combatant someone who is actively involved in planning the fighting, even if they are not armed. This concept is acceptable to most of the international community," he said.

Bell added that even if the legal definition was clear, Israel would not have accurate numbers yet.

Graphic

Photo: A MAN carries his wounded son into Shifa Hospital in Gaza City. The dispute over the proportion of civilian to terrorist casualties may never be resolved. (Credit: Ashraf Amra/AP)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011



We would have called this atrocity a war crime if Hamas had carried it out

The Sunday Independent (South Africa)

January 11, 2009

e1 Edition

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Section: DISPATCHES; Pg. 16

Length: 929 words

Body

So, once again, Israel has opened the gates of hell to the Palestinians. Forty civilian refugees dead in a United Nations school, three more in another. Not bad for a night's work in Gaza by the army that believes in "purity of arms". But why should we be surprised?

Have we forgotten the 17 500 dead - almost all civilians, most of them children and <u>women</u> - in Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon; the 1 700 Palestinian civilians dead in the Sabra-Chatila massacre; the 1996 Qana massacre of 106 Lebanese civilian refugees, more than half of them children, at a UN base; the massacre of the Marwahin refugees who were ordered from their homes by the Israelis in 2006, then slaughtered by an Israeli helicopter crew; the 1 000 dead of that same 2006 bombardment and Lebanese invasion, almost all of them civilians?

What is amazing is that so many Western leaders, so many presidents and prime ministers and, I fear, so many editors and journalists, bought the old lie: "Israel makes every possible effort to avoid civilian casualties," yet another Israeli ambassador said only hours before the Gaza massacre. And every president and prime minister who repeated this mendacity as an excuse to avoid a ceasefire has the blood of this most recent butchery on their hands. Had George Bush had the courage to demand an immediate ceasefire 48 hours earlier, those 40 civilians, the old and the **women** and children, would be alive.

What happened is not just shameful. It is a disgrace. Would war crime be too strong a description? For that is what we would call this atrocity if it had been committed by *Hamas*. So a war crime, I'm afraid, it is.

After covering so many mass murders by the armies of the Middle East - by Syrian troops, by Iraqi troops, by Iraqi troops, by Iraqi troops, by Iraqi troops, by Israeli troops - I suppose cynicism should be my reaction. But Israel claims it is fighting our war against "international terror". The Israelis claim they are fighting in Gaza for us, for our Western ideals, for our security, for our safety, by our standards. And so we are also complicit in the savagery now being visited upon Gaza.

I've reported the excuses the Israeli army has served up in the past for these outrages. As they may well be reheated in the coming hours, here are some of them: that the Palestinians killed their own refugees, that the Palestinians dug up bodies from cemeteries and planted them in the ruins, that, ultimately, the Palestinians are to blame because they supported an armed faction, or because armed Palestinians deliberately used the innocent refugees as cover.

The Sabra and Chatila massacre was committed by Israel's right-wing Lebanese Phalangist allies while Israeli troops, as Israel's own commission of inquiry revealed, watched for 48 hours and did nothing. When Israel was

blamed, Menachem Begin's government accused the world of a blood libel. After Israeli artillery had fired shells into the UN base at Qana in 1996, the Israelis claimed that Hizbollah gunmen were also sheltering in the base. It was a lie. The more than 1 000 dead of 2006 - a war started when Hizbollah captured two Israeli soldiers on the border - were simply dismissed as the responsibility of the Hizbollah.

Israel claimed that the bodies of children killed in a second Qana massacre may have been taken from a graveyard. It was another lie. The Marwahin massacre was never excused. The people of the village were ordered to flee, obeyed Israeli orders and were then attacked by an Israeli gunship.

The refugees took their children and stood them around the truck in which they were travelling so that the Israeli pilots could see they were innocents. Then the Israeli helicopter mowed them down at close range. Only two survived, by playing dead. Israel didn't even apologise.

Twelve years earlier, another Israeli helicopter attacked an ambulance carrying civilians from a neighbouring village - again after they were ordered to leave by Israel - and killed three children and two <u>women</u>. The Israelis claimed that a Hizbollah fighter was in the ambulance. It was untrue. I covered all these atrocities, I investigated them all, talked to the survivors. So did a number of my colleagues. Our fate was that most slanderous of libels: we were accused of being anti-Semitic.

And I write the following without the slightest doubt: we'll hear all these scandalous fabrications again. We'll have the <u>Hamas</u>-to-blame lie - heaven knows, there is enough to blame them for without adding this crime - and we may well have the bodies-from-the-cemetery lie and we'll almost certainly have the <u>Hamas</u>-was-in-the-UN-school lie and we will very definitely have the anti-Semitism lie. And our leaders will remind the world that <u>Hamas</u> broke the ceasefire. It didn't. Israel broke it, first on November 4 when its bombardment killed six Palestinians in Gaza and again on November 17 when another bombardment killed four more Palestinians.

Yes, Israelis deserve security. Twenty Israelis dead in 10 years around Gaza is a grim figure, indeed. But 600 Palestinians dead in just over a week, thousands over the years since 1948 - when the Israeli massacre at Deir Yassin helped to kick-start the flight of Palestinians from that part of Palestine that was to become Israel - is on a quite different scale.

This recalls an atrocity on the level of the Balkan wars of the 1990s. And, when an Arab bestirs himself with unrestrained fury and takes out his incendiary, blind anger on the West, we will say it has nothing to do with us. Why do they hate us, we will ask? But let us not say we do not know the answer. - Foreign Service

Load-Date: January 11, 2009



Key word in Israel, Gaza war is 'Enough'

THE KOREA HERALD January 5, 2009 Monday

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Length: 953 words

Body

Be it the missiles launched into Israel by <u>Hamas</u> or the Israeli offensive in Gaza, the message from the world community is: "Enough is enough."

The message that the fighting has to stop on both sides has been echoed by many Arab countries, the United States, European Union nations and Korea.

"They (*Hamas*) are terrorists, we (Israel) are a government, so we said enough is enough with the bombings from *Hamas*," said Israeli Ambassador to Korea Yigal Caspi.

The Arab League was sharply divided during their meeting on Wednesday over how to respond to the fighting between Israel and *Hamas*.

Moderate Arab states blamed Palestinian disunity for the crisis while other states urged Arab nations to band together to defend Palestinians against Israel.

One of the more striking comments came from Saudi Arabian foreign minister Prince Saud al-Faisal, who condemned *Hamas* for not uniting behind Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas of the Fatah party.

In 2007 *Hamas* took over Gaza in a violent civil war with Fatah.

Egypt's foreign minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit said on Thursday that <u>Hamas</u> must stop firing rockets into Israel before any ceasefire deal can be arranged.

Turkey's Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan met with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak to work out an Egyptian-Turkish initiative to end the violence.

Both countries have been instrumental recently in trying to bring about peace between Israel and its Arab neighbors.

Egypt worked on the ceasefire agreement between Israel and <u>Hamas</u> which saw six months of relative calm until <u>Hamas</u> said that they would not renew the ceasefire and started launching rockets into Israel.

Turkey, on the other hand, has been in between Israel and Syria in working on a peace agreement.

"Any eventual truce agreement should include a mechanism to oversee that everything proceeds without one side causing problems with the other," said Gheit, adding that "international forces or Arab forces or just observers" could be used.

As for Israel, Caspi said that this is strictly a war to stop *Hamas* from bombing Israel.

Key word in Israel, Gaza war is 'Enough'

"We gave Gaza to the Palestinians. There is no scenario that Israel will occupy Gaza again. So the military action is to eliminate the *Hamas* threat and give it back to the Palestinians," Caspi said.

Yesterday, Israel sent ground troops into Gaza.

While many international newspapers and key senior diplomats and politicians are condemning the bombing actions of Israel as disproportionate, other newspapers from unlikely parts of the world are strongly condemning *Hamas*.

The editor of Al Hayat Al Jadedah, the official newspaper of the Palestinian Authority, said in an editorial that "the extension of the ceasefire was of national interest. Why *Hamas* didn't prevent the aggression?"

The same paper also said in a separate editorial that the Palestinian Authority "needs to establish a Palestinian committee of inquiry" and "accuse <u>Hamas</u> of the killing of Palestinians in Gaza. Israel warned <u>Hamas</u> before the ceasefire not to do this; what did **Hamas** expect Israel to do?"

Fatah, the ruling party of the Palestinian Authority, and <u>Hamas</u> are currently engulfed in a power struggle for the West Bank.

Kuwaiti newspaper Al Watan called for the Israeli Defense Forces to "kill the <u>Hamas</u> terrorists and give them a lesson they will never forget." They added for "Israel to liberate the Gaza Strip from <u>Hamas</u> control."

"What did *Hamas* think?" Caspi said. "That we will capitulate?"

"There are several innocent victims who died and we cry for all of them," he added.

The Israeli government said that most casualties are <u>Hamas</u> operatives. However, several <u>women</u> and children have been killed due to the operation.

Israel is using pinpoint, state of the art missiles and targeting only military instillations and ammunition storage facilities "for the purpose of hitting buildings and not people but *Hamas* aims theirs at cities and people," he said.

"It's not indiscriminate. What are we supposed to do? Shoot one when they shoot one? This is a war, we are not fighting an army, we are fighting terrorists."

During the six-month ceasefire the Israeli government said that <u>Hamas</u> has amassed Garad rockets that have a range of about 40 kilometers, well in the range of the Israeli cities of Ashdot, Ashkelon and Beersheba.

"But theoretically they can bomb Tel Aviv," he said.

Missiles were brought in through underground tunnels between homes in the Gaza and Egyptian sides of the border.

A few days before the offensive, senior <u>Hamas</u> official Ayman Taha said that "It is our right as an occupied people to defend ourselves from the occupation by all means possible including suicide attacks."

<u>Hamas</u> last carried out a suicide attack in Israel in January 2005. Seven months later Israel evacuated its settlers and soldiers from Gaza ending any form of occupation. Since 2005, <u>Hamas</u> has fired more than 6,000 rockets at Israeli civilians, killing 10 and wounding more than 780.

"We gave Gaza to the Palestinians so that they can establish a foundation for a state that is totally under their responsibility," said Caspi. "The result was that in 2007 <u>Hamas</u> kicked Fatah out even though there's a legitimate president that sits in Ramallah.

"<u>Hamas</u> doesn't recognize Israel's right to exist, they refuse to talk about a political compromise, they refuse to accept all the previously signed agreements between Israel and the Palestinian Authority and they still believe that the only solution is through violence."

Key word in Israel, Gaza war is 'Enough'

More than 460 people have been killed in Gaza and over 2,700 wounded said medical practitioners inside Gaza. The attacks by *Hamas* have caused the lives of four Israelis.

The ground offensive that started yesterday will change the landscape drastically.

By Yoav Cerralbo

(yoav@heraldm.com)

Load-Date: January 5, 2009



Israeli claims to be targeting only Hamas militants cast into doubt

Sunday Independent (Ireland)

January 11, 2009

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Sunday Independent

Section: WORLD NEWS; Middle East

Length: 799 words

Body

Israeli claims to be attacking only <u>Hamas</u> military targets in Gaza, where civilian deaths are estimated at over 800, are called into question by an internal report compiled by its own army on its 2006 campaign in south Lebanon in which more than 1,000 civilians were killed.

The Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) PowerPoint report, entitled Hizbollah Closed Military Zones, reveals that despite its repeated claims at the time that Hizbollah was using civilian centres to launch rocket attacks into northern Israel, killing 43 civilians, the Hizbollah actually had a very large military infrastructure based in "open terrain" well away from civilians centres.

More than a 1,000 Lebanese civilians werekilled in Israeli bombingand shelling, and the civilian infrastructure of the country was massively damaged.

A copy of the secret report has been obtained by the Sunday Independent. It supports claims by international agencies that Israel's attack on the civilian population of Lebanon was not necessarily justified by the presence of military installations in populated areas. However, it does not categorically prove that rockets were not launched from populated areas, in addition to whatever activities were carried out from the "open terrain" military infrastructures.

The IDF report contains photographs, maps and diagrams of Hizbollah rocket installations and underground bunker complexes, all based well away from civilian population centres.

Out of almost 100 illustrations in the PowerPoint document, none shows Hizbollah launch sites or bunkers anywhere near civilian centres.

The Israeli report actually states: "The CMZs (closed military zones) are locatedin open terrain, outside the villages, usually in valleys, in areas of thick vegetation and forests, on spurs at points that dominate axes of entry from Israel and Lebanon and/or on rear mountain slopes hidden from IDF surveillance."

Despite this, the IDF bombarded almost every town and village in south Lebanon, causing large-scale civilian casualties and huge collateral destruction.

At the time, the IDF attempted to explain the bombing of civilian centres by saying they were being used to launch attacks on Israel. Their own debriefing report suggests this was not so.

In a section entitled: "Closed Military Zones", the report states: "These areasare isolated from the general population and are usually located in ravines, in forested areas or on rear mountain slopes to facilitate concealed and clandestine movement." The report also refers to some of these military centres as being in "nature reserves".

The pictures in the report reveal that Hizbollah had,and probably still has, a very sophisticated military structure in the region. Underground bunkers, dug six or seven metres down intorock, were used as command and control centres, safefrom all but a direct hit by aerial bombing. From thesebunkers the Hizbollah could fire salvoes of rocketsdeep into northern Israel.

The term "closed military zones" was not publicly used at the time of the 2006 conflict, but has been used openly for the first time in respect of the Gaza conflict. It effectively means that these are areas from which the international media and observers are excluded, so preventing accurate reporting.

Another previous Israeli campaign -- the 1996 war in Lebanon -- could help shed light on last week's shelling of the UN-protected refugee camp and school at Jabiliya, in which it was reported that 43 civilians, including many children, were killed. The United Nations Work and Relief Agency director in Gaza, John Ging, an ex-Irish Army captain from Mullingar, stated that the camp was attacked despite the fact the UN had supplied global positioning satelliteco-ordinates to the IDF and stated that there was no evidence of it being used to launch attacks into Israel.

The Israeli Government response was: "This tragedy occurred because <u>Hamas</u> consistently uses its own population as human shields."

A similar statement was issued by the Israelis whenthey shelled a UN-protected refugee camp at Qana in southern Lebanon in April 1996, killing 116 people, most of them <u>women</u> and children. Irish soldiers serving with the UN in southern Lebanon at the time were among the first on the scene, and several were traumatised by what they saw.

Despite claims by the Israelis that rockets had been launched from the camp, it emerged shortly afterwards that a Norwegian UN soldier had been filming from a hill overlooking the camp at the time and this showed that no rockets had been launched from anywhere nearby.

The Israelis hit the refugees in Qana with airburst shells, which have also been used in Gaza. These shells burst in the air, showering shrapnel downwards. Most of the dead in Qana were decapitated ortorn vertically in half.

Load-Date: January 11, 2009



Israeli strikes and ME peace process

The Nation (AsiaNet)

January 11, 2009 Sunday

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Length: 1334 words

Byline: ABID MUSTAFA

Body

On December 27, 2008 the Jewish state launched a savage assault on Gaza city, which left 255 people dead and over 700 injured. Almost half of those killed were <u>women</u> and children. Israeli military officials confirmed that more than 100 tons of bombs were dropped on Gaza within a span of few hours.

The attacks were the most brutal the people of Gaza had witnessed in many years. Yet the military operation codenamed Operation Cast Lead was not a spontaneous response to the termination of the truce between <u>Hamas</u> and Israel, rather it was part of a well-crafted military and diplomatic scheme intended to accomplish specific objectives.

Ever since, <u>Hamas</u> toppled the Palestinian Authority (PA) in June 2007, the Israelis perturbed by militant nature of the organisation have been planning to secure Israel's borders with Gaza though a series of initiatives. The wide ranging measures consisted of mobilising the international community to accept <u>Hamas</u> as a terrorist organisation, isolating <u>Hamas</u> internationally and regionally, instituting a complete economic blockade of Gaza, instigating a popular uprising against <u>Hamas</u>'s political leadership and collating intelligence related to <u>Hamas</u>'s security and military infrastructure. The later has led to a full-scale military operation intended to destroy <u>Hamas</u>'s security apparatus and its military capacity to strike back.

Despite the overwhelming superiority of the Israeli army in relation to the poorly equipped <u>Hamas</u> fighters, senior military and political figures were reluctant to wage another war without thorough planning. Essentially the cautious approach adopted by the civilian government was intended to avoid a repeat of the spectacular failings of the Israeli army during the Lebanon war of 2006. Hence Israel used the six-month truce with <u>Hamas</u> to gather invaluable intelligence before conducting the latest military operation.

The Jewish paper Haaretz in an article entitled Disinformation, secrecy and lies: How the Gaza offensive came about confirmed the cautious approach. It stated:

"Defence Minister Ehud Barak instructed the Israel defence forces to prepare for the operation over six months ago, even as Israel was beginning to negotiate a ceasefire agreement with *Hamas*.

Barak maintained that although the lull would allow <u>Hamas</u> to prepare for a showdown with Israel, the Israeli army needed time to prepare, as well. Barak gave orders to carry out a comprehensive intelligence-gathering drive, which sought to map out <u>Hamas</u>' security infrastructure, along with that of other militant organisations operating in the Strip. This intelligence-gathering effort brought back information about permanent bases, weapon silos, training camps, the homes of senior officials and coordinates for other facilities."

The manipulation of the truce to amass intelligence and prepare for armed combat demonstrates Israel's unwillingness to accept <u>Hamas</u> as a viable entity in the peace process. In this regard Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni said: "<u>Hamas</u> cannot continue to control Gaza... In the long term, Israel cannot tolerate an extreme Islamic state on its southern border."

The plan to attack <u>Hamas</u> came into effect on November 19, 2008 when dozens of Qassam rockets and mortar rounds exploded on Israeli soil. Thereafter, Israel began a diplomatic offensive with a number of countries to explain its intentions. On December 15, 2008 Defence Minister Ehud Barak told visiting Austrian President Heinz Fischer that "I am not afraid of launching an offensive in Gaza, but I'm not running to Gaza." Likewise Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni visited Cairo and told Hosni Mubarak about Israel's plans to attack Gaza. (The fact that Livni was invited to Cairo as opposed to Olmert or Barak indicates that she is the preferred US choice to lead Israel).

Furthermore, comments from some world leaders as well as regional leaders not only support the Israeli offensive on Gaza but hold <u>Hamas</u> responsible for the current situation. "<u>Hamas</u> must end its terrorist activities if it wishes to play a role in the future of the Palestinian people. The United States urges Israel to avoid civilian casualties as it targets <u>Hamas</u> in Gaza," said White House spokesman Gordon Johndroe.

British Prime Minister Gordon Brown said: "I call on Gazan militants to cease all rocket attacks on Israel immediately. These attacks are designed to cause random destruction and to undermine the prospects of peace talks led by Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas."

Mahmud Abbas and Egypt also blamed <u>Hamas</u>. Speaking from Cairo Abbas said: "We talked to them (<u>Hamas</u>) and we told them 'please, we ask you, do not end the truce. Let the truce continue and not stop' so that we could have avoided what happened."

Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Abul Gheit said: "The wounded are barred from crossing" into Cairo, blaming "those who control Gaza. We are waiting for the wounded to cross." In fact the only people who were caught off guard by the attacks were <u>Hamas</u> and bore the brunt of the initial assault. It is expected that Israel will expand the operation into a ground offensive and actively seek out and destroy <u>Hamas</u>'s security and military infrastructure.

But beyond destroying <u>Hamas</u>'s ability to rule Gaza and launch rocket attacks against Israel, what is Israel trying to achieve. Israel is well aware that the incoming Obama administration is serious about implementing a comprehensive solution to Israel's disputes with Palestine, Lebanon and Syria.

The composition of Obama's foreign policy team (advisors and officials) together with Jimmy Carter's recent visit to the region points to a much more active US engagement than the outgoing Bush administration had managed to achieve in the past eight years. Additionally, the Obama administration unlike the Bush administration is not too close to the Israeli lobby.

This realisation has spread quickly amongst Israeli politicians. Therefore the expansion of settlements in West Bank and the latest military offensive in Gaza is designed to give Israel the upper hand over the Palestinians before the onset of peace talks sometime after January 2009. America has consented to this and expects Israel to agree to a ceasefire as soon as it feels it has achieved its security objectives in Gaza.

Regarding the Palestinian position, both Israel and America want the Abbas to lead the negotiations. However, Abbas's presidential term expires on January 9, 2009. Although his own Fatah party makes a case that the term could legitimately be extended by another year, <u>Hamas</u> is opposed to it. By inflicting huge damage on <u>Hamas</u>, the US through Egyptian mediation is expecting <u>Hamas</u> to agree to some type of power sharing formula with Fatah that retains Abbas as the president. Snap elections maybe called to achieve this outcome.

On the issue of who will lead Israel in polls scheduled for February 2009, the US favours Livni. Livni's strong stance against <u>Hamas</u> as a prelude to the latest military conflict has boosted her appeal amongst Israeli voters. On December 26, 2008 a poll published in the Maariv daily showed Livni's moderate Kadima Party neck and neck with its hawkish Likud rival ahead of general elections. A Teleseker survey showed Kadima winning 30 of Parliament's

Israeli strikes and ME peace process

120 seats, to Likud's 29 seats. The poll surveyed more than 800 people and had a margin of error of 2 seats. Previous polls in recent weeks had given Likud a strong lead.

However, the challenges facing the US in kick-starting the peace process and arriving at some resolution are significant. Both <u>Hamas</u> and Fatah are discredited amongst the Palestinian populace and even if both parties are able to form a unity government there is a strong likelihood that the people will resist its dealings with Israel.

On the Jewish front, Israeli intransigence to derail American peace initiatives is notorious. Unless, the Obama administration shows determination to force Israel into a peace deal then very little will be accomplished by America.

Load-Date: January 14, 2009



Israeli troops mobilize as assault widens

Telegraph Herald (Dubuque, IA)

December 29, 2008 Monday

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Section: A; Pg. 7 Length: 504 words

Byline: The Associated Press

Body

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip (AP) - Israel widened its deadliest-ever air offensive against Gaza's <u>Hamas</u> rulers Sunday, pounding 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 nearing 300 Sunday, crowds of Gazans breached the border wall with Egypt 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 rockets deeper than ever into Israel, near the Israeli port city of Ashdod. Yet Hamas leaders were forced into hiding, most of the dead were from the Hamas security forces, and Israel's military intelligence chief said *Hamas*' ability to fire rockets had been reduced by 50 percent. Indeed, *Hamas* rockets fire dropped off sharply, from more than 130 on Saturday to just over 20 on Sunday. Still, Hamas continues to command some 20,000 fighters. Israel's intense bombings - some 300 airstrikes since midday Saturday - wreaked unprecedented destruction in Gaza, reducing entire buildings to rubble. After nightfall, Israeli aircraft attacked a building in the Jebaliya refugee camp next to Gaza City, killing a 14-month-old baby, a man and two women, Gaza Health Ministry official Dr. Moaiya Hassanain said. In the southern town of Rafah, Palestinian residents said a toddler and his two teenage brothers were killed in an airstrike aimed at a *Hamas* commander. Israeli aircraft also bombed the Islamic University and government compound in Gaza City, centers of *Hamas* power, and the house next to the residence of *Hamas* Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh in a refugee camp. Haniyeh is in hiding. The White House was mum about the situation in Gaza on Sunday after speaking out expansively on Saturday, blaming Hamas for provoking Israel's retaliatory strikes. In the most dramatic attacks Sunday, warplanes 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 influx of goods had helped Hamas defy an 18-month blockade of Gaza by Israel and Egypt, and was key to propping up its rule. Sunday's blasts shook the ground several miles away and sent black smoke high into the sky. Earlier, warplanes dropped three bombs on one of Hamas' main security compounds in Gaza City, including a prison. Moments after the blasts, one man, still half buried, raised a hand to alert rescuers. Gaza's nine hospitals were overwhelmed. Hassanain, who keeps a record for the Gaza Health Ministry, said more than 290 people were killed over two days and more than 800 wounded.

Load-Date: December 29, 2008



Look further, think harder, don't take it at face value

Canberra Times (Australia)

January 14, 2009 Wednesday

Final Edition

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Section: A; Pg. 11 Length: 888 words

Byline: The Canberra Times

Body

Atemporary ceasefire in Gaza that simply allows <u>Hamas</u> to obtain more lethal weapons will assure a repetition of <u>Hamas</u>'s win-win tactic of firing rockets at Israeli civilians while using Palestinian civilians as human shields.

The best example of <u>Hamas</u>'s double war crime tactic was last Tuesday, when it succeeded in sending a rocket to a town fewer than 35km south of Tel Aviv and injuring a child. At the same time, it provoked Israel to attack a United Nations school from which <u>Hamas</u> was launching its rockets. Residents of the neighbourhood said two <u>Hamas</u> fighters were in the area at the time, and the Israeli military said they had been killed.

The <u>Hamas</u> tactic of firing rockets from schools, hospitals and mosques dates back to 2005, when Israel ended its occupation of Gaza.

Several months ago, the head of the Israeli air force showed me a videotape (now available on YouTube) of a <u>Hamas</u> terrorist deliberately moving his rocket launcher to the front of a UN school, firing a rocket and then running away, no doubt hoping that Israel would then respond by attacking the rocket launcher and thus killing Palestinian children in the school.

This is the <u>Hamas</u> dual strategy: to kill and injure as many Israeli civilians as possible by firing rockets indiscriminately at Israeli civilian targets, and to provoke Israel to kill as many Palestinian civilians as possible to garner world sympathy.

Lest there be any doubt about this, recall the recent case of Nizar Rayan, the <u>Hamas</u> terrorist and commander killed in Gaza by an Israeli missile strike on January 1. Israeli authorities had warned him that he was a legitimate military target, as was his home, which was a storage site for rockets. This is the same man who in 2001 sent one of his sons on a suicide mission to blow himself up at a Jewish settlement in Gaza. Rayan had the option of moving his family to a safe area. Instead, his four wives and children remained with him and became martyrs as Israel targeted his home for destruction.

<u>Hamas</u> leaders have echoed the mantra of Hassan Nasrallah, the leader of Hezbollah, that, "We are going to win because they love life and we love death". It is difficult to fight an enemy that loves death in a world that loves life.

The world tends to think emotionally rather than rationally when it is shown dead <u>women</u> and children who are deliberately placed in harm's way by <u>Hamas</u>. Instead of asking who was really to blame for these civilian deaths, people place responsibility on those who fired the fatal shots.

Consider a related situation: An armed bank robber kills several tellers and takes a customer hostage.

Hiding behind his human shield, the robber continues to kill civilians. A police officer, trying to prevent further killings, shoots at the robber but accidentally kills the hostage.

Who is guilty of murder? Not the police officer who fired the fatal shot but the bank robber who fired from behind the human shield.

The international law of war, likewise, makes it a war crime to use human shields in the way <u>Hamas</u> does. It also makes it a war crime for <u>Hamas</u> to target Israeli civilians with anti-personnel rockets loaded with ball bearings and shrapnel designed to kill as many civilians as possible.

In Lebanon in 2006, Hezbollah used this same tactic in its war with Israel, setting up civilians to be in harm's way of Israeli responses to rocket fire. When Israel accidentally killed civilians, Hezbollah celebrated them as martyrs. Similarly, the *Hamas* leadership quietly celebrates the deaths they provoke by causing Israel to fire at its rocket launchers, treating the dead Palestinian civilians as martyrs. The New York Times reported last Friday that a wounded fighter was smiling at the suffering of civilians, saying, "They should be happy," because they "lost their loved ones as martyrs".

The best proof of <u>Hamas</u>'s media strategy of manipulating sympathy is the way it dealt with a rocket it fired the day before Israel's airstrikes began. The rocket fell short of its target in Israel and landed in Gaza, killing two young Palestinian girls.

<u>Hamas</u>, which exercises total control of Gaza, censored any video coverage of those deaths. Although there were print reports, no one saw pictures of these two dead Palestinian children because they were killed by Palestinian rockets rather than by Israeli rockets. <u>Hamas</u> knows that pictures are more powerful than words. That is probably why Israel mistakenly in my view has kept foreign journalists from entering the war zone. Israel must continue to try to stop the <u>Hamas</u> rockets that endanger more than one million Israeli civilians. It also must continue to do everything in its power to avoid Palestinian civilian casualties, not only because that is the right thing to do but because every Palestinian death plays into the hands of <u>Hamas</u>' leaders.

A bad day for <u>Hamas</u> is a day in which its rockets fail to kill or injure any Israeli civilians and Israel kills no Palestinian civilians. That is what Israel and the world must strive for.

<u>Hamas</u> knows that the moment it ends its policy of firing rockets at Israeli civilians from behind the shield of Palestinian civilians, Israel will end its military activities in Gaza.

That is precisely the result *Hamas* does not want to achieve.

Los Angeles Times Alan M. Dershowitz is a professor of law at Harvard University.

Load-Date: January 13, 2009



Forced martyrdom

The Vancouver Sun (British Columbia)

January 9, 2009 Friday

Final Edition

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Section: EDITORIAL; Pg. A10

Length: 290 words

Byline: Ottawa Citizen

Body

On Tuesday an Israeli shell struck a school in the Gaza strip, killing many Palestinian civilians. The loss of life was awful, and as the day went on analysts began to speculate that the tragedy -- in addition to being so heartbreaking - would amount to a public relations disaster.

The analysts were correct -- except that it is <u>Hamas</u> rather than the Israeli government that risks global opprobrium. Late Tuesday, the Associated Press confirmed what many suspected: <u>Hamas</u> fighters had been using the UN school as cover to fire mortars. The Palestinians inside the school -- it was doubling as a shelter -- were human shields.

<u>Hamas</u> has long glorified martyrdom, but now it is creating martyrs without their consent. There are signs that even the Arab-Muslim world is revolted. Ahmed Al-Jarallah, editor of Kuwait's Arab Times, wrote this week that <u>Hamas</u> leaders have "traded in their own people's blood." He decried <u>Hamas</u> for using "the media to spread half-truths from their hideouts at the expense of innocent children, <u>women</u> and elderly."

Mona Eltahawy, a well-known voice in the Arab media, has also accused <u>Hamas</u> of failing the Palestinians of Gaza: "<u>Hamas</u> has given truth to the fear that Islamists care more about facing down Israel than taking care of their people."

When hostilities in Gaza broke out, the Muslim Canadian Congress denounced <u>Hamas</u> for "treating the Palestinian people as human bait." The statement went on: "No other national liberation movement in modern history has offered martyrdom as a substitute to freedom and statehood."

<u>Hamas</u> fighters will continue to stockpile weapons in mosques and fire rockets from near schools.

And they will continue to measure victory by the amount of their children's blood that they shed.

Load-Date: January 9, 2009



Column: Israel gave peace a chance

University Wire

January 13, 2009 Tuesday

Copyright 2009 Harvard Crimson via U-Wire

Length: 895 words

Byline: By Alix M. Olian, Harvard Crimson; SOURCE: Harvard

Dateline: CAMBRIDGE, Mass.

Body

Article 13 of the charter for <u>Hamas</u> - a terrorist group elected by the people of the Gaza Strip as their so-called "government" - reads as follows: "[Peace] initiatives, the so-called peaceful solutions, and the international conferences to resolve the Palestinian problem, are all contrary to the beliefs of the Islamic Resistance Movement." In other words, any sort of peaceful solution in which Israel continues to exist is simply unacceptable to <u>Hamas</u>. Faced with this stark reality - that, until Israel is wiped off the map, <u>Hamas</u> will not stop its campaign of terror - Israel is absolutely justified in its defensive actions against <u>Hamas</u>.

While critics have charged that Israel continues to instigate the admittedly tragic violence in the region, they ignore the numerous efforts that the Israeli government has made to end the conflict. In the past decade, Israel has offered to withdraw from 97 percent of the West Bank, and has also unilaterally removed its forces from the Gaza Strip. But apparently even these well-intentioned efforts are not enough for the radical <u>Hamas</u> leadership, which has repeatedly refused to recognize Israel as a state and has called for its complete destruction. As Israel is understandably - not going to eliminate itself in an attempt for peace, it is left with no options other than military retaliation in order to persuade <u>Hamas</u> to cease its terrorism.

Many people have protested Israel's actions, arguing that its military response has been disproportionate. With all due respect, they are dead wrong. Would it be preferable if Israel fired several rockets into homes in Gaza every day without giving warning, like <u>Hamas</u>? After all, <u>Hamas</u> has not demonstrated much concern for Israeli civilians; in fact, it has repeatedly and indiscriminately fired rockets at Israeli settlements on undisputedly Israeli territory. If Israel were to do the same to Gaza - which it most assuredly has not - then it would be condemned in nearly every corner of the world. But <u>Hamas</u>, a radical terrorist group devoted to the overthrow of a legitimate state, apparently gets a free pass.

Nor has <u>Hamas</u> shown much compassion for its own people, for it often uses civilians - whom it knows Israel will go to great lengths not to kill - in order to carry out its missions. In 2006, armed <u>Hamas</u> terrorists barricaded themselves inside a mosque. Palestinian <u>women</u> gathered outside, and the terrorists managed to dress themselves in the <u>women</u>'s garb and escape, knowing that Israel would not fire at a group of people without knowing who among the group was the real target.

The international community has criticized Israel's response on the basis of humanitarian concerns. It is true that the humanitarian crisis in Gaza should not be ignored. But, while many have chastised Israel for its blockade of Gaza, it is imperative to remember that there would be no need for such a drastic measure if *Hamas* had not started the violence against Israel. Moreover, Israel has attempted on several occasions to relieve the worst of the

Column: Israel gave peace a chance

suffering in Gaza. Even though its Defense Forces are engaged in active combat, Israel has sent more than 10,000 tons of humanitarian aid into Gaza.

Despite propagandistic appeals bemoaning the welfare of Palestinian civilians, <u>Hamas</u> has done little to actually improve their situation. It has even been reported that <u>Hamas</u> - a "government" that should be providing for the basic needs of its people - has diverted medicine and supplies that Israel delivered for civilians in order to care for its soldiers. And the outrageous behavior has not been limited to a mere diversion of aid supplies. During last week's humanitarian cease-fire, <u>Hamas</u> insurgents continued to fire rockets and small arms at Israeli aid convoys and settlements. It is horrifying that <u>Hamas</u> would first cry that its people are being unjustly deprived of humanitarian aid and then, when that aid is being delivered, take advantage of Israel's generosity in order to inflict further harm.

There is also a fundamental disconnect between what critics of Israel have loudly proclaimed and what they have actually done to ameliorate the plight of Palestinian people. It is true that innocent civilians in Gaza lack some necessities. But instead of "aiding" the Palestinians by supplying them with missiles and mortars, Syria, Iran and other countries in the region could provide them with much-needed food and medicine. A concrete improvement in the lives of everyday Palestinians will only occur when the incessant *Hamas*-instigated violence in the region has come to an end. But unfortunately for the long-suffering Palestinian people, this Gazan "government" doesn't actually seem to be interested in either real peace or economic growth.

Many individuals, private organizations and national governments have repeatedly called on Israel to stop its military operations in Gaza. But where were the calls for peace when <u>Hamas</u> fired 771 rockets and 857 mortar-bombs at Sderot and the Negev from June 2007 to February 2008? Where were the calls for a cessation of violence when <u>Hamas</u> broke last year's cease-fire? It is high time for the international community to draw the line on <u>Hamas</u>' destructive behavior and realize that, until <u>Hamas</u> is out of power, Israel will be left with no other option than to defend its mere existence.

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Load-Date: January 14, 2009



Day the rules of conflict changed

The Sunday Telegraph (London)

December 28, 2008

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The Sunday Telegraph

Section: NEWS; Pg. 2 Length: 578 words Byline: TIM BUTCHER

Body

THE AIR assault on Gaza was not just a black day for the Islamist movement: it was the day when Israel changed the rules in its conflict with Palestinian militancy.

For years, the outside world has grown used to a drip-drip of violence between Israel and Palestinian militants.

Both sides have been criticised for targeting civilians, with Israel singled out for using disproportionate force. But, despite this, Israel has "restrained" itself in Gaza, confining its attacks to what it perceived to be active military units or *Hamas* political leaders responsible for ordering attacks on Israeli civilians.

I use quotation marks around "restrained" because, in the eyes of Gaza's 1.5 million people, it was often difficult to see restraint in any of Israel's actions.

In 2006, Israeli artillery fired a dawn barrage of shells, supposedly against militants in the Gazan village of Beit Hanoun. The guns missed. Seventeen members of a Palestinian family, the Athamnehs, died in their pyjamas, cut to pieces by fragmenting 6in [155mm] howitzer shells.

Two years earlier, an elderly man in his wheelchair, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, was killed by an Israeli missile as he was pushed out of a mosque.

Those operations generated fierce international criticism, but they did at least pass a certain threshold of military logic. The Athamnehs were killed when, as Israel argued, a legitimate artillery attack on a military target went wrong because of a technical error. Sheikh Yassin was not a harmless old man. He was the <u>Hamas</u> leader responsible for ordering suicide bombings against Israeli civilians during the Second Intifada.

That threshold was lowered considerably yesterday when, for the first time, Israel targeted groups of *Hamas* soldiers and policemen not involved in active operations.

Membership alone of the security structures of <u>Hamas</u> was turned by Israel into grounds for attack. To put on a <u>Hamas</u> police baseball cap is to make oneself a target.

Day the rules of conflict changed

This means that any <u>Hamas</u> traffic officer on a street corner in Gaza, or manning a makeshift checkpoint, can expect to be attacked.

Yesterday's assaults ended what *Hamas* may come to see as a golden period of unprecedented power in Gaza.

In January 2006, the movement stunned Israel, the Middle East and the wider world by winning a general election. But while it won the vote, <u>Hamas</u> did not win power. Armed groups and political factions connected to the rival Fatah movement refused to hand over authority.

In June 2007, <u>Hamas</u> responded by unleashing a series of attacks on Fatah-affiliated armed groups. Fatah was routed and <u>Hamas</u>, in Gaza at least, was victorious. It then sought to create an image of normality in Gaza and to create a single, united military structure for the first time.

There were factions, notably the Islamic Jihad Party, that it failed to rein in, but <u>Hamas</u> was getting organised. It ran courses for police officers, even recruiting <u>women</u> into specialist units, and Gaza's crowded, tatty streets finally had decent traffic officers.

All the time, <u>Hamas</u> was trying to make itself stronger, sending officers to Iran for training by the same people who made Hizbollah, the Lebanese Shia movement, so effective against Israel.

Throughout this period <u>Hamas</u> planners assumed that their security forces were safe from Israeli strikes, as long as they were not directly involved in running or ordering an attack. Not any more. Somehow, I no longer expect to see uniformed <u>Hamas</u> officers guiding traffic in Gaza.

Load-Date: December 28, 2008



Israel widens Gaza assault

The Pantagraph (Bloomington, Illinois)

December 29, 2008 Monday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A1

Length: 823 words

Byline: By Ibrahim Barzak and Karin Laub; Associated Press

Body

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip - Israel widened its deadliest-ever air offensive against Gaza's <u>Hamas</u> rulers Sunday, pounding smuggling tunnels and a central prison, sending more tanks and artillery toward the Gaza border and approving a reserves callup 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 nearing 300 Sunday, crowds of Gazans breached the border wall with Egypt 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 rockets deeper than ever into Israel, near the Israeli port city of Ashdod.

Yet <u>Hamas</u> leaders were forced into hiding, most of the dead were from the <u>Hamas</u> security forces, and Israel's military intelligence chief said <u>Hamas</u>' ability to fire rockets had been reduced by 50 percent. Indeed, <u>Hamas</u> rockets fire dropped off sharply, from more than 130 on Saturday to just over 20 on Sunday. Still, <u>Hamas</u> continues to command some 20,000 fighters.

Israel's intense bombings - some 300 air strikes since midday Saturday - wreaked unprecedented destruction in Gaza, reducing entire buildings to rubble.

After nightfall, Israeli aircraft attacked a building in the Jebaliya refugee camp next to Gaza City, killing a 14-monthold baby, a man and two <u>women</u>, Gaza Health Ministry official Dr. Moaiya Hassanain said. In the southern town of Rafah, Palestinian residents said a toddler and his two teenage brothers were killed in an airstrike aimed at a <u>Hamas</u> commander.

Israeli aircraft also bombed the Islamic University and government compound in Gaza City, centers of <u>Hamas</u> power, and the house next to the residence of <u>Hamas</u> Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh in a Gaza City refugee camp. Haniyeh, in hiding, was not home.

Shlomo Brom, a former senior Israeli military official, said it was the deadliest force ever used in decades of Israeli-Palestinian fighting. "Since <u>Hamas</u> took over Gaza (in June 2007), it has become a war between two states, and in war between states, more force is used," he said.

Israel widens Gaza assault

European leaders called on both Israel and *Hamas* to end the bloodshed.

French President Nicolas Sarkozy spoke Sunday with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, who leads a rival government to <u>Hamas</u> in the West Bank, and condemned "the provocations that led to this situation as well as the disproportionate use of force."

The White House was mum about the situation in Gaza on Sunday after speaking out expansively on Saturday, blaming *Hamas* for provoking Israel's retaliatory strikes.

In the most dramatic attacks Sunday, warplanes struck dozens of smuggling tunnels under the Gaza-Egypt border, cutting off a lifeline that had supplied <u>Hamas</u> with weapons and Gaza with commercial goods. The influx of goods had helped <u>Hamas</u> defy an 18-month blockade of Gaza by Israel and Egypt, and was key to propping up its rule.

Sunday's blasts shook the ground several miles away and sent black smoke high into the sky. Earlier, warplanes dropped three bombs on one of <u>Hamas'</u> main security compounds in Gaza City, including a prison. Moments after the blasts, frantic inmates, their faces dusty and bloodied, scrambled down the rubble. One man, still half buried, raised a hand to alert rescuers.

Gaza's nine hospitals were overwhelmed. Hassanain, who keeps a record for the Gaza Health Ministry, said more than 290 people were killed over two days and more than 800 wounded.

The Palestinian Center for Human Rights, which keeps researchers at all hospitals, said it had counted 251 dead by midday Sunday, and that among them were 20 children under the age of 16 and nine **women**.

Across Gaza, families pitched traditional mourning tents of green tarp outside homes. Yet the rows of chairs inside these tents remained largely empty, as residents cowered indoors for fear of new Israeli strikes.

Israeli leaders gave interviews to foreign television networks to try win international support.

Public Security Minister Avi Dichter, speaking Arabic, spoke on Arab satellite TV stations, denouncing <u>Hamas</u> rule in Gaza. And Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni told NBC that the assault came because <u>Hamas</u>, an Islamic group backed by Syria and Iran, is smuggling weapons and building a "small army."

In Jerusalem, Israel's Cabinet approved a callup of 6,500 reserve soldiers, raising fears of an impending ground offensive. Israel has doubled the number of troops on the Gaza border since Saturday and also deployed an artillery battery.

Load-Date: December 29, 2008



Barak warns ground war will be intensified `as much as necessary' -- Israeli tanks roll into Gaza

The Australian

January 5, 2009 Monday

3 - All-round Metro Edition

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Section: LOCAL; Pg. 1

Length: 754 words

Byline: John Lyons, Middle East correspondent

Body

ISRAEL vowed to further escalate the military campaign against the militant group *Hamas* after launching a ground invasion in Gaza yesterday.

Israel would intensify its offensive against <u>Hamas</u> in the Gaza Strip ``as much as necessary", Defence Minister Ehud Barak said yesterday.

"This operation won't be easy and won't be simple," he said. "The operation will be expanded and intensified as much as necessary. War is not a picnic."

<u>Hamas</u> vowed that Gaza would become ``a welcome cemetery" for Israeli troops and pledged ``a black destiny" as retribution.

Five civilians had been killed since Israeli troops, tanks and special forces soldiers launched the ground invasion of the Gaza Strip through four points.

Troops were reported to be operating last night just 3km south of Gaza City, the hub of the densely populated enclave sandwiched between Israel and Egypt.

Israeli troops had control of the major roads leading into Gaza's main population centre as they pushed deeper into the *Hamas* stronghold.

At the same time, Israel ordered troops in the north of the country, along the border with Lebanon, to be on alert against Hezbollah in case the Iranian-backed militant group launched attacks.

Israeli infantry kitted with night-vision goggles trotted alongside tank columns into the <u>Hamas</u> stronghold before battles raged in open areas east and north of Jabaliya and east of Gaza City.

Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah urged *Hamas* to inflict huge losses on Israel.

Mr Barak, who is running Israel's military operation, referred to Hezbollah's presence to the north of Israel during a televised address.

Barak warns ground war will be intensified `as much as necessary' -- Israeli tanks roll into Gaza

"While we are fighting in Gaza we keep an open eye on the sensitive situation to the north," he said. "We are ready and alert to face any unwanted developments in that area."

Dozens of Palestinian families fled as infantry took control of the roads. Cars and trucks filled with <u>women</u> and children headed south from the area of the former Jewish settlement of Netzarim, about 3km south of Gaza City.

The ground invasion was an escalation of Israel's eight-day aerial bombing of Gaza. Israel said it was targeting facilities and infrastructure that support *Hamas*'s firing of rockets up to 40km into Israel.

The UN estimates that 421 Palestinians have been killed in the bombing. Four Israelis have been killed in the past two weeks by *Hamas* rockets.

At least 30 Israeli soldiers and an unknown number of *Hamas* fighters have been wounded.

An Israeli officer and a soldier "were severely wounded", the army said. "Twenty-eight other soldiers were injured."

Medics said five <u>Hamas</u> fighters and at least 20 Palestinian civilians had been killed since the ground invasion began.

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas said the escalation would have ``grave consequences' for the Middle East. The UN Security Council held an emergency session yesterday but was unable to agree on a statement calling for an immediate ceasefire after the US argued a return to the situation that existed before the ground invasion was unacceptable.

Shortly before the invasion, Israel hit a mosque during evening prayers in northern Gaza, killing up to 16 people and injuring scores of others.

<u>Hamas</u> showed that despite eight days of bombardment it still had weapons, firing a rocket into the southern Israeli town of Ashkelon.

Demonstrations against the attacks took place around the world but Israel insisted the attacks were in self-defence after two weeks of rocket attacks by *Hamas*.

Israeli officials said the aim of the operation was to destroy facilities that enabled <u>Hamas</u> to launch the rockets that in recent weeks had hit towns and cities such as Ashkelon, Sderot, Ashdod and Beersheba.

Israeli military spokesman Major Avital Leibovich said that up to a million Israelis were living in fear of rockets from Gaza.

Palestinian presidential adviser Sabri Saidam said Israel's invasion would only serve to intensify hatred in the region.

French President Nicolas Sarkozy arrives in Jerusalem today to broker a ceasefire.

Another battle raged across the airwaves, with Israel breaking into *Hamas* television and radio broadcasts.

"Hamas leadership, your time is finished," said one message posted on al-Aqsa television.

The movement's radio output was interrupted by a man's voice speaking in Hebrew-accented Arabic: "Hamas leaders are hiding in the tunnels and are leaving you on the front line of Israel's defence forces," he said.

"Hamas leaders are lying to you and they are hiding in hospitals. Launching rockets puts civilians in danger."

Load-Date: January 4, 2009



<u>Israeli tanks roll into Gaza -- Ground war to be intensified `as much as necessary'</u>

The Australian

January 5, 2009 Monday

1 - All-round Country Edition

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Section: LOCAL; Pg. 1

Length: 744 words

Byline: John Lyons, Middle East correspondent

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Israeli tanks roll into Gaza -- Ground war to be intensified `as much as necessary'

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At least 30 Israeli soldiers and an unknown number of *Hamas* fighters have been wounded.

An Israeli officer and a soldier "were severely wounded", the army said in a statement. "Twenty-eight other soldiers were injured moderately and lightly."

Medics said three *Hamas* fighters and 20 Palestinian civilians had been killed since the ground invasion began.

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas said the escalation would have ``grave consequences" for the Middle East. The UN Security Council held an emergency session yesterday after the ground invasion but was unable to agree on any statement.

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Load-Date: January 4, 2009



Israeli Officials Say Main Goals in Gaza Are Still Unfulfilled

The New York Times

January 14, 2009 Wednesday

Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section A; Column 0; Foreign Desk; Pg. 6

Length: 1114 words

Byline: By STEVEN ERLANGER and MICHAEL SLACKMAN; Steven Erlanger reported from Tel Aviv, and Michael Slackman from Cairo. Reporting was contributed by Taghreed El-Khodary from Gaza City, Ethan Bronner and Sabrina Tavernise from Jerusalem, and Neil MacFarquhar from the United Nations.

Body

TEL AVIV -- Despite heavy air and ground assaults, Israel has yet to cripple the military wing of <u>Hamas</u> or destroy the group's ability to launch rockets, Israeli intelligence officials said on Tuesday, suggesting that Israel's main goals in the conflict remain unfulfilled even after 18 days of war.

The comments reflected a view among some Israeli officials that any lasting solution to the conflict would require either a breakthrough diplomatic accord that heavily restricts <u>Hamas</u>'s military abilities or a deeper ground assault into urban areas of Gaza, known here as a possible "Phase Three" of the war.

The intelligence officials said there were some signs that the military assault had undermined <u>Hamas</u>'s political cohesion, and that <u>Hamas</u>'s leaders in hiding inside Gaza were more eager for a cease-fire than group leaders in exile. They described this assessment as based on hard intelligence, presumably telephone intercepts.

A senior Egyptian official in Cairo said separately on Tuesday that representatives of <u>Hamas</u> had disagreed openly when participating in continuing Egyptian efforts to broker a cease-fire.

Inside Gaza, the military wing of <u>Hamas</u> has been hit "to a certain extent" with "a few hundred" <u>Hamas</u> fighters killed during the ground offensive that began midway through the war, the intelligence officials said. They spoke on condition of anonymity in return for discussing internal assessments of the conflict. <u>Hamas</u> is still able to launch 20 to 30 rockets a day, including 5 to 10 missiles of ranges longer than 20 kilometers, or about 12 miles, down by a third from the start of the war, the officials said.

Greater damage has been done to <u>Hamas</u>'s capacity to run Gaza, with a large number of government buildings destroyed over the course of the operation, they said.

The Israeli Army's chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Gabi Ashkenazi, speaking to Parliament on Tuesday, said that "we have achieved a lot in hitting *Hamas* and its infrastructure, its rule and its armed wing, but there is still work ahead."

In Egypt, efforts to broker a cease-fire were complicated by bickering inside <u>Hamas</u>, the Egyptian official said. The official said that <u>Hamas</u> representatives in Gaza were eager for a cease-fire, but were being blocked because political decisions were being made by the group's leadership in Damascus, Syria.

"Hamas is in a very difficult position," the Egyptian official said. "On the ground, their militants are not doing as good a job, not matching their rhetoric. But politically, they have been totally taken over by their sponsors.

"The guys inside are holding their ground, but they don't want to continue the confrontation," the official said. Egypt talks to *Hamas* but is not eager to see the radical Islamic group succeed in running a small statelet next door.

Israeli officials said they were delaying any expansion of the war until the negotiations succeeded or failed. But journalists and photographers along the Israeli border with Gaza said they saw large numbers of Israeli reservists moving into the territory, suggesting preparation for an intensified phase of the conflict.

On the eve of a visit to the region, the United Nations secretary general, Ban Ki-moon, demanded an immediate halt to the fighting in accordance with a Security Council resolution.

"Too many people have died," Mr. Ban said, while Gazans are facing a humanitarian disaster. United Nations officials have said that three-hour daily humanitarian lulls are insufficient to provide enough food, medicine and other essentials to civilians. Israel said that 102 trucks carrying aid entered Gaza on Tuesday, with a total of 1,028 since the war began.

John Ging, director of operations in Gaza for the United Nations Refugee and Works Agency, who has been highly critical of the Israeli military action, said by video link that the fighting was extracting an unacceptably high toll on civilians.

"Tragically, the horror continues overnight," he said. "Nineteen children killed and 52 injured last night. I would hope that would motivate those who can help."

Israeli officials say their primary aim in the operation is to stop <u>Hamas</u> from firing rockets from Gaza into Israeli cities.

<u>Hamas</u> is capable of building rockets with an advanced propellant that can go up to 18 miles, the intelligence officials said, using chemicals and parts smuggled in from Egypt. <u>Hamas</u> also is using 122-millimeter rockets that are Chinese-made and supplied by Iran that can go almost 25 miles, they said.

But they assessed the probability that <u>Hamas</u> now has rockets capable of going farther than 25 miles as "very low."

On Tuesday, *Hamas* fired 11 rockets and six mortar shells into Israel, the Israeli Army said.

General Ashkenazi said that Israeli aircraft had carried out more than 2,300 strikes since the offensive began on Dec. 27.

In Tuesday's fighting, 18 Palestinian fighters and seven civilians were killed, part of the 971 Palestinians who have died, according to Gaza's <u>Hamas</u>-run Health Ministry. Those figures are not thought to include many of the fighters killed since the ground war began.

Thirteen Israelis have died, including 10 soldiers. The Israeli military said one Israeli officer was critically wounded and two Israeli soldiers suffered light wounds in fighting overnight. They were hurt, the military said, after a bomb exploded in a booby-trapped house that they were searching.

General Ashkenazi said that <u>Hamas</u> fighters were using suicide bombers, sometimes <u>women</u> and sometimes dressed as Israeli soldiers, to try to get close to Israeli troops and kill them. One Israeli soldier was killed last week by a <u>Hamas</u> suicide bomber, the Israeli intelligence officials said. The method of the attack that caused the death had not been disclosed before.

Moussa Abu Marzouk, the exiled deputy to the <u>Hamas</u> political chief Khaled Meshal, told Al Jazeera television on Tuesday that while the organization had "serious reservations" about the Egyptian cease-fire plan, he believed that it might be accepted if changes were made.

Israeli Officials Say Main Goals in Gaza Are Still Unfulfilled

"If the initiative is accepted, it will be in accordance with the position set out by <u>Hamas</u> at the start, namely an Israeli withdrawal, a cease-fire and the opening of the crossing points" between Gaza, Israel and Egypt, he said.

The leader of Israel's opposition Likud Party, Benjamin Nentanyahu, said Tuesday that ultimately <u>Hamas</u> would have to be removed from Gaza and if the government chose to do so in this war, he would support it.

"At the end of the day there will be no escape from toppling <u>Hamas</u> rule," he said at a meeting with the Foreign Press Association, adding that "Israel can not tolerate an Iranian base right next to its cities."

http://www.nytimes.com

Graphic

PHOTOS: Israeli men looked to Gaza on Tuesday near the southern city of Sderot. Journalists along the border saw large numbers of reservists moving into the territory.(PHOTOGRAPH BY MOISES SAMAN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES)

Palestinians mourned relatives outside a morgue in Beit Lahiya, northern Gaza, where the fighting has been intense.(PHOTOGRAPH BY FADI ADWAN/ASSOCIATED PRESS) (A6)

A Palestinian woman, her son and daughter were treated Tuesday at a hospital in Gaza after an Israeli airstrike in Beit Lahiya.(PHOTOGRAPH BY FADI ADWAN/ASSOCIATED PRESS)

A wounded Israeli soldier Tuesday at a hospital in Beersheba. Thirteen Israelis have died in the war, including 10 soldiers.(PHOTOGRAPH BY RONEN ZVULUN/REUTERS)(pg. A12)

Load-Date: June 25, 2011



Hard truths about the Mideast conflict; Lasting peace will only be possible once Palestinians accept that they cannot prevail over Israel by use of force

Edmonton Journal (Alberta)
January 3, 2009 Saturday
Final Edition

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Section: IDEAS; Pg. A17

Length: 914 words

Byline: Robert J. Lieber, Special to The Washington Post

Body

After Israel's dramatic airstrikes, the world's media are filled with images of suffering Palestinian <u>women</u> and children, innocent victims in what is being referred to as a renewed cycle of violence. Predictably, both sides are being urged to call a halt, though in much of the Middle East and parts of Europe these demands, and the blame, fall especially heavily upon the Israelis. In America, there is relatively greater understanding and sympathy for Israel, but here, too, concern is growing about the violence.

While the details of the conflict often appear complex, the fundamentals -- hard truths about Gaza, its <u>Hamas</u> rulers and the wider Israeli-Palestinian conflict -- are straightforward.

First, despite the tragic deaths of civilians, Israeli's airstrikes have been precisely aimed at <u>Hamas</u> fighters, installations and rocket launchers. Inevitably, the use of force causes injury and death to innocents, but from initial figures announced by UN personnel, it appears that more than 80 per cent of those killed were <u>Hamas</u> security personnel or other militants -- a ratio that might compare favourably with the use of force by U.S. and NATO troops in Afghanistan. In view of <u>Hamas</u>'s practice of deliberately placing missile launchers and other weapons in the midst of densely populated areas, the precision is remarkable. It also reflects the fact that the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) seek to minimize civilian deaths, while *Hamas* deliberately targets civilians.

Second, what we are witnessing is not a "cycle" of violence. The IDF airstrikes are a reaction to unrelenting rocket and mortar attacks against the Jewish state. Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005 in the hope that the Palestinians would use the opportunity to prepare for an eventual agreement and a two-state solution in which they would live side by side in peace with Israel. Since then, there have been more than 3,500 such attacks aimed at areas of southern Israel, including over 200 launches since Dec. 19, after <u>Hamas</u> chose not to extend a six-month truce. The expanding range of these missiles now covers an area populated by as many as 700,000 Israelis.

Third, Israel and <u>Hamas</u> have profoundly different aims. Israel has accepted the principle of a two-state solution as the basis for ending the conflict. <u>Hamas</u>, by contrast, rejects this. Its language of "resistance" or "ending occupation" (even though no Israelis, civilian or military, have "occupied" Gaza for the past three years) is but a veiled expression of <u>Hamas</u>'s actual objective: destroying Israel and creating an Islamist Palestinian state in its place. Credulous observers may see more peaceful purposes, but <u>Hamas</u> leaders periodically reassert these objectives, whether in the <u>Hamas</u> covenant or, in the words of a prominent <u>Hamas</u> cleric, Muhsen Abu 'Ita, speaking on Al-Agsa TV and calling for "the annihilation of the Jews here in Palestine."

Hard truths about the Mideast conflict; Lasting peace will only be possible once Palestinians accept that they cannot prevail over Israel by use of force

Fourth, any realistic hope of progress toward a peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and a successful two-state solution requires that <u>Hamas</u> suffer a severe setback in the present fighting in ways that seriously damage its capabilities and weaken its political credibility among Palestinians. Leading officials of Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the Palestinian Authority know this and, notwithstanding their formulaic criticisms of Israel, have explicitly blamed <u>Hamas</u> for the current violence. PLO and Fatah officials fault <u>Hamas</u> for the deaths in Gaza, and an adviser to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, Nimr Hammad, told the Lebanese newspaper Al-Akhbar: "The one responsible for the massacres is <u>Hamas</u>, and not the Zionist entity, which in its own view reacted to the firing of Palestinian missiles." <u>Hamas</u>'s position as a radical, terrorist, adventurist, Islamist organization is underscored by the absence of support for it by Muslim governments other than Iran and its surrogates.

Successful negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis remain highly desirable, but their achievement would require that a single credible Palestinian authority ("one authority, one gun, one law," as Abbas puts it) be able to speak on behalf of its people, represent them in difficult but meaningful negotiations, and possess the capacity as well as the will to enforce its side of a binding agreement. But <u>Hamas</u> represents an alternative source of authority and a direct challenge to the existing Palestinian leadership in the West Bank, while also -- through its non-recognition of Israel, its support for terrorism and its refusal to accept prior negotiated agreements -- rejecting even the most basic prerequisites for negotiations.

Egypt and Jordan have made peace with Israel, not because they embraced the ideas of Theodor Herzl, the founder of modern Zionism, but because they concluded that the effort to destroy the Jewish state had failed and that refusing to come to terms with it was harmful to their national interests. Ultimately, peace will be possible only if most Palestinians and their leaders become convinced that terrorism and violence are a dead end and that they cannot under any circumstances prevail over Israel through the use of force. If today's conflict leaves a seriously weakened and politically damaged <u>Hamas</u>, that result is more likely to enhance the prospects for peace than to weaken them.

Rober J. Lieber, a professor of government and international affairs at Georgetown University, is the author of The American Era: Power and Strategy for the 21st Century

Graphic

Photo: Getty Images; Palestinian Christian children light candles during a mass service in support of Gaza at the Latin Holy Family Church in the West Bank city of Ramallah on Wednesday. <u>Hamas</u> vowed today to fight "until the last breath" if Israel makes good on threats to send ground troops into Gaza.;

Load-Date: January 3, 2009



Editorial: It takes two to make trouble in Gaza

University Wire

January 12, 2009 Monday

Copyright 2009 The Hoya via U-Wire

Length: 630 words

Byline: By Editorial Board, The Hoya; SOURCE: Georgetown

Dateline: WASHINGTON

Body

The most recent clash in the endless circus in Gaza diminishes hope for a bloodless future in the region. After a six-month cease-fire treaty expired in late December, both sides have taken up arms once again.

Palestine's ruling party, *Hamas*, has wanted Israel to end its blockade of the Gaza Strip since the Israeli withdrawal in 2005. The Islamist group argued that the blockade pushed Gaza into economic turmoil. The United Nations estimates that more than three-quarters of the population depends on humanitarian aid.

Israel refused to lift the blockade, arguing that <u>Hamas</u> would transport weapons to Gaza in order to later fire into Israel. The decision infuriated Palestinian leadership and <u>Hamas</u> resumed firing rockets and mortars into Israel. To end the rocket fire, the Israeli Air Force struck military bases, training camps and headquarters. On Jan. 3, Israel launched a ground invasion with troops and tanks. At this writing, the violence has taken over 900 lives, most of which are Palestinian.

Voices in international media have decried both the disproportionality of the death tolls and <u>Hamas</u>' role in reigniting the violence. In this latest episode in the Holy Land's bloody history, both sides are to blame.

<u>Hamas</u> has brought a considerable amount of suffering upon its own people. Did Palestinian leadership not expect Israel to respond to renewed attacks? <u>Hamas</u> only further endangered homes and citizens by deciding to resume hostilities.

Some responsibility for the high Palestinian death toll lies with <u>Hamas</u>. Its use of homes, mosques and schools to store its weapons caches have contributed to the high number of <u>women</u> and children killed. When these caches become Israeli targets, is it any surprise who dies?

On the other hand, Israel did not do nearly enough to prevent this crisis from happening. The Gaza blockade has helped to engender resentment and to economically cripple the region - there were other options. For example, bipartisan negotiations might have solved the problem. Gaza needs food, water, medicine, power and building supplies. It does not need rockets. A well-run, sensible blockade ought to be able to achieve that outcome.

That itself poses a problem. It's difficult to weed out "good" imports from "bad" ones, just as in America it's difficult to block the importation of illicit drugs. But difficulty should not obstruct honest reform. After all, if <u>Hamas</u> really seeks peace - a claim that Israel reasonably questions - opening the border will stop the rocket firings. If it does not, then Israel has its ideological ammunition to make war.

Editorial: It takes two to make trouble in Gaza

The ceasefire could have facilitated a lasting peace. <u>Hamas</u> rocket fire into Israel from Gaza dropped significantly during the ceasefire. Israel should have used that time to work with **Hamas** to restructure the blockade.

Some hope for peace remains. Last Thursday's UN Security Council resolution called for an immediate cease-fire. The United States refrained from voting and the resolution has been effectively ignored, but the gesture demonstrates the international community's commitment to halting the bloodshed. A Franco-Egyptian panel also looks fruitful, as Israel has accepted the beginnings of a truce agreement. <u>Hamas</u>' leadership must now step up to the plate and do likewise.

That won't be easy. <u>Hamas</u> denies Israel's legitimacy and tends toward violent radicalism. It would do well by the Palestinians - the people <u>Hamas</u> claims to represent - to drop both habits. They have proven not merely unproductive, but counterproductive.

For the time being, the vicious circle spirals on. Israel will not end the blockade for fear of Palestinian rocket fire. <u>Hamas</u> won't end the rocket fire until Israel lifts the blockade. Blame both sides for refusing to break the cycle.

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Load-Date: January 13, 2009



VANTAGE POINT; Eyeless in Gaza

BusinessWorld

January 9, 2009 Friday

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Section: Pg. S1/4

Length: 1020 words

Byline: Luis V. Teodoro

Body

The 12-day Israeli assault on Gaza and its cost in noncombatant lives has elicited the usual tongue-clucking about the need for a ceasefire to prevent another "humanitarian disaster."

The phrase is straight out of the dictionaries of UN relief agencies, and by now has little meaning to many people. The entire planet having become one huge disaster area, humanitarian crises have become so common millions are part of one, while others have been desensitized to the tales of suffering that daily flood the media.

In Gaza, the Israeli bombings, machine-gunning, artillery-pounding and tank attacks of the past two weeks are mere additions to the disaster Palestinians have endured both during formal Israeli occupation as well as "withdrawal." The Western media insist that Gaza is under <u>Hamas</u> control, but it is still under Israeli blockade, and the Israelis control the seas and the airspace. As a result the Palestinians there have had to live on \$2 a day per capita.

Israel has also cut off the water supply, and conducts military operations in the Strip at will, since it has the high-tech, US-supplied hardware that assures it military superiority over the Kalashnikov- and RPG-armed <u>Hamas</u> fighters. In retaliation for the <u>Hamas</u>' capture (the Israelis and Western media called it a "kidnapping") of an Israeli soldier in 2006, for example, the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) launched a series of attacks on alleged <u>Hamas</u> strongholds that left at least a hundred Palestinians including children dead.

Before that, the Islamist group <u>Hamas</u> had handily won 56% of the seats in the Palestinian Legislative Council in elections international observers said were fair and free. The Palestinians' failure to vote for the US- Israel-favored Fatah party of Palestinian Authority president Mahmoud Abbas rather than <u>Hamas</u> provoked a punishing Israeli response and US efforts to unseat **Hamas**, whose poll victory the US had not anticipated.

As has become normal in US foreign policy during the Bush watch, the <u>Hamas</u> victory was a result the policy was trying to prevent. It was much like the attempt to halt Iraq's turning into a terrorist breeding ground by attacking it in 2003 which produced the exact opposite effect of turning it into a terrorist breeding ground.

The usual suspect is US President George W. Bush, who had pushed for the elections "in furtherance of democracy" over the objections of Israel and the US' Fatah allies, who knew they couldn't win a fair election. Bush's commitment to democracy rapidly faded with the <u>Hamas</u> victory, and was replaced with the usual US tactic of punishing entire populations for voting for people it doesn't like, in the hope that they (the population) will eventually change their minds.

VANTAGE POINT Eyeless in Gaza

The punishment in this case, said US journalist David Rose in a 2008 article in Vanity Fair, was an intra-Palestinian civil war, specifically between Fatah and <u>Hamas</u>, in which, of course, the usual civilian casualties were likely. To make a long and distressingly sordid story short, the US refused to recognize the <u>Hamas</u>-led, democratically elected government, and rejected the <u>Hamas</u> call for a ceasefire to allow negotiations on the two- state plan that has been supported by much of the international community for 30 years except by Israel and the US.

Instead the US offered to arm and train Fatah so it could confront <u>Hamas</u> militarily. By now practically a US creature, Fatah's Abbas agreed, albeit reluctantly, and sent fighters off to Egypt for training and arming - with US funding, of course.

To preempt Fatah's capturing with arms the power it had lost in the polls, <u>Hamas</u> attacked Fatah security forces and defeated them in the middle of 2007. The US policy under Bumbling Bush once again produced the exact opposite result of its intent: it made <u>Hamas</u> and its hold on Gaza even stronger.

State terrorism begets home-made terrorism. <u>Hamas</u> kept lobbing rockets into Israeli-held areas in Gaza and the West Bank, but also targeted Israeli towns near the Gaza-Israel border as the Israelis kept up their blockade, assassinations, and brutal military incursions. A tenuous truce that might as well have been nonexistent was somehow put in place, with the Israelis continuing to arrest and assassinate <u>Hamas</u> leaders by obliterating the neighborhoods they live in, while <u>Hamas</u> continued to fire rockets into Israel, killing civilians and causing extensive property damage.

The immediate justification for the December air attacks and subsequent ground assault by the Israelis was to put a stop to the rocket attacks, which, however, would be possible only if <u>Hamas</u> were totally destroyed and its links to its major patrons and funders, among them Iran, were severed.

While analysts concede that Israel could inflict substantial damage on <u>Hamas</u>, it's not likely to destroy it, not only because its fighters are among the population, but also because the usual collateral damage on <u>women</u>, children, and other noncombatants is likely to foment even greater anger against Israel and the US, and to breed even more terrorists and terrorism. Despite the noises it's making about an immediate ceasefire, the Bush administration is incidentally likely to have approved the Israeli attack, which seems to have been timed to limit the options of the incoming Obama administration in dealing with *Hamas*.

The way to peace in this part of the Middle East has been known for 30 years: it is to negotiate and implement the two-state solution that in the first place the creation of the Jewish state out of Palestine in 1948 by the UN was supposed to put in place, but which it never did. Except for a brief period during the Clinton administration, neither the US nor Israel have ever considered that solution, blinded as they are by their singular focus on their self-interest and in denying the Palestinians a fair share of the land and resources to which they have as much right as the Israelis. The US and Israel are as eyeless in Gaza as Samson was- but with the difference that Samson was blinded, not by greed and intolerance, but by love and his Philistine foes.

Comments and other columns: <u>www.luisteodoro.com</u>

Load-Date: January 8, 2009



Comment & Debate: Gaza: Gazans need to choose peace over extremism: As Operation Cast Lead enters its eleventh day, a member of the Israeli parliament and a Hamas leader write

The Guardian - Final Edition

January 6, 2009 Tuesday

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Section: GUARDIAN COMMENT AND DEBATE PAGES; Pg. 26

Length: 789 words **Byline:** Shai Hermesh

Body

The signing of the Oslo agreements between Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat in 1993 raised hopes for peace on both sides of the Israel-Gaza border. Tens of thousands of Palestinians found work in Israel. Along with their Israeli neighbours, mostly farmers who have cultivated fields adjacent to the border, a shared dream of peace and prosperity was woven.

In those days I served as mayor of the regional council that stretches along the Gaza-Israeli border. The optimism of the time provided me and my Palestinian neighbours with an opportunity to develop a multifaceted relationship: hundreds of young Gazans studied in our academic college; <u>women</u>'s organisations joined forces in summer camps for Israeli and Palestinian children; Israeli environmental experts assisted the mayor of Dir el-Balakh in the strip in dealing with sewage flowing into the sea; and, with the help of European countries, a large plant was designed to provide purified water for agriculture on both sides of the border. Many personal friends from Gaza spent their weekends at the swimming pool in my kibbutz, while I used to dine with my family at the excellent fish restaurants in the neighbouring city.

Things seemed like a dream. At the time we asked ourselves why we had wasted so many years on a bloody and futile conflict. But the time of good neighbourly relations ended abruptly in September 2000, when Yasser Arafat decided to launch the second intifada and drag us all into the bloody whirlpool that extracts an intolerable price from us all to this day.

Even the bold decision, made by prime minister Ariel Sharon, to uproot 7,500 Israeli settlers and raze their homes, in addition to the withdrawal of nearly 15,000 soldiers from the Gaza Strip, did not halt the fire. The targeting of farmers working in the fields, the bombardment of their houses and families, only increased. The rise of <u>Hamas</u> to power following the 2006 Palestinian elections severed the last connections remaining with authorities in Gaza, while at the same time <u>Hamas</u> intensified its actions against members of Fatah.

On a Sabbath evening last May, families in the kibbutz, all dressed in white, headed toward the communal dining hall for the traditional supper. The hall was brightly lit, white tablecloths covered the tables, and candles were

Comment & Debate: Gaza: Gazans need to choose peace over extremism: As Operation Cast Lead enters its eleventh day, a member of the Israeli parliament and a Ham....

placed at the centre of the room. As children and parents calmly made their way, a heavy bombardment of mortar rounds rained into the heart of the kibbutz.

Jimmy Kedoshim, 48, father of three young children, was killed by one of the bombs in front of his wife and children. During those fatal seconds, many people were torn between the need to assist a friend and their obligation to seek shelter for their children and themselves.

The violent death of Jimmy is one aspect of the long and complicated saga we have endured in the last eight years. Thousands of families living near the Gaza border have been affected by the daily bombardment of their communities. Even more have endured this reality in recent days. Over eight years, children have been born into the sound of exploding rockets, and carry these experiences with them every moment. Post-traumatic symptoms have become widespread among children and adults, whose only wish is to lead life in peace.

The time has come for a responsible government to regain its sovereignty and provide its citizens with the personal security they deserve. The Israeli government does not seek to adopt <u>Hamas</u>'s tactics. The Islamist organisation has indiscriminately fired over 8,000 missiles, rockets and mortar rounds into a civilian population over the last eight years. During that time the Israeli military has gone above and beyond to minimise the damage inflicted on the Palestinian population, at times placing Israeli soldiers and civilians at risk.

It is important to remember that the operation taking place in Gaza is not aimed at the Palestinian population with whom we have had close relations in the past, nor is it a punitive act. The operation seeks to restore calm and stability to a region that lacks both due to <u>Hamas</u>'s acts. Peace is a mutual interest. The Palestinians chose to elect an extremist group that has inflamed hatred and suffering instead of investing in education and reducing poverty.

As the battles subside, Israeli forces will return to their bases. We will return to cultivate our fields. The people of Gaza will have to decide whether to maintain a radical and suppressive regime, or whether to seize the opportunity to establish a peace-seeking leadership that will help us all bring back the days of good neighbourly relations.

The choice is theirs.

Shai Hermesh is a Kadima member of the Knesset and longtime resident of Kibbutz Kfar Aza near the Gaza Strip

Load-Date: January 6, 2009



Column: Media skews Israeli-Palenstinian conflict to favor Hamas

University Wire

January 12, 2009 Monday

Copyright 2009 FSView & Florida Flambeau via U-Wire

Length: 938 words

Byline: By Samuel Berkowitz, FSView & Florida Flambeau; SOURCE: Florida State U.

Dateline: TALLAHASSEE, Fla.

Body

What do you suppose would happen if a minority group in this country was under attack and retaliated against their assailants, only to have people advocating grisly, painful and undignified modes of death for them?

Say, for example, the Mexican crime cartel MS-13 went into a black neighborhood and caused a lot of mayhem, but when blacks who had lived in the area for generations opened fire on the gangsters in self-defense, people started protesting and calling for lynchings and nooses?

There would be justifiable outrage, both in the press and among the general public. Regrettably, this is not always the case.

If I told you of a case of Muslim woman screeching, "You need a big oven, that's what you need!" to Jews at a protest, would you imagine I was referring to a protest in Israel or in Fort Lauderdale?

As FOX News reported: "Separated by battle lines and a stream of rush-hour traffic outside a federal courthouse last week, at least 200 pro-Palestinian demonstrators faced off against a smaller crowd of Israel supporters. Most of the chants were run-of-the-mill ... but as the protest continued and crowds grew, one woman in a hijab began to shout curses and slurs that shocked Jewish activists in the city, which has a sizable Jewish population. 'Go back to the oven,' she shouted, calling for the counter-protesters to die in the manner that the Nazis used to exterminate Jews during the Holocaust." This incident received sparse, if any, coverage by other mainstream news outlets.

Of course, if you imply that airport security might be right in screening passengers from Arab countries more thoroughly than little old ladies from Kentucky, you're cast as an aspiring senior officer of the Fourth Reich; a real Joseph Goebbels reborn.

Over and over again, radical Muslims -- no, not the regular, peaceful kind who want nothing more than peace, love and good vibrations --Â commit one atrocity or another, and when they face reprisals, the news is rife with images of grief-stricken Muslim mothers wailing and moaning amid the rubble. More and more, the same images of grieving Jewish parents crying over the charred corpse of their child, killed by whatever form of bomb the Muslim terrorist in that particular case cobbled together, is absent from any media scrutiny of note. The fact that the Israeli Defense Force goes to great lengths to warn Palestinian civilians away from buildings targeted for destruction, whereas *Hamas* and their ilk gleefully target civilians, is virtually unmentioned.

Column: Media skews Israeli -Palenstinian conflict to favor Hamas

Through the lens of the Western liberal media and that of the bafflingly dovish portion of the Jewish population itself, IDF soldiers would have to be forced to watch their mothers and wives be raped and murdered before any retaliation by them was acknowledged as legitimate.

In his outstanding column "Why Palestinian Victims Get More Attention Than Others," writer Michael Medved points out examples of media hypocrisy in terms of casting Muslims as perpetual victims, while ignoring much greater instances of brutality against other groups: "In the first week of Israel's current military operation to stop *Hamas* rocket attacks from Gaza, the U.N. reported that 500 died, at most 125 of them civilians. At precisely the same time, Ugandan rebels slaughtered an estimated 400 civilians in the Eastern Congo ... and piled at least 150 of their horribly mutilated bodies like cord wood in a church sanctuary on Christmas day.

"The scene at the church was unbelievable,' Captain Chris Magezi of the Ugandan Army told the Associated Press. 'It was horrendous. On the floor were dead bodies of mostly **women** and children cut in pieces.'

"Why should the suffering and martyrdom of these African villagers count for less than the simultaneous, vastly more publicized misfortunes of Palestinians in Gaza?"

Why, indeed? Medved arrives at a similar conclusion to that posited by Dennis Miller on the Jan. 7 episode of "The O'Reilly Factor": that Jews are becoming increasingly convenient scapegoats due to Israel's connection to the United States and that, as Medved says, "The Palestinians receive disproportionate notice not because of any distinctive quality of their own nationhood or history, but because their purported oppressors remain the most controversial, compelling, loathed, admired and polarizing people on the planet."

In the post-9/11 world, international anti-American sentiment is blamed in part on our support of Israel. In the Arab world, the friendship between the United States and Israel is a significant contributor to anti-Semitism. In post-WWI Germany, Jews were scapegoated because their financial acumen was envied and resented in the economically depressed nation.

Reading some of the posts on lefty nut job sites like Daily Ko's and HuffPo, one has a hard time not believing that everything old is new again. This is not to say that we have all the makings of another Holocaust here in the United States, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't be mindful of the tendency to single out someone who is convenient to cast as a bad guy.

To paraphrase Lenny Bruce: Everyone wants to beat the devil, so if there isn't one, people invent a devil to beat.

It is difficult to say what it will take to awaken people to the reality of the situation in Israel. President-elect Barack Obama commented some months ago: "If my daughters were living in a house that was being threatened by rocket attacks, I would do whatever it takes to end that situation."

Let us pray that Obama will maintain this sensible -- and sadly, courageous -- stance when he takes office next week.

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Load-Date: January 12, 2009



Cool Gaza crisis, then push peace

The Toronto Star

January 3, 2009 Saturday

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Section: EDITORIAL; Pg. AA04

Length: 441 words

Body

Israel Prime Minister Ehud Olmert has buoyed his country's spirits by dealing <u>Hamas</u> a fierce blow in the past week. Air strikes have killed <u>Hamas</u> leader Nizar Rayyan, driven militants underground, destroyed weapons caches and disrupted rocket attacks. Much of Gaza, including official buildings and mosques, is in ruins. And Gazans were braced last night for a feared Israeli ground assault, as foreigners fled.

Many Israelis hail this as success. But Israel has been down the illusory "victory" path before. In 2004, Ariel Sharon's government decapitated <u>Hamas</u> by killing Sheikh Ahmad Yassin and other leaders. It proved to be a hollow victory. <u>Hamas</u> regrouped, won the 2006 Palestinian parliamentary vote, seized Gaza in 2007, and fired more than 3,000 rockets and mortars at Israeli towns.

Now Olmert is considering invading Gaza again, though Israelis have little stomach to return three years after pulling out.

As U.S. President-elect Barack Obama and other world leaders contemplate this latest spasm of violence, they should reflect on the broader picture and resolve to breathe new life into the stalled Mideast peace process before another violent cycle erupts.

Undeniably, Israel is within its rights to defend itself, as it has. But Olmert has not managed to topple <u>Hamas</u>, or even to stop the rocket attacks, which continued yesterday. <u>Hamas</u> now vows reprisals. And moderate Palestinians are becoming radicalized by the lopsided war. This past week 430 Gazans, including <u>women</u> and children, were reported killed and 2,200 hurt; four Israelis have died.

Ending this carnage is an urgent priority, made more difficult by the vacuum in Washington as President George W. Bush prepares to quit office. French President Nicolas Sarkozy and others are pushing Israel to declare a brief "humanitarian truce" in the hope that <u>Hamas</u> will reciprocate by ceasing its attacks. Arguing <u>Hamas</u> should halt attacks first, Israel has balked at a truce. And, not unreasonably, Israel wants international monitors.

Broadly, Obama should endorse Sarkozy's approach, and countries such as Canada should offer to supply monitors, if both sides agree.

But the Gaza crisis is symptomatic of a deeper problem. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and his Fatah party have been so weakened by the go-nowhere peace process that Palestinians in Gaza turned to <u>Hamas</u>, and its Iranian sponsors, with disastrous results.

Israel has tried to crush <u>Hamas</u> before, and failed. The better approach would be to strengthen Abbas and other moderates by rehabilitating the peace process.

Cool Gaza crisis, then push peace

But that will require Obama to show an interest, and an even-handedness, that his predecessor did not.

Load-Date: January 3, 2009



GAZA'S GRIEF; 227 DEAD IN BIGGEST ISRAELI RAID IN 40YRS

Sunday Mirror

December 28, 2008 Sunday

1 Star Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 8 Length: 560 words

Byline: BY KAREN ROCKETT

Body

AT least 227 people were killed and more than 700 wounded yesterday in massive Israeli air strikes in the Gaza Strip.

In the largest attack since 1967, F-16 jets continued to pound targets last night as rescuers desperately dug for survivors buried in the rubble.

Missiles fired into the Palestinian enclave, which is sandwiched between Israel and Egypt, flattened bases of the ruling *Hamas* militant group and destroyed all its security compounds in Gaza City.

Bodies of police - including the territory's police chief Tawfiq Jaber - and <u>Hamas</u> security men lay in the crowded streets amid burning buildings and scenes of chaos. With many of the targets in densely-packed residential areas, many of the dead caught in the blasts were civilians, including <u>women</u> and children.

The first strikes came as pupils walked home from school, leaving frantic mothers searching the blasted streets.

Mosques issued urgent appeals for people to donate blood and *Hamas* sources said hospitals were soon full.

Egypt opened its border at Rafah to allow ambulances to drive out some of the wounded from the south of Gaza. The attacks came days after a strained six-month truce for Israel and <u>Hamas</u> expired.

Israel said the strikes were in response to about 200 rockets fired from Gaza in the past few days and would continue "as long as necessary".

Prospects for peace looked bleak last night as Israel rejected worldwide calls for a ceasefire. Defence Minister Ehud Barak warned that the strikes could be followed up by ground attacks if necessary.

GAZA'S GRIEF 227 DEAD IN BIGGEST ISRAELI RAID IN 40YRS

"There is a time for calm and a time for fighting, and now the time has come to fight," he told US TV. "For us to be asked to have a ceasefire with *Hamas* is like asking you to have a ceasefire with al Qaeda."

Israel's military said their first wave of 60 warplanes hit 40 targets of "terror operatives, training camps and weapons storage warehouses". But <u>Hamas</u> quickly retaliated, firing home-made rockets into Israel - killing at least one - and vowing to send suicide bombers over the border.

The <u>Hamas</u> government leader in Gaza, Ismail Haniyeh, said: "Palestine has never witnessed an uglier massacre." The party's spokesman Fawzi Barhoum said: "Hamas will continue the resistance until the last drop of blood."

World leaders appealed for calm last night.

Prime Minister Gordon Brown called on both sides to reach a "lasting solution through peaceful means" and the US urged Israel to "avoid civilian casualties as it targets *Hamas* in Gaza".

King Abdullah of Jordan called for a ceasefire, saying the attacks had "targeted innocents".

And Arab League head Amr Moussa called for an emergency meeting of Arab foreign ministers in Cairo.

A 60-YEAR CONFLICT

Q WHEN did the Israeli-Palestinian conflict begin?

A THE formation of the state of Israel in 1948 led to 700,000 Palestinians being driven into Gaza, a coastal strip 25 miles long and six miles wide bordered by Israel, the Mediterranean Sea and Egypt.

Q WHAT are they fighting over?

A TERRITORY. The displaced Palestinians have no recognised country to call their own. Since Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip in 2005 a shaky truce held at the border.

Q WHO are *Hamas* and what does the word mean?

A <u>HAMAS</u> means "zeal" - the Arabic acronym for the Islamic Resistance Movement. It won the Palestinian election in 2006 and aims to restore Islamic rule to Palestine. It refuses to recognise Israel.

Graphic

Pictures: GETTY IMAGES/AFP/AP PHOTO Medics take a wounded toddler to Shifa hospital in Gaza City yesterday; Tears... body of a <u>Hamas</u> guard; Strike on <u>Hamas</u> compound; Palestinians gather at site of an air strike in the southern Gaza city of Rafah yesterday

Load-Date: December 28, 2008



Foreign-passport holders flee as Gaza strikes continue

therecord.com

January 3, 2009 Saturday

Final Edition

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Section: FRONT; Pg. A1

Length: 770 words

Byline: Aron Heller and Ibrahim Barzak, The Associated Press

Dateline: EREZ CROSSING, ISRAEL

Body

Israel allowed several hundred Palestinians with foreign passports to flee Gaza yesterday, even as its warplanes bombed a mosque it said was used to store weapons and destroyed homes of more than a dozen *Hamas* officials.

The evacuees told of crippling shortages of water, electricity and medicine, echoing a UN warning of a deepening humanitarian crisis in the besieged Gaza Strip in the seven-day-old Israeli campaign.

The United Nations estimates at least a quarter of the 400 Palestinians killed by Israeli air strikes on <u>Hamas</u> militants have been civilians.

Jawaher Hajji, a 14-year-old U.S. citizen who was allowed to cross into Israel, said her uncle was one of them -killed while trying to pick up some medicine for her cancer-stricken father. She said her father later died of his illness.

"They are supposed to destroy just the <u>Hamas</u>, but people in their homes are dying too," Hajji, who has relatives in Virginia, said at the Erez border crossing between Gaza and Israel.

U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice accused <u>Hamas</u>' leaders of holding the people of Gaza hostage and said an end to violence would only be possible once <u>Hamas</u> stopped firing rockets into Israel. She said the United States continues to seek a "durable and sustainable" ceasefire.

International calls for a ceasefire have been growing, and French President Nicolas Sarkozy is expected in the region next week. Rice said she had no plans to go to the region.

Israel has targeted <u>Hamas</u> leaders in the past but halted the practice during a six-month truce that expired last month. Most of <u>Hamas</u>' leaders went into hiding at the start of the Israeli offensive on Dec. 27.

Israeli troops in bases in southern Israel are awaiting orders to invade Gaza. But Israel also appears to be open to intense diplomatic efforts by Arab and European leaders, saying it would consider stopping its punishing aerial assaults if international monitors were brought in to track compliance with any truce with <u>Hamas</u>.

Foreign-passport holders flee as Gaza strikes continue

Israel began its campaign to try to halt weeks of intensifying Palestinian rocket fire from Gaza. The offensive has dealt a heavy blow to <u>Hamas</u> but has not stopped the rockets, which continue to strike deeper and deeper into Israel. Three Israeli civilians and one soldier have been killed in the rocket attacks.

More than 30 rockets were fired into southern Israel yesterday, slightly injuring four people.

After destroying <u>Hamas</u>' security compounds early in the operation, Israel has turned its attention to the group's leadership. Israeli warplanes yesterday hit about 20 houses believed to belong to <u>Hamas</u> militants and members of other armed groups.

Israel also bombed a mosque it said was used to store weapons. The mosque was known as a <u>Hamas</u> stronghold and was identified with Nizar Rayan, the <u>Hamas</u> militant leader killed Thursday when Israel bombed his home. Rayan, 49, was ranked among **Hamas**' top five decision-makers.

The explosion killed 20 people, including all four of Rayan's wives and 11 of his children.

Israel's military said the bombing of Rayan's house triggered secondary explosions from the weapons stockpile there.

Fear of Israeli attacks led to sparse turnout at yesterday's communal prayers at mosques throughout Gaza. Still, thousands attended a memorial service for Rayan.

"The Palestinian resistance will not forget and will not forgive," said <u>Hamas</u> legislator Mushir Masri. "The resistance's response will be very painful."

Israel also destroyed homes of more than a dozen <u>Hamas</u> members. Most seemed empty, but one man was killed in the Jebaliya refugee camp in northern Gaza.

Air strikes killed five other Palestinians -- including a teenage boy east of Gaza City, and three children playing in southern Gaza.

Maxwell Gaylard, UN humanitarian co-ordinator for the Palestinian Territories, said 2,000 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.

The UN World Food Program began giving out bread in Gaza. It said there had been a drastic deterioration in living conditions, with shortages of food, cooking gas and fuel, and frequent power cuts.

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.

The military has called some houses ahead of time to warn inhabitants of an impending attack. In some cases, aircraft also fired sound bombs to warn away civilians before flattening the homes with their missiles, Palestinians and Israeli defence officials said.

Graphic

Photo: Dan Balilty, the associated press, A Palestinian protester throws stones at Israeli troops yesterday from the Shuafat refugee camp on the outskirts of Jerusalem.

Load-Date: January 3, 2009



Gaza portrayed

The Jerusalem Post
December 29, 2008 Monday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 13

Length: 749 words **Highlight:** Editorial

Body

With the exception of the White House - which reacted to Israel's Gaza operation by labeling <u>Hamas</u> leaders "nothing but thugs" and blaming the "terrorists" for igniting the violence - international political and media reaction has, by and large, fallen into two broad categories: low-key evenhandedness and knee-jerk condemnation.

The evenhanded school appreciates that no country can permit, indefinitely, its citizens to be bombarded by an enemy committed to its annihilation. Still, they oppose "disproportionate" Israeli measures - basically those that might actually compel *Hamas* to end its campaign of terror.

Among these evenhanded are Quartet envoy Tony Blair, French President Nicholas Sarkozy (who also holds the EU presidency), British Prime Minister Gordon Brown and German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier.

The quintessentially evenhanded Javier Solana, the European Union's foreign policy czar, holds any non-combatant deaths on the Palestinian side "unacceptable." His advice? <u>Hamas</u> should stop attacking Israel, and Israel should stop retaliating.

But it is the Vatican's reaction that captures the very essence of evenhandedness: "*Hamas* is a prisoner to a logic of hate; Israel to a logic of faith in force as the best response to hate." What to do? "One must continue to search for a different way out, even if that may seem impossible."

THERE are those who make no pretense at being evenhanded. For them, <u>Hamas</u> has been exercising its inalienable right to resist "the occupation" by violently opposing the existence of the Jewish state. For them, practically out of the blue, the Zionists went berserk, massacring <u>women</u>, children, and the occasional <u>Hamas</u> "martyr."

Desmond Tutu weighed in by calling Israel's use of its air force to stop <u>Hamas</u> "a war crime." Peter Beaumont, foreign affairs editor of Britain's Guardian, said that Israel's actions ranked with what he termed the massacres of Deir Yassin and Sabra and Shatilla.

Tim Butcher of London's Telegraph aimed to provide context. As time goes on, he explained, Israel lowers the threshold for who it considers a legitimate target. In 2004, "an elderly man in his wheelchair, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, was killed by an Israeli missile as he was pushed out of a mosque after weekly prayers." Butcher went on to note that Yassin "was the <u>Hamas</u> leader responsible for ordering suicide bombings." Still, his point was that, nowadays, "any <u>Hamas</u> traffic cop on a street corner" has become fair game.

Gaza portrayed

ISRAEL embarked on this operation to compel <u>Hamas</u> to stop terrorizing our population in the South. It did so reluctantly, and only after <u>Hamas</u> rejected multiple appeals from Mahmoud Abbas and the Egyptian government to maintain the "cease-fire."

Despite the difficulties inherent in presenting Israel's position to a not always sympathetic media, the Prime Minister's Office, Foreign Ministry and IDF recognize that public diplomacy is an integral element in getting *Hamas* to stop its attacks. To that end, the articulate former UN representative Dan Gillerman has been appointed to coordinate the Foreign Ministry's response to the crisis. On the whole, Israeli spokespeople have rarely been more proactive or competent.

Israel has had no military or civilian presence in Gaza since 2005. Quiet would prevail across the Israel-Gaza border, and the Palestinians could build a model state, if their <u>Hamas</u> leadership were not insistently bent on attacking Israel. <u>Hamas</u> acknowledges as much. Even as its spokesman Taher al-Nunu was telling al-Jazeera and other channels of the current "ferocious Zionist massacre," he was also emphasizing that <u>Hamas</u> will never abandon its determination to destroy Israel.

The declared Israeli aim in the military operation - putting an end to a neighboring terror-state's ability to threaten our populace - is precisely the goal that any other nation would set itself if attacked as Israel has been.

All of this should be obvious to fair-minded observers everywhere. But when dramatic pictures from Gaza threaten to overwhelm clear thinking, Israeli leaders have in the past two days often formulated effective reminders. "Military actions are not easy to support," Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni noted in one interview on Monday, for instance. "But this is the only way we can change realities on the ground... This is our responsibility as a government to our citizens."

Carefully chosen words set against dramatic images? It's an uneven media battlefield. But at least, this time, Israel is fighting.

Load-Date: October 4, 2011



Fulfilling a state's moral obligation

The Straits Times (Singapore)
January 1, 2009 Thursday

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Section: REVIEW - OTHERS

Length: 713 words

Byline: Ilan Ben-Dov, For The Straits Times

Body

THE harsh photographs and reports arriving from Gaza in recent days sometimes give an unbalanced, inaccurate picture of the current crisis in Gaza.

An impartial analysis of the sequence of events should not start from last Saturday. It should start instead from eight years earlier. Hundreds of thousands of Israelis have been subjected to almost daily attacks by <u>Hamas</u>' Kasam rockets in those eight years.

<u>Hamas</u> has launched as many as 100 rockets and mortar shells a day. As a result, thousands of Israelis live in a state of constant fear and anxiety. <u>Women</u> and men leaving their homes for their workplace; children on their way to kindergarten and school - all do not know if they will return home safely. It is regrettable that some of the media organisations which are now dedicating massive coverage to the events in Gaza, and rightly so, should choose to completely ignore the reality of the sufferings of these Israelis who have lived for many years under constant attack by **Hamas**.

Israel's government decided not to react to these daily attacks in order to prevent an escalation of the conflict. It preferred to explore all possible political and diplomatic avenues, with the aim of avoiding the use of force. The Israeli government faced much domestic criticism for pursuing this policy.

This is how a new reality was created in Gaza. <u>Hamas</u> got used to being able to do anything. It could dictate events; it could attack whenever it wished, without Israel responding.

About a week ago, <u>Hamas</u> announced that it rejected the ceasefire agreement of six months ago and resumed its massive rocket attacks against southern Israel. But this time, the Israeli government decided to change the rules of the game and to stop <u>Hamas</u>' attacks. It decided to fulfil its obligation towards its citizens and to protect their lives.

This is an elementary moral obligation of any government towards its citizens. Israel is no different from any other country in this respect.

'Enough is enough,' most Israelis have said in the past week. It is now time to defend ourselves. Israel's goal in the current military operation is simple: To stop *Hamas* from attacking Israel.

Those who accuse Israel of an 'over proportional' reaction tend to ignore the nature of <u>Hamas</u>. It is a radical, fundamentalist terror organisation. It operates under the direct influence of Iran. Its aim, first and foremost, is the annihilation of the state of Israel.

Fulfilling a state's moral obligation

One should not ignore the ideology of this organisation. <u>Hamas</u> does not demand anything from Israel. Neither does it wish to negotiate with Israel, since it rejects the right of the Jewish people to a state of their own. It rejects the very existence of Israel no matter what its borders. Hence, any political dialogue with this organisation is practically impossible. What can be the basis of negotiating with **Hamas** - the terms of Israel's destruction?

Israel is conducting strikes only against <u>Hamas'</u> military installations. While it makes the utmost attempts to avoid hitting civilians, <u>Hamas</u> deliberately targets Israeli citizens. Moreover, it cynically launches its rockets from the most populated civilian neighbourhoods of Gaza, well aware of Israel's sensitivity in hitting back at civilians. This is not only a tactical difference between the two sides; it is a basic moral difference.

<u>Hamas</u> is not the only representative of the Palestinians. Israel and the Palestinian Authority are conducting negotiations, with the aim of reaching a peaceful solution, based on mutual understanding and a historic compromise. Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas are meeting almost on a weekly basis, trying to reach a pragmatic and constructive solution to all the disputes between the two peoples.

Israel is ready to pay a heavy price in order to reach a compromise with the Palestinians. A vast majority of Israelis support the establishment of an independent, sovereign Palestinian state, existing side by side with Israel.

Unlike the Palestinian Authority, which presents to the Palestinians the possibility of a better future, all that <u>Hamas</u> is offering is a continuation of bloodshed and misery.

It is for the Palestinians to decide which path they want to choose.

The writer is Israel's Ambassador to Singapore.

Load-Date: January 1, 2009



A Palestinian View: War crimes in Gaza put PA in awkward place

Daily News Egypt

January 4, 2009 Sunday

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Length: 726 words

Body

The devastating Israeli bombardment of Gaza in the past few days did not come as a surprise to anybody. Its scale and magnitude, however, were unexpected by almost everybody except its perpetrators.

The attack, which Israel called "Operation Cast Lead", began around 11:30 am last Saturday when 64 aircraft delivered over 100 tons of explosives on 50 to 100 targets in the Gaza Strip. It was described by officials as the largest Israeli operation in Gaza since 1967. In that first attack, over 130 were killed and about 800 injured. The number of casualties on that day and the following few days has continued to rise and those slain come from a seemingly random sample of society: they include <u>Hamas</u> security forces and civilian men, <u>women</u> and children, among them seven UNRWA students and their instructor.

Israel's disproportionate and indiscriminate bombing of Gaza should invite experts of humanitarian and international law to seriously investigate the Palestinian claim that the attack is a war crime.

On the second day of the Israeli attack, the objectives of both Israel and <u>Hamas</u> were clear. Israel wanted to teach <u>Hamas</u> the same lesson that it meant to give Hezbollah in the summer of 2006: that there is a heavy price all Gazans will pay when <u>Hamas</u> launches any attack against Israelis. In addition, Israel wanted to destroy the smuggling tunnels from Egypt to Gaza without any promise of easing its siege on Gaza. In other words, Israel wanted to renew the truce while maintaining, and consolidating, the closure.

<u>Hamas</u> is even clearer in what it is striving to achieve from this confrontation. In the first official statement on the first day of the attack it declared that the "practical response to the Israeli attack is the opening of the Rafah crossing and the cutting of diplomatic relations between Israel and Arab states."

It is notable that following that declaration, which was echoed by all <u>Hamas</u> spokespeople, the call to open the Rafah crossing and criticism of Egypt for failing to do so became the main rallying call in almost all solidarity demonstrations across the Arab world. That is a strong indicator that there are well-organized groups taking advantage of Arab sympathy with the Palestinians of Gaza to make political gains on a regional level. The harmony between <u>Hamas</u> and Islamic political parties in the region is significant.

In spite of the heavy material and human losses, the Israeli attack on Gaza is strengthening <u>Hamas</u> politically and increasing public support and sympathy for the movement. <u>Hamas</u> is using this momentum to achieve an end to the

A Palestinian View: War crimes in Gaza put PA in awkward place

closure of Gaza, not by Israel opening the crossings it controls but by Egypt opening Rafah. The irony here is that if Rafah is opened on <u>Hamas</u>' terms, is will also secure a significant Israeli strategic objective, namely handing over effective responsibility for Gaza to Egypt.

In the meantime, the war in Gaza is also affecting the balance of power between the two main rival factions in Palestine, Fateh and *Hamas*. The Israeli attack has increased public sympathy and support for *Hamas* because it is the target of these attacks and because it is trying to fight back. The Palestinian Authority in Ramallah, meanwhile, finds itself in an awkward and difficult position.

For one thing, it has been marginalized and has been the target of criticism while being compared unfavorably with the role and position of <u>Hamas</u> in Gaza. This has led Fateh spokespeople and leaders to change their tone from trying to hint at <u>Hamas</u> responsibility for the suffering of Gazans to a more reasonable and rational tone, exemplified by President Mahmoud Abbas, who, during a meeting of the PLO's Executive Committee, suggested that the time is right for coordination between the different factions and invited all factions, including <u>Hamas</u>, to address this issue.

This change in tone could result in some positive momentum in the dialogue among the Palestinian factions that are under growing pressure from the public to reconcile.

Ghassan Khatibis coeditor of the bitterlemons family of internet publications. He is vice-president for community outreach at Birzeit University and a former Palestinian Authority minister of planning. He holds a PhD in Middle East politics from the University of Durham. This commentary is published by DAILY NEWS EGYPT in collaboration with bitterlemons.org.

Load-Date: January 5, 2009



News: Air strikes on Gaza: 'There is a time for calm ... now is the time to fight: Ehud Barak, Israeli Defence Minister: More than 200 people were killed and many others injured after Israel launched its most deadly assault on the Gaza Strip in 40 years. The air strikes - in retaliation for ongoing Hamas rocket attacks - were aimed at the Palestinian group's security assets but also caused widespread carnage

The Observer (London)

December 28, 2008

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The Observer

Section: OBSERVER HOME PAGES; Pg. 2

Length: 936 words

Byline: Toni O'Loughlin, Jerusalem and Hazem Balousha, Gaza

Body

MAYHEM, DEATH and deafening destruction came to Gaza at 11.30am yesterday when Israel dropped a first wave of bombs on the <u>Hamas</u> security compounds it had determined to wipe off the face of the map. By the end of "Operation Solid Lead", some 60 aircraft had launched around 100 strikes and at least 225 people were reported to have been killed. It was the most devastating attack on Gaza since 1967.

Dense black smoke billowed as shoppers, schoolchildren, shopkeepers, workers and pedestrians ran to find shelter, emptying the streets.

Around the tightly packed Gaza City area, where several of <u>Hamas</u>'s security force compounds were tucked away between residential buildings, sirens wailed as ambulances sped through the streets to reach piles of dead bodies. Most of the dead were police officers. About 700 people had been injured, according to **Hamas**.

Doctors and ambulance officers rushed between buildings, taking away the wounded they hoped to save and leaving those who had already died outside the mortuary, which was already overflowing with corpses.

Said Masri sat in the middle of a Gaza City street, close to a security compound, slapping his face, covering his head with dust from the bombed-out building and wailing: "My son is gone, my son is gone." The shopkeeper said he had sent his nine-year-old son out to buy cigarettes minutes before the air strikes began and now could not find him.

"May I burn like the cigarettes, may Israel burn," he shouted.

News: Air strikes on Gaza: 'There is a time for calm ... now is the time to fight: Ehud Barak, Israeli Defence Minister: More than 200 people were killed and ma....

Some of the air strikes took place as children were leaving school, causing panic in the streets. The hospitals overflowed. One doctor at Shifa hospital, Gaza's main treatment centre, said: "We are treating people on the floor, in the corridors. We have no more space. We don't know who is here and what the priority is to treat."

Earlier in the week, as a consequence of Israel's 18-month blockade of Gaza, some hospitals had announced that they would be restricted to performing emergency operations only.

As the casualties lined corridors and wards, it was clear that medical resources had long since been stretched beyond breaking point. Shifa's hospital, which stumbles along on an erratic electricity supply and a severe shortage of equipment, was overhwelmed with dead bodies and injured.

On Friday, there had been the false promise of at least a relative return to normality. Israel reopened crossings into Gaza to let in a humanitarian shipment of food and fuel. Yesterday many Palestinians sent their children to school and went about their daily business. But the signs from Israel had been ominous. In Cairo the Israeli foreign minister, Tzipi Livni, had described the daily launching of rockets by *Hamas* across the border as "unbearable". Seven thousand have been launched at nearby Israeli towns since army barracks and settlements were withdrawn from Gaza in 2005. Since they began launching rocket attacks in 2001, militants based in the Strip have killed 16 civilians living in southern Israeli towns.

Yesterday that death toll rose by one when militants fired about 20 rockets, a relatively low number compared with earlier in the week, when they bombarded the Negev desert areas with more than 70 in a day. One man in Netivot was killed and several more injured. "No country in the world can or would tolerate the ongoing security situation in the Gaza area," said Israeli military spokesman Benjamin Rutland.

The Israeli media had been predicting a military action early this week. In the event, Israel's patience had run out earlier than that.

While Gaza cowered under the ferocious double wave of attacks, Israeli citizens on the other side of the border applauded what they saw as an act of justice and revenge against <u>Hamas</u>. David Buskliah, the mayor of Sderot, said: "I'm proud to be an Israeli today. I lend my full support to the commanders of the Israeli Defence Force in their campaign to put an end to eight years of attacks on innocent men, <u>women</u> and children. I hope that their actions today help return peace to my town and the neighbouring communities."

Others were more circumspect, taking to shelters after being warned by the military that this was just the beginning of a larger operation. The Home Front Command ordered residents in Sderot and the Gaza periphery within a 20-kilometre radius of the Strip to stay inside reinforced safe rooms for as long as possible.

Israeli police were also put on a state of high alert in Israeli Arab towns, where already simmering racial tensions were likely to reach boiling point in the wake of yesterday's attacks.

A <u>Hamas</u> response seems inevitable. "I don't believe in ceasefires. I think Palestinians should respond," said Mohammed Omer, a 29-year-old teacher who was rushing to donate blood at the Shifa hospital.

Tempers flared around the Arab world after the Israeli assault, and sympathy for the Gazans was unusually strong. The Arab League said it would convene an emergency meeting today to discuss the situation.

Egypt, which has kept its border with Gaza closed, effectively reinforcing Israel's blockade, said it would open its frontiers to the wounded, despite sending security reinforcements to stop Palestinians from trying to break out of the besieged territory in case of an attack.

In Jordan and Beirut, people took to the streets denouncing the attacks and called on the international community to stop further Israeli aggression.

News: Air strikes on Gaza: 'There is a time for calm ... now is the time to fight: Ehud Barak, Israeli Defence Minister: More than 200 people were killed and ma....

In Ramallah in the West Bank, home to the US-backed Palestinian Authority, which opposes <u>Hamas</u>'s rule of Gaza, protesters called for unity talks between <u>Hamas</u> and its rival group, Fatah. The violence, from both sides, may have only just begun.

Load-Date: December 29, 2008



Israel expands assault on Gaza

therecord.com

December 29, 2008 Monday

Final Edition

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Section: FRONT; Pg. A5

Length: 653 words

Byline: Ibrahim Barzak and Amy Teibel, The Associated Press

Dateline: GAZA CITY, GAZA STRIP

Body

Israel widened its deadliest-ever air offensive against Gaza's <u>Hamas</u> rulers yesterday, pounding 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 290, crowds of Gazans breached the border wall with Egypt to escape the chaos. Egyptian forces, some firing in the air, tried to push them back into Gaza. An official said one border guard was killed.

Hamas, in turn, fired rockets deeper than ever into Israel, near the Israeli port city of Ashdod.

Yet <u>Hamas</u> leaders were forced into hiding, most of the dead were from the <u>Hamas</u> security forces, and 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 yesterday. Still, <u>Hamas</u> continues to command 20,000 fighters.

Israel's intense bombings -- some 300 air strikes since midday on Saturday -- wreaked unprecedented destruction in Gaza, reducing entire buildings to rubble.

Shlomo Brom, a former senior Israeli military official, said it was the deadliest force ever used in decades of Israeli-Palestinian fighting.

Yesterday, warplanes struck dozens of smuggling tunnels under the Gaza-Egypt border, cutting off a lifeline that had supplied <u>Hamas</u> with weapons and Gaza with commercial goods. The influx of goods had helped <u>Hamas</u> defy an 18-month blockade of Gaza by Israel and Egypt, and was key to propping up its rule.

Earlier, warplanes dropped three bombs on one of <u>Hamas</u>' main security compounds in Gaza City, including a prison.

Israel expands assault on Gaza

Gaza's nine hospitals were overwhelmed. Dr. Moawiya Hassanain, who keeps a record for the Gaza Health Ministry, said more than 290 people were killed over two days and more than 800 wounded.

The Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, which keeps researchers at all hospitals, said 20 children under the age of 16 and nine **women** were among the dead.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said it was unclear when the operation would end but told his cabinet it was "liable to last longer than we are able to foresee at this time."

Israeli leaders gave interviews to foreign television networks to try and win international support.

Public Security Minister Avi Dichter, speaking Arabic, spoke on Arab satellite TV stations, denouncing <u>Hamas</u> rule in Gaza. Livni, the foreign minister, told NBC that the assault came because <u>Hamas</u>, an Islamic group backed by Syria and Iran, is smuggling weapons and building a "small army."

In Jerusalem, Israel's cabinet approved a call-up of 6,500 reserve soldiers, raising fears of an impending ground offensive. Israel has doubled the number of troops on the Gaza border since Saturday and also deployed an artillery battery. It was not clear, though, whether the deployment was meant to pressure <u>Hamas</u> or whether Israel is determined to send in ground troops.

Since Israel's withdrawal from Gaza in 2005, after 38 years of military occupation, Israeli forces have repeatedly returned to the territory to hunt militants. But Israel has shied away from retaking the strip, for fear of getting bogged down in urban warfare.

Military experts said Israel would need at least 10,000 soldiers for a full-scale invasion.

Hundreds of thousands of Israelis live in cities and towns in range of rockets fired from Gaza, and life slowed in some of the communities. Schools in communities in a 20-kilometre radius from Gaza were ordered to remain closed beyond the weeklong Jewish holiday of Hanukkah, which ends today.

Load-Date: December 29, 2008



Israel calls air assault just the start of offensive - Correction Appended

The International Herald Tribune December 31, 2008 Wednesday

Correction Appended

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 8

Length: 626 words

Byline: Ethan Bronner and Taghreed El-Khodary - The New York Times Media Group

Dateline: JERUSALEM

Body

Israel launched airstrikes against <u>Hamas</u> targets in Gaza for a fourth consecutive day Tuesday as Prime Minister Ehud Olmert called the bombardment "the first of several stages," suggesting that the conflict was far from resolution.

Israeli aircraft bombed a government compound, buildings of the Islamic University and the home of a top <u>Hamas</u> commander in a continued onslaught that left Gaza without electric power, according to residents of the enclave.

Gaza residents said Israeli warships in increasing numbers were visible from the enclave's Mediterranean shoreline, while Israeli tanks and troops massed on its land border.

But despite the encirclement, *Hamas* militants remained defiant, firing 10 rockets into southern Israel on Tuesday.

So far in the offensive, more than 350 Palestinians - about 60 of them civilians - have been killed, according to the United Nations. Four Israelis - three civilians and a soldier - have died.

Israeli says its offensive, which began Saturday, is designed to neutralize the threat posed to southern Israel by <u>Hamas</u> rockets. As the airstrikes continued Tuesday, Interior Minister Meir Sheetrit told Israel Radio: "There is no room for a cease-fire."

"The government is determined to remove the threat of fire on the south," he added, referring to rocket attacks on southern Israel by <u>Hamas</u> forces. "Therefore the Israeli Army must not stop the operation before breaking the will of Palestinians, of <u>Hamas</u>, to continue to fire at Israel."

At a meeting with President Shimon Peres, Olmert said the air attacks, which began Saturday, were "the first of several stages approved by the security cabinet," according to Peres's office.

"The government is giving the military its full backing and the room for maneuver to achieve the goal set out by the government," Olmert said. But it remained uncertain whether Israel would follow the aerial attack with a ground offensive.

Israel calls air assault just the start of offensive

The military has created a three-kilometer, or two-mile, cordon along the Gaza border, with commanders saying that a ground force invasion was a distinct possibility but had not yet been decided upon.

The latest attacks came a day after Israeli jets struck <u>Hamas</u>'s civic institutions - including the Islamic University, the Interior Ministry and a presidential guesthouse.

Defense Minister Ehud Barak told Parliament on Monday that his country was waging an "all-out war with Hamas."

Israel has defined its aims relatively narrowly - the crippling of <u>Hamas</u>'s ability to send rockets into Israel - but has not made clear if it intends to topple the leadership of <u>Hamas</u>, which Israel and the United States brand as a terrorist organization.

<u>Hamas</u> sought to cast its fighters as martyrs in a continuing battle against Israel, the lone resisters in a Palestinian community divided between Gaza, where <u>Hamas</u> rules, and the West Bank, which is run by the rival Fatah organization.

Despite the hostilities, around 100 trucks laden with emergency food and medical supplies donated by international organizations awaited permission to enter Gaza. At sea, an Israeli naval vessel collided with a small boat carrying Palestinian sympathizers and medical supplies, forcing it to divert to Lebanon.

In Crawford, Texas, a spokesman for President George W. Bush renewed calls on Monday for the parties to reach a cease-fire but said Israel was justified in retaliating against *Hamas*'s attacks. "Let's just take this one day at a time," said the spokesman, Gordon Johndroe.

Israel sent in about 40 trucks of humanitarian relief, including blood from Jordan and medicine. Egypt opened its border with Gaza to some similar aid and to allow some of the wounded through.

Taghreed el-Khodary reported from Gaza. Alan Cowell contributed from London.

The New York Times

Correction

An article Wednesday about the Israeli assault in Gaza referred incorrectly to the number of civilians killed in Gaza through the first three days of the conflict. The total number of civilians killed was more than 60, not "some 60." (The number of <u>women</u> and children civilians alone totaled 62, according to United Nations officials; they had no count for male civilians who were killed.)

Correction-Date: January 6, 2009

Load-Date: January 6, 2009



Israel mobilizes troops as assault widens

Deseret Morning News (Salt Lake City)

December 29, 2008 Monday

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Length: 1360 words

Byline: Ibrahim Barzak and Karin Laub Associated Press

Body

GAZA CITY -- Israel widened its deadliest-ever air offensive against Gaza's <u>Hamas</u> rulers Sunday, pounding 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 nearing 300 Sunday, crowds of Gazans breached the border wall with Egypt 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 rockets deeper than ever into Israel, near the Israeli port city of Ashdod.

Yet <u>Hamas</u> leaders were forced into hiding, most of the dead were from the <u>Hamas</u> security forces, and Israel's military intelligence chief said <u>Hamas</u>' ability to fire rockets had been reduced by 50 percent. Indeed, <u>Hamas</u> rockets dropped off sharply, from more than 130 on Saturday to just over

20 on Sunday. Still, *Hamas* continues to command some 20,000 fighters.

Israel's intense bombings -- some 300 airstrikes since midday Saturday -- wreaked unprecedented destruction in Gaza, reducing entire buildings to rubble.

After nightfall, Israeli aircraft attacked a building in the Jebaliya refugee camp next to Gaza City, killing a 14-monthold baby, a man and two <u>women</u>, Gaza Health Ministry official Dr. Moaiya Hassanain said. Israeli aircraft also bombed the Islamic University and government compound in Gaza City, centers of <u>Hamas</u> power. Witnesses saw fire and smoke at the university, counting six separate airstrikes there just after midnight.

Shlomo Brom, a former senior Israeli military official, said it was the deadliest force ever used in decades of Israeli-Palestinian fighting. "Since *Hamas* took over Gaza (in June 2007), it has become a war between two states, and in war between states, more force is used," he said.

European leaders called on both Israel and *Hamas* to end the bloodshed.

Israel mobilizes troops as assault widens

French President Nicolas Sarkozy spoke Sunday with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, who leads a rival government to <u>Hamas</u> in the West Bank, and condemned "the provocations that led to this situation as well as the disproportionate use of force."

The White House was mum about the situation in Gaza on Sunday after speaking out expansively on Saturday, blaming *Hamas* for provoking Israel's retaliatory strikes.

In the most dramatic attacks Sunday, warplanes struck dozens of smuggling tunnels under the Gaza-Egypt border, cutting off a lifeline that had supplied <u>Hamas</u> with weapons and Gaza with commercial goods. The influx of goods had helped <u>Hamas</u> defy an 18-month blockade of Gaza by Israel and Egypt, and was key to propping up its rule.

Sunday's blasts shook the ground several miles away and sent black smoke high into the sky. Earlier, warplanes dropped three bombs on one of <u>Hamas'</u> main security compounds in Gaza City, including a prison. Moments after the blasts, frantic inmates, their faces dusty and bloodied, scrambled down the rubble. One man, still half buried, raised a hand to alert rescuers.

Gaza's nine hospitals were overwhelmed. Hassanain, who keeps a record for the Gaza Health Ministry, said more than 290 people were killed over two days and more than 800 wounded.

The Palestinian Center for Human Rights, which keeps researchers at all hospitals, said it had counted 251 dead by midday Sunday, and that among them were 20 children under the age of 16 and nine **women**.

Across Gaza, families pitched traditional mourning tents of green tarp outside homes. Yet the rows of chairs inside these tents remained largely empty, as residents cowered indoors for fear of new Israeli strikes.

Israeli leaders gave interviews to foreign television networks to try to win international support.

Public Security Minister Avi Dichter, speaking Arabic, spoke on Arab satellite TV stations, denouncing <u>Hamas</u> rule in Gaza. And Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni told NBC that the assault came because <u>Hamas</u>, an Islamic group backed by Syria and Iran, is smuggling weapons and building a "small army."

In Jerusalem, Israel's Cabinet approved a call-up of 6,500 reserve soldiers, raising fears of an impending ground offensive. Israel has doubled the number of troops on the Gaza border since Saturday and also deployed an artillery battery. It was not clear, though, whether the deployment was meant to pressure <u>Hamas</u> or whether Israel is determined to send ground troops.

Since Israel's withdrawal from Gaza in 2005, after 38 years of full military occupation, Israeli forces have repeatedly returned to the territory to hunt militants. However, Israel has shied away from retaking the entire strip, for fear of getting bogged down on urban warfare.

Military experts said Israel would need at least 10,000 soldiers for a full-scale invasion.

The diplomatic fallout, meanwhile, was swift.

Syria decided to suspend indirect peace talks with Israel, begun earlier this year. "Israel's aggression closes all the doors" to any move toward a settlement in the region, Syria said.

The U.N. Security Council called on both sides to halt the fighting and asked Israel to allow humanitarian supplies into Gaza; 30 trucks were let in Sunday. The prime minister of Turkey, one of the few Muslim countries to have relations with Israel, called the air assault a "crime against humanity."

The carnage inflamed Arab and Muslim public opinion, setting off street protests across the West Bank, in an Arab community in Israel, in several Middle Eastern cities and in Paris.

Israel mobilizes troops as assault widens

Some of the protests turned violent. Israeli troops quelling a West Bank march killed one Palestinian and seriously wounded another. A crowd of anti-Israel protesters in the northern Iraqi city of Mosul became a target for a suicide bomber on a bicycle. In Lebanon, police fired tear gas to stop demonstrators from reaching the Egyptian Embassy.

Egypt, which has served as a mediator between Israel and the Palestinians as well as between <u>Hamas</u> and its rival Fatah, has been criticized for joining Israel in closing its borders with Gaza. The blockade was imposed immediately after the *Hamas* takeover in June 2007.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit called on <u>Hamas</u> to renew its truce with Israel. The cease-fire began unraveling last month, and formally ended more than a week ago. Since then, Gaza militants have stepped up rocket fire on Israel, prompting the latest offensive.

A <u>Hamas</u> leader in exile, Osama Hamdan, said the movement would not relent. "We have one alternative which is to be steadfast and resist and then we will be victorious," Hamdan said in Beirut.

Also in Beirut, Hassan Nasrallah, leader of the Hezbollah militia, said he would not abandon <u>Hamas</u>, but did not threaten to attack Israel. During the Israel-Hezbollah war of 2006, the militia fired thousands of rockets into Israel.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said it was unclear when the operation would end but told his Cabinet was "liable to last longer than we are able to foresee at this time."

Hundreds of thousands of Israelis live in cities and towns in Gaza rocket range, and life slowed in some of the communities. Schools in communities in a 12-mile radius from Gaza were ordered to remain closed beyond the weeklong Jewish holiday of Hanukkah, which ends Monday.

In the southern city of Ashkelon, home to some 120,000 people, streets were relatively busy, despite the military's recommendations against being out in the open.

Several times throughout the day, however, that routine was briefly interrupted by the sounds of wailing sirens warning of an imminent attack. Pedestrians scurried for cover in buildings. After a number of rockets landed in the distance, a woman taking cover nearby briefly fainted. She refused water and food from bystanders, instead shivering in a corner, apparently in shock. Additional reporting by Aron Heller in Ashkelon, Israel. Karin Laub reported from Jerusalem.

Load-Date: December 29, 2008



Gaza offensive part of global fight against terrorism

The Mercury (South Africa)
January 09, 2009 Friday
e1 Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 6 Length: 892 words

Body

The world was shocked as terrorists caused explosions in European cities and turned New York skyscrapers into piles of rubble. Everyone agreed that there should be strong international co-operation to confront terrorist attacks perpetrated by Islamist fanatics.

Israel's operation in Gaza is part of this global fight against terrorism. Israelis have the same basic right as citizens in the rest of the world, to live in safety without being exposed to the danger of rockets and bombs that might rain upon them at any given moment.

Fifteen seconds is all the time that hundreds of Israelis have, wherever they are, from the moment the alarm sounds, signalling that a rocket has been launched at them by <u>Hamas</u>, to run to the nearest bomb shelter. For eight years the residents of Sderot have been living this way. A quarter of the town's population has already deserted it. Would you be willing to live as veritable sitting ducks in the crossfire of a <u>Hamas</u> projectile?

The Palestinians as a people are not our enemy; we truly want to build bridges of dialogue and hope for a better future with them. Our enemy is <u>Hamas</u>, a violent Islamic terrorist organisation, a member of the radical Tehran-Hizbollah axis.

Extremist

With its hardline adherence to a particularly extremist religious doctrine, <u>Hamas</u> is unwilling to compromise or respect any agreements. Its declared aim is to eliminate the state of Israel and murder all its citizens.

<u>Hamas</u> has blown up buses in Tel Aviv, Haifa and Jerusalem, sent suicide bombers to murder Israeli teenagers in discotheques. It has perpetrated horrendous massacres in restaurants, killing hundreds of Israelis. How would you act if a brutal, terrorist organisation were to send its murderers to kill men, <u>women</u> and children in your restaurants, supermarkets and trains?

<u>Hamas</u> is not the enemy of Israel alone, but the enemy of all moderate Palestinians. When <u>Hamas</u> took over Gaza by force, they thought nothing of throwing their political opponents, supporters of President Mahmoud Abbas, off buildings. Scores of Palestinians were killed by <u>Hamas</u> gunfire, as <u>Hamas</u> wrestled control of Gaza from the hands of Abbas.

<u>Hamas</u> is the incarnation of the Middle East's worst nightmare. It does not represent the Palestinian national desire for independence, because it objects to the two-state solution, that is, Israel and a Palestinian state existing side by side in peace and security.

Gaza offensive part of global fight against terrorism

Rather, it espouses the idea of one fanatical Islamist state that would be established on top of the ruins of the Jewish state. This is the most important message that the media fails time and again to impart.

In the summer of 2005, Israel pulled out of the Gaza Strip completely. Anyone speaking today of the "Israeli occupation of Gaza" simply does not know what they are talking about.

The Palestinians were given a historical opportunity to change their fate, and turn Gaza into an economic, national and cultural miracle.

Instead, <u>Hamas</u> seized control and made Gaza into a den of terrorism and oppression. It methodically violated all ceasefire agreements with Israel, smuggled Iranian-made weapons and rockets through tunnels |dug under the border, and consistently ignored the basic human needs of Gaza's civilian population.

<u>Hamas</u> deliberately fires at our civilians from hideouts among its own civilian population. <u>Hamas</u> militants deliberately hole up among <u>women</u> and children, in mosques and hospitals, while hoping Israel will respond so that they can portray themselves as victims in the world press. This is a tremendous moral dilemma, which Israel handles far better than other armies in the world who have found themselves in less difficult circumstances. There are those among the world media who fall easily into the traps of deceptive photographs. I ask you not to be taken in.

Israel endeavours to enable the transfer of humanitarian aid to Gaza despite ongoing fighting. The Israeli air force makes |huge efforts to avoid hitting civilians who are not involved in terrorism.

Warnings

Israeli aircraft distribute leaflets calling on residents to leave areas that are about to be bombed. Do you know of any other air force in the world that takes such measures, in the midst of war?

Our people make telephone calls to homes in Gaza, warning innocent civilians of what may happen to a building that houses a *Hamas* headquarters or a stockpile of rockets.

Despite all our efforts, we are not always successful. Civilian casualties are deeply regretted. Mistakes happen even in times of peace, let alone in the turmoil of war.

Our war against <u>Hamas</u> is aimed at protecting the lives of citizens of Israel's south, but it is far more than that. It can also protect the political process and the chance for peace between Israelis and Palestinians, a chance that is persistently torpedoed by <u>Hamas</u>.

It comes also to rescue this region from slipping into an abyss of fanaticism and from Iranian hegemony. It is part of the world's legitimate struggle against terrorism and murderous extremism.

When talking about the southern Israeli towns and cities, I ask you to engage in mental exercise. Just for a moment, imagine your lovely city under a sudden barrage of Grad and Kassam rockets.

Only if you put yourself for a moment in our place and realise the hardships that Israel's residents cope with, will you be able to see the picture in true colour.

Load-Date: January 9, 2009



An offer they can't refuse

The Jerusalem Post
October 23, 2008 Thursday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 16

Length: 1077 words

Byline: GERSHON BASKIN

Highlight: Why is the government only now submitting a list of Palestinian prisoners to Gilad Schalit's abductors? The writer is the co-CEO of the Israel/Palestine Center for Research and Information and has been involved in

behind the scenes talks for the release of Gilad Schalit.

Body

Last month it was reported in the media that Ofer Dekel, the person responsible for the "Gilad Schalit file," went to Egypt to present to the Egyptian mediators a list of 450 names of Palestinian prisoners that Israel agrees to release in exchange for Schalit. A week later it was reported that the "Ramon Committee" for setting the criteria for prisoner release finalized a list of 450 Palestinian prisoners to be presented to the Egyptians. Beside the obvious contradiction of these two reports, I wonder why no one has asked why only now, two years and three months after the abduction of Schalit is the government submitting a list of Palestinian prisoners to the abductors? What has the government done in the more than 800 days since the abduction?

Immediately after the abduction there were attempts to locate Schalit and to bring him back through a military operation. There have been reports and some talk about a number of failed attempts. I have been told by reliable sources that it is known where Schalit is being held, but that the place is booby-trapped with explosives and any attempt to release him will end up with his being killed along with the soldiers sent to save him. There is no doubt that if there were a real option for a military operation to bring Schalit home, the government would back it unanimously, but there appears to be no such possibility.

ABOUT THREE months after the abduction, <u>Hamas</u> issued its demands. Those demands included 450 Palestinian prisoners according to a list that it would submit; all of the minors and <u>women</u> Palestinian prisoners; in a second phase another 550 prisoners according to a list that would be agreed on later - in total about 1,500 prisoners. <u>Hamas</u> submitted, through the Egyptians, a list of 350 names, including the most vicious and vile terrorists that Israel has ever known who caused the death of hundreds of innocents. Since the time of the abduction the only change in <u>Hamas</u>'s demands has been to receive guarantees that the cease-fire would continue after the prisoner exchange - something which is not directly against Israeli interests.

In addition to those terrorists were political leaders such as Marwan Barghouti and Ahmed Sa'adat who were responsible for sending others to kill Israelis and who are serving multiple life sentences. Additionally included in the list were the <u>Hamas</u> members of the Palestinian National Council arrested following the abduction of Schalit (about 40).

Between the state of Israel and the people of Israel there is an unwritten covenant which says the IDF will not leave soldiers behind enemy lines. This covenant is one of the foundations on which the country's "peoples' army" is based. There is no doubt that acting on this covenant is complex and full of moral dilemmas for our leaders. The

An offer they can't refuse

kidnappers, <u>Hamas</u> people, live by a different set of values. In Gaza human life is much cheaper - since Schalit's abduction Israel has killed more than 1,000 people in Gaza. One of the <u>Hamas</u> intellectuals dared to ask in an article in the <u>Hamas</u> newspaper: How many Gazans are worth one Israeli soldier? He was immediately reprimanded by the <u>Hamas</u> leadership for even asking the question.

MANY BELIEVE that the release of Palestinian prisoners will bring about the murder of more Israelis. An organization of terror victims claims that 20 percent of those who have been released in past prisoner exchanges have returned to violence. If this is true, or even close to the truth, the dilemma of prisoner release in exchange for Schalit is very grave. *Hamas* has already indicated that it will not accept a list of "light" prisoners or those who have almost finished their prison terms.

<u>HAMAS</u> CLAIMS that Israel has not demonstrated any seriousness at all; until recently it only agreed to accept about 80 names on the <u>Hamas</u> list of 350. According to the Egyptian mediators, Israel has still not submitted the list of the Ramon committee.

AFTER SO much time of frozen negotiations, Israel should understand that <u>Hamas</u> has no intention of being flexible. Despite that, it is clear that it cannot accept the list that <u>Hamas</u> submitted. Why hasn't the Israel government initiated an alternative list? Or in the words of The Godfather, why hasn't it made an offer to <u>Hamas</u> that it cannot refuse?

If Israel were to submit to the Egyptians a list of 2000 names of Palestinian prisoners made up of prisoners from Gaza, administrative detainees and veteran older prisoners - a significant tool for pressuring *Hamas* to release Schalit would be created. The risks involved in releasing 700-800 Gazan prisoners is small, noting that Gaza is hermetically sealed off, unlike the West Bank. There are about 750 administrative detainees who have not been brought to trial and have not been convicted of anything and among the 10,000 other Palestinian prisoners it is possible to find another 500 veteran, older prisoners - some who have been serving sentences from before 1993. The risks involved in releasing them would be considerably less than some of the names of the *Hamas* list. What would the families of the 2,000 prisoners say to *Hamas* once this initiative was published?

It is important that the entire world know about this initiative to apply pressure on <u>Hamas</u>. The saying that this kind of negotiation should be conducted in secret is not always true. When the government is doing nothing or is not doing enough, from its point of view, the negotiations should be quiet and secret.

IT IS important to point out that the release of the <u>Hamas</u> parliamentarians will be very problematic for Mahmoud Abbas. According to various reports, he has requested that Prime Minister Ehud Olmert not release them. Abbas has requested repeatedly from Olmert to release a significant number of Palestinian prisoners linked to progress in the negotiations so that the Palestinian people will understand that value of diplomacy and negotiations and not the value of violence and kidnapping. Unfortunately this has not happened. It is not too late and prior to the prisoner exchange for Schalit, Olmert should make a significant release to Abbas, including Fatah leader Marwan Barghouti, who if not released to Abbas will be released to **Hamas**.

To the shame of Olmert and his government, the State of Israel has not done everything possible to bring about the release of Schalit. Olmert still has a couple of weeks to serve. Schalit was abducted on Olmert's watch and Olmert should bring him home now.

Load-Date: October 4, 2011



GAZA'S GRIEF; 205 DEAD IN BIGGEST ISRAELI RAID IN 40YRS

Sunday Mirror

December 28, 2008 Sunday

Eire Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 6 **Length:** 558 words

Byline: BY KAREN ROCKETT

Body

AT least 205 people were killed and more than 700 wounded yesterday in massive Israeli air strikes in the Gaza Strip.

In the largest attack since 1967, F-16 planes continued to pound targets last night as rescuers desperately dug for survivors buried in the rubble.

Missiles fired by Israeli jets flattened bases of the ruling <u>Hamas</u> militant group and destroyed all its police security compounds in Gaza City.

Bodies of police - including the territory's chief Tawfiq Jaber - and <u>Hamas</u> security men lay in the crowded streets amid burning and destroyed buildings and scenes of chaos.

With many of the targets in densely-packed residential areas, many of the dead caught in the blasts were civilians, including **women** and children.

The first strikes had come as pupils walked home from school, leaving frantic mothers searching the blasted streets.

Mosques issued urgent appeals for people to donate blood and *Hamas* sources said hospitals were soon full.

Egypt opened its border at Rafah to allow ambulances to drive out some of the wounded from the south of Gaza.

The attacks came days after a strained six-month truce for Israel and *Hamas* expired.

Israel said the strikes were in response to about 200 rockets fired from Gaza in the past few days and would continue "as long as necessary".

GAZA'S GRIEF 205 DEAD IN BIGGEST ISRAELI RAID IN 40YRS

Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak said: "It won't be easy and it won't be short. There is a time for calm and a time for fighting, and now the time has come to fight."

The country declared a state of emergency in communities within 20km of Gaza, putting the area on a war footing.

Israel's military said its first wave of 60 warplanes hit 40 targets of "terror operatives, training camps and weapons storage warehouses".

But <u>Hamas</u> quickly retaliated, firing homemade rockets into Israel - killing at least one person - and vowing to send suicide bombers over the border.

The <u>Hamas</u> government leader in Gaza, Ismail Haniyeh, said: "Palestine has never witnessed an uglier massacre." The party's spokesman Fawzi Barhoum said: "<u>Hamas</u> will continue the resistance until the last drop of blood."

As rumours grew that Israel was preparing to launch a ground offensive in Gaza, world leaders appealed for calm.

British Prime Minister Gordon Brown said he was "deeply concerned" and called on both sides to reach a "lasting solution through peaceful means".

White House spokesman Gordon Johndroe said the US "urges Israel to avoid civilian casualties as it targets <u>Hamas</u> in Gaza".

King Abdullah II of Jordan called for a ceasefire saying the attacks "targeted innocents".

And Arab League head Amr Moussa called for an emergency meeting of Arab foreign ministers in Cairo today.

A 60-YEAR CONFLICT

Q WHEN did the Israeli-Palestinian conflict begin?

A THE formation of the state of Israel in 1948 led to 700,000 Palestinians being driven into Gaza, a coastal strip 25 miles long and six miles wide bordered by Israel, the Mediterranean Sea and Egypt.

Q WHAT are they fighting over?

A TERRITORY. The displaced Palestinians have no recognised country to call their own. Since Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip in 2005 a shaky truce held at the border.

Q WHO are *Hamas* and what does the word mean?

A <u>HAMAS</u> means "zeal" - the Arabic acronym for the Islamic Resistance Movement. It won the Palestinian election in 2006 and aims to restore Islamic rule to Palestine. It refuses to recognise Israel.

Graphic

Medics take a wounded toddler to Shifa hospital in Gaza City yesterday; Tears... body of a <u>Hamas</u> guard Pictures: GETTY/AP PHOTO; Strike on <u>Hamas</u> compound; Palestinians gather at site of an air strike in the southern city of Rafah yesterday

Load-Date: December 28, 2008



THE REAL WINNER IS ... IRAN

Daily Mail (London)

December 29, 2008 Monday

1ST Edition

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Section: Pg. 7

Length: 763 words

Byline: Michael Burleigh

Body

FOR months, the Israelis have been secretly planning military operations against <u>Hamas</u> terrorists in the Gaza Strip.

Since 2002 <u>Hamas</u> (the name means 'Zeal') has fired more than 6,000 rockets and mortar shells from the strip at Israeli settlements and towns.

In a little-reported incident last Friday, a <u>Hamas</u> rocket aimed at Israel 'misfired' and hit a house in the northern Gaza Strip, killing five-year-old Hanin Abu Khoussa and her 12-year-old cousin Sabah Abu Khoussa, both of them Palestinians.

Usually rockets land randomly amid Israeli towns within 40 miles of the border with the Gaza Strip, killing innocent civilians and terrorising hundreds of thousands of men, **women** and children.

According to Human Rights Watch, such attacks are an unequivocal violation of the laws of war and illegally impose collective punishment on innocent civilians.

We should bear that in mind amid the rush to condemn Israel for the 'disproportionality' of the airstrikes it launched on Saturday.

On Wednesday last week, *Hamas* fired 60 rockets and a further 80 on Thursday: something had to give.

Inevitably, there was widespread condemnation yesterday of Israel's attacks and angry demonstrations by Palestinians and their supporters in capital cities around the world - including London - while Iran has called for urgent action against Israel by the UN Security Council.

Israel has for long practised the targeted assassination of <u>Hamas</u> terrorist leaders and key bomb-makers, routinely using helicopter gunships or armed Predator drones. The victims have included the wheelchairbound quadriplegic Sheik Ahmed Yassin, killed in 2004 after he was held responsible for directing suicide bombers into Israel.

This time it decided to use F-16s to strike at the entire <u>Hamas</u> security infrastructure, which diverts arms and trained personnel into its terrorist operations and is secretly funded by Iran and western Islamic 'charities'.

Israel will need to balance a desire to disable <u>Hamas</u> with an awareness that an often hostile world media will be printing images of people killed in the attacks to use against it.

THE REAL WINNER IS ... IRAN

It is an indication of the ruthlessness of <u>Hamas</u> that those who fire missiles at Israel deliberately operate from within dense civilian housing in the knowledge that any reprisals will cause civilian casualties which can be used in propaganda against Israel. <u>Hamas</u>'s response to the air strikes is already in motion. It quickly resumed the missile attacks, launching 110 which killed a single Israeli in Netivot. The group's Damascus-based leader, Khaled Meshal, called for a third Palestinian uprising, similar to those in 1987 and 2000.

As in the wider wake of the Iraq war, Iran could be the main beneficiary of Israel's current enterprise.

The reigniting of the Palestinian- Israeli conflict will inevitably move to the top of President Obama's agenda and thus the problem of Iran's quest for a nuclear bomb will slip down the priorities for the administration. This is hardly the outcome the Israelis sought.

It is also likely that clandestine Israeli-Syrian peace talks which Turkey has been brokering will collapse, the intention having been to detach Syria from Iran so as to weaken Hizbollah.

Another loser will be Mahmoud Abbas, the comparatively moderate president of Palestine, still clinging to power in the West Bank after <u>Hamas</u> drove his Fatah organisation out of Gaza by force. Since armed conflict polarises emotions, it is likely that Palestinians will rally around <u>Hamas</u>.

THAT will be unfortunate for the Palestinians since the <u>Hamas</u> regime in Gaza is a vicious little tyranny which brutally suppresses journalists and anyone who protests against the politicisation of sermons in mosques. It cares so little for the residents of Gaza that it has continued to fire rockets at the price of an Israeli blockade on urgently-needed supplies, and now won't even let the injured get medical treatment in Egypt.

Since <u>Hamas</u> is pathologically anti-Semitic, rather than anti- Israel, and dedicated to creating an Islamist state in Gaza, there are no prospects of it entering into a lasting peace settlement with Israel.

Negotiating with it is as impossible as us seeking to reason with Al Qaeda.

In coming weeks some sort of uneasy ceasefire will be patched up, enabling *Hamas* to regroup.

The single largest impediment to a durable Arab-Israeli peace settlement will live to fight another day.

Israel can expect more of those rockets - and so can more little Palestinian girls when they go astray.

Michael Burleigh's Blood and Rage: A Cultural History of Terrorism is published by HarperCollins

Load-Date: December 29, 2008



Victory through air attack? It's pie in the sky; Israel imagined it could defeat Hamas though aerial bombardment. It shows it hasn't learnt the lessons of history, Correlli Barnett says

The Times (London)

January 8, 2009 Thursday

Edition 1

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 28

Length: 1105 words **Byline:** Correlli Barnett

Body

The spectacle of Merkava tanks rumbling into the Gaza Strip last weekend served as complete proof that the massive Israeli onslaught from the air, killing hundreds of Palestinian men, <u>women</u> and children, utterly failed in its objective of crippling <u>Hamas</u>. I simply do not believe Ehud Barak's claim that Israel always planned a ground invasion as a necessary second stage of the offensive against <u>Hamas</u>.

Those tanks so conspicuously parked along the borders of the Gaza Strip were simply intended to put extra psychological pressure on <u>Hamas</u>.

Now they have been deployed in earnest - and the invaders have taken casualties.

The failure of the air onslaught to cow <u>Hamas</u> into surrender signifies that the Israeli leadership (including Mr Barak, a soldier who ought to know better) have yet again been deluded by the seductive fallacy that airpower (especially air power in today's hi-tech form) can win wars all on its own, and at no cost to those flying the bombers or directing the drones on TV from remote "PlayStations".

The extra seduction of PlayStation warfare (as pioneered by the Americans in Iraq and Afghanistan) lies in hitting the enemy without the slightest risk to yourself. That time and again innocent families are massacred along with the targeted al-Qaeda, Taleban or <u>Hamas</u> leaders, comes conveniently under the heading "collateral damage".

Instead of putting their faith in the F16 bomber and the drone, the Israeli leadership would have done better to study the history of airpower, from the Anglo-American strategic air offensive against Germany in the Second World War to Israel's own abortive attempt in 2006 to defeat Hezbollah in the Lebanon. The history clearly shows that air power alone cannot win wars. It only works as an extra dimension to land or sea warfare.

In the Second World War the

Victory through air attack? It's pie in the sky Israel imagined it could defeat Hamas though aerial bombardment. It shows it hasn't learnt the lessons of histor....

Luftwaffe (a tactical air force) served as a key component of the German blitzkrieg offensives against Poland, France and in the Balkans in 1939-41, but the victories were nevertheless won by the German panzer divisions.

Later, from 1942 to 1945, the Anglo-American tactical air forces similarly gave the Allied armies in Italy, Normandy and northwest Europe a huge advantage over German armies now denuded of air cover by the destruction of the Luftwaffe. But once again, the campaigns were won on the ground, not in the air.

Meanwhile the Anglo-American strategic air offensive against Germany in 1943-45, though inflicting enormous damage, failed to fulfil the promise of the air chiefs that bombing alone could win the war without the need for a ground invasion of Hitler's Europe, costly in allied casualties. So a land campaign it had to be.

In the Korean War of 1950-53 and the Vietnam War in 1967 and after, the Americans relied on air power as a warwinner. Yet in both cases air power failed in the event to decide the issue. Vietnam especially marked a spectacular failure, with a heavier weight of bombs dropped than in the whole Second World War, and yet in the end an enemy victory.

The First Gulf War in 1991 was an exception, being really like the Battle of Omdurman updated - we had the Gatling gun (meaning mastery of the air) and they did not. But the success of the aerial onslaught on the Iraqi field army has to be balanced against the complete failure of the attacks on targets like Baghdad to decide the war. In any case, it was the allied ground forces which had to turf Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait.

Perhaps the most important, though largely forgotten, recent failure of air power to win a war on its own was in Yugoslavia in 1999, when the Anglo-Americans led by Bill Clinton and Tony Blair illegally intervened (ie, without UN sanction)

in a domestic conflict between the Yugoslav Government and the insurgents of the so-called Kosovo Liberation Army.

Mr Clinton and Mr Blair believed that three days of massive airstrikes against the Yugoslav army in Kosovo would break the nerve of Slobodan Milosevic and his colleagues. In fact, the air onslaught went on for 78 days, and yet was still barren of decisive result - even though extended to targets throughout Yugoslavia, many of them purely civilian, such as bridges, power stations, and even the main TV studios in Belgrade.

Why did the Anglo-Americans resort to such extreme means? It was because of the total failure of the initial tactical bombing in Kosovo itself, and the consequent allied desperation. But even the "total war" bombing of Belgrade and other cities failed to break the nerve of the Yugoslav (really the Serb) people.

There is another lesson here that the Israelis would have done well to learn before their onslaught on Lebanon in 2006 and certainly before their onslaught on Gaza in 2008-9. The lesson is that savage air attack by a foreign enemy does not break the nerve of a civilian population, but instead only stiffens its resolve not to give in. As a schoolboy in London during the 1940-41 blitz and the flying-bomb and V2 rocket attacks of 1945, I saw this for myself.

So why did the Anglo-American leadership so grossly miscalculate the likely moral effect on the Yugoslavs of their cruise missiles and bombs? And why has the Israeli leadership just made a similar gross miscalculation despite all the earlier lessons of history? In the case of the Israelis, it may be because (according to Israel's own official spokesmen) the morale of the population in southern Israel has been shaken by <u>Hamas</u>'s sporadic hits with minirockets inflicting only minor damage and relatively few casualties. Surely then the population of Gaza would buckle under the IDF's deluge of American-supplied hi-tech ordnance? Well actually, no.

So instead it had to be a ground war.

In the case of Kosovo in 1999, the Anglo-Americans had no land forces available in the Balkans capable of evicting the Yugoslav army. Clinton's and Blair's adventure was on the verge of catastrophic failure. It was only the Russians, by telling Milosevic that they would not back him in an all-out war, that compelled him to order the

Victory through air attack? It's pie in the sky Israel imagined it could defeat Hamas though aerial bombardment. It shows it hasn't learnt the lessons of histor....

Yugoslav army to evacuate Kosovo. And it was only this Russian intervention that got Clinton and Blair off the hook - and saved Blair's premiership.

In the case of Gaza today, there has been no outsider to rescue the Israelis from the consequences of the failure of their air power. So the task of rescue falls to Israel's own ground troops - conducting a messy struggle with hatefuelled guerrillas amid close-packed slums.

Correlli Barnett is a Fellow of Churchill College, Cambridge, and author of The Collapse of British Power (Pan Books)

The important recent failure of airpower was in Yugoslavia in 1999

Graphic

Despite the devastation on the ground, Britons during the blitz in 1940, left, or Gazans today did not submit

Load-Date: January 8, 2009



Gaza assault is a 'war to the bitter end': Israel; Air strikes Three-day death toll rises above 350

The Telegraph-Journal (New Brunswick)

December 30, 2008 Tuesday

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Section: NEWS; NEWS; Pg. A8

Length: 1142 words

Byline: Ibrahim Barzak and Matti Friedman THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Body

Israel obliterated symbols of <u>Hamas</u> power on the third day of what the defense minister described Monday as a "war to the bitter end," striking next to the <u>Hamas</u> premier's home and devastating a security compound and a university building.

The three-day death toll rose Monday to 364, with some 1,400 reported wounded. The UN said at least 62 of the dead were civilians, while medics said eight children under the age of 17 were killed in two separate strikes overnight.

Israel launched its campaign, the deadliest against Palestinians in decades, on Saturday in retaliation for rocket fire aimed at civilians in southern Israeli towns.

Since then, the number of Israeli troops on the Gaza border has doubled and the Israeli cabinet has approved the call-up of 6,500 reserve soldiers.

The strikes, which drove <u>Hamas</u> leaders into hiding and damaged the organization's ability to launch rockets, did little to end the barrages, which continued through the day, with incoming rocket sirens sending Israelis scrambling for cover.

One medium-range rocket fired at the Israeli city of Ashkelon killed an Arab construction worker there Monday and wounded several others. He was the second Israeli killed since the beginning of the offensive.

At first light Monday, strong winds blew black smoke from the bombed sites over Gaza City's deserted streets. The air hummed with the buzz of drone aircraft and the roar of jets, punctuated by airstrike explosions. Palestinian health officials said one strike killed four Islamic Jihad militants and a child.

Some Palestinians ventured outside for mourning. In northern Gaza, a father lifted the body of his four-year-old during a funeral Monday for five children from the same family killed in an Israeli missile strike.

On Sunday, <u>Hamas</u> missiles struck for the first time near the city of Ashdod, only 40 kilometres from Israel's heart in Tel Aviv. <u>Hamas</u> leaders have also threatened to renew suicide attacks inside Israel. A missile from Gaza struck Ashdod again on Monday, seriously wounding two people.

Gaza assault is a 'war to the bitter end': Israel; Air strikes Three-day death toll rises above 350

On Monday, the White House released a statement saying "in order for the violence to stop, <u>Hamas</u> must stop firing rockets into Israel and agree to respect a sustainable and durable cease-fire."

But in Damascus, Syria, a senior exiled <u>Hamas</u> official said there can be no talk of a truce with Israel until the assault ends and Israel reopens the Gaza crossings.

"We need our liberty, we need our freedom and we need to be independent. If we don't accomplish this objective, then we have to resist. This is our right," Abu Marzouk said in an interview.

A a six-month truce between <u>Hamas</u> and Israeli expired earlier this month, but <u>Hamas</u> refused to extend it, saying Israel had violated its terms.

Most of those killed since Saturday were members of <u>Hamas</u> security forces, though the precise numbers remain unclear.

A <u>Hamas</u> police spokesman, Ehab Ghussen, said 180 members of the <u>Hamas</u> security forces were among the dead, and the UN said at least 62 of the dead were civilians.

A rise in civilian casualties could intensify international pressure on Israel to end the offensive.

Ehud Barak, the Israeli defense minister, told parliament Israel was not fighting the residents of Gaza.

"But we have a war to the bitter end against <u>Hamas</u> and its branches," he said, adding that the goal was to deal <u>Hamas</u> a "severe blow" and that the operation would be "widened and deepened as needed."

Israel's intense bombings - more than 300 airstrikes since midday Saturday - reduced dozens of buildings to rubble. The military said naval vessels also bombarded targets from the sea.

At the United Nations, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon again condemned Israel's excessive use of force and called for an immediate cease-fire.

"The frightening nature of what is happening on the ground, in particular its effects on children - who are more than half of the population - troubles me greatly. I have continuously stressed the need for strict observance of international humanitarian law," he said.

One Israeli strike destroyed a five-story building in the <u>women</u>'s wing at Islamic University, one of the most prominent <u>Hamas</u> symbols in Gaza. Other attacks ravaged a compound controlled by one of the group's chief security arms and destroyed a house next to the residence of Ismail Haniyeh, the **Hamas** prime minister.

Late Sunday, Israeli aircraft attacked a building in the Jebaliya refugee camp next to Gaza City, killing five children and teenagers under age 17 from the same family, Gaza Health Ministry official Dr. Moaiya Hassanain said. In the southern town of Rafah, a toddler and his two teenage brothers were killed in an airstrike aimed at a <u>Hamas</u> commander, Hassanain said. In Gaza City, another attack killed two **women**.

Gaza's nine hospitals were overwhelmed. Hassanain, who keeps a record for the Gaza Health Ministry, said that some of the over 1,400 wounded were now being taken to private clinics and even homes.

Abdel Hafez, a 55-year-old history teacher, waited outside a Gaza City bakery to buy bread. He said he was not a *Hamas* supporter but believed the strikes would only increase support for the group.

"Each strike, each drop of blood are giving *Hamas* more fuel to continue."

In Israel, 17 people have been killed in attacks from Gaza since the beginning of the year, including nine civilians - six of them killed by rockets - and eight soldiers, according to Israel's Foreign Ministry.

Gaza assault is a 'war to the bitter end': Israel; Air strikes Three-day death toll rises above 350

In Jerusalem, Israel's cabinet approved a call-up of 6,500 reserve soldiers Sunday in apparent preparation for a ground offensive. The final decision to call up reserves has yet to be made by the defense minister. Military experts said Israel would need at least 10,000 soldiers for a full-scale invasion.

The assault has sparked diplomatic fallout. Syria decided to suspend indirect peace talks with Israel, and the U.N. Security Council called on both sides to halt the fighting and asked Israel to allow humanitarian supplies into Gaza. Israel opened one of Gaza's border crossings Monday, and about 40 trucks had entered with food and medical supplies by midday, military spokesman Peter Lerner said.

Egypt also opened its borders to Gaza and allowed trucks loaded with humanitarian aid to enter the Rafah terminal Monday. It was also taking in wounded Palestinians from Gaza, with more than a dozen Egyptian ambulances waiting at the crossing.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, who heads a moderate government in the West Bank and is holding peace talks with Israel, issued his strongest condemnation yet of the operation, calling it a "sweeping Israeli aggression against Gaza" and saying he would consult with his bitter rivals in <u>Hamas</u> in an effort to end it.

The carnage inflamed Arab and Muslim public opinion, setting off street protests in Arab communities in Israel and the West Bank, across the Arab world, and in some European cities.

Load-Date: December 30, 2008



Israel's War in Gaza, and the War of Words

The New York Times

January 7, 2009 Wednesday

The New York Times on the Web

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

Length: 1015 words

Body

To the Editor:

Re "Israel Deepens Gaza Incursion as Toll Mounts" (front page, Jan. 6):

Thank you for showing pictures of the madness from both sides. As a Muslim American, I am deeply pained by the violence inflicted by Israel on so many Palestinian civilians -- men, <u>women</u> and helpless children alike. All this in broad daylight, with such swagger and confidence as the world looks on passively.

But I am also frustrated by my fellow Muslims' complete refusal to reflect on what might be wrong with our own methods of "negotiation." We don't get the political game, and we don't get that we don't get it. That's a big, dangerous problem, that bombs will make only worse.

Why do we humans never learn? If anyone thinks that this kind of violence can put an end to violence or obtain security, let him think again. Anger is the Palestinians' most dangerous weapon. Are we deluded enough to think that it can be laid to rest amid the rubble of Gaza?

Anni Shamim Cambridge, Mass., Jan. 6, 2009

To the Editor:

In "Incursion Into Gaza" (editorial, Jan. 6), you condemn <u>Hamas</u>'s rocket fire into Israel, but express concern that Israel "attempt to decimate <u>Hamas</u> and wrest Gaza from its grip."

<u>Hamas</u> is an extremist terrorist regime with a worldview similar to that of the Taliban in Afghanistan. Both view Judeo-Christian Western values represented by Israel and the United States as satanic. The Taliban's fall from power brought with it hope for the people of Afghanistan while the elimination of <u>Hamas</u> would also provide true prospects of tranquillity for the all peoples in Gaza.

Thus Israel should be encouraged and not deterred from removing *Hamas* from power.

Josh Hasten Jerusalem, Jan. 6, 2009

The writer is a former spokesman for the Yesha Council, which represents settlers.

To the Editor:

Israel 's War in Gaza, and the War of Words

What is needed is a temporary cease-fire with foreign troops on the Egyptian side of the border to block any attempts at rearming by smuggling over and under the land.

Israel can block the sea and the air. Then Israel can bring supplies into Gaza and remove wounded to be cared for in Israeli hospitals. If *Hamas* wants to continue, it can start the fight again, but before long it will run out of rockets.

Israel will have accomplished its objective. The world will begin to understand that the main issue for Israel is the rockets. Stop the rockets, and <u>Hamas</u> is virtually emasculated and will eventually die as a military organization. Israel will have effective peace as long as observers remain at the border.

Eugene Gordon Dover, N.J., Jan. 6, 2009

To the Editor:

Thank you for having the courage to publish the heartbreaking photo of the dead little Palestinian girl on your Jan. 5 front page.

Politicians argue, people use religion to support their violence and young men itch to prove themselves in combat. But that photo shows in dramatic focus just who truly suffers.

That little girl, whose last minutes of life were most certainly spent in great fear, exemplifies the failures of the human race. Her death (and all civilian deaths) will be easily qualified by "they shoot at us as well" or it was part of combat's "collateral damage" -- but she was too young and innocent to knew of those issues.

After two combat tours in Iraq, I can't look at that picture and not think how meaningless it all is.

Charles W. Mitchell Washington, Jan. 6, 2009

To the Editor:

Re "Warnings Not Enough for Gaza Families" (news article, Jan. 6):

The heart-wrenching photograph of the three dead Palestinian children is a telling insight into the <u>Hamas</u> strategy that has led to the current violence.

<u>Hamas</u> repeatedly attacks Israel with rockets and mortars, forcing Israel into the inevitable military response. <u>Hamas</u> then claims victimhood, and neatly displays the resulting suffering of its civilian population for the world media. The international community is appalled by the images.

Israel, faced with the mounting and unavoidable civilian casualties, restrains its military and the battle ends in a perceived stalemate. <u>Hamas</u> declares victory. Its status in the Arab world is enhanced, and the graphic images and reports of civilian casualties advance <u>Hamas</u>'s ultimate goal of delegitimizing Israel in the eyes of the international community.

The stage is set for the next round of violence. The strategy has worked before and may work again unless the international community recognizes <u>Hamas</u>'s cynical ploy and holds it responsible for the suffering it has intentionally brought upon its own people.

Gregg M. Mashberg New Rochelle, N.Y., Jan. 6, 2009

To the Editor:

Does <u>Hamas</u> send warnings to families in Sderot or Ashdod that it plans to launch a bunch of rockets indiscriminately aimed at their communities? What a double standard. Would the world prefer that instead of trying to limit civilian casualties, Israel simply played tit-for-tat with <u>Hamas</u>, and responded to 40 rockets aimed at southern Israel by launching 400 rockets indiscriminately aimed at Gaza?

Israel 's War in Gaza, and the War of Words

There is such a clear difference in intent between the actions of Israel and <u>Hamas</u>, yet the press seems bent on playing up the humanitarian issues. War is a humanitarian crisis. Israel did not ask <u>Hamas</u> to end the de facto cease-fire by a frenzied renewal of rocket attacks.

Let's finally call a spade a spade.

Rob Brownstein Santa Cruz, Calif., Jan. 6, 2009

To the Editor:

It is fascinating to see the outrage against Israel during demonstrations in Europe and Arab lands. Here are some examples of violence that never prompted rallies: rockets fired at Israeli kindergartens (from Gaza); mosques, water treatment plants and the like targeted by Muslims with hundreds of Muslims killed (in Iraq); Muslim girls attacked for going to schools or reporting rapes (in Pakistan); and Hindus, Muslims and Jews slaughtered in train stations, hotels and Jewish centers (in India).

So when Israel tries to halt rocket fire on its civilians, the streets of the world are filled with horrified protesters? Spare me.

Richard Schlussel Englewood, N.J., Jan. 5, 2009

http://www.nytimes.com

Load-Date: January 7, 2009



<u>Gaza airstrikes; Was Israel right to continue its bombing last week in</u> <u>response to Hamas rocket attacks? MESSAGE BOARD The violence flared</u> <u>when a six-month truce ended</u>

The Sunday Times (London)

January 4, 2009

Edition 1

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 17

Length: 217 words

Body

Howard, Allentown, USA

I feel for the Israeli government. They were forced to defend their people, only to find the world sneering at them. No other nation in the world would let insurgents attack their country with missiles and not retaliate. Israel has to do this, they are in a very tight spot.

Paul, London

Ashamed to be Jewish and British. Predictable that only the UK and the US would refuse to call for an end to the air strikes. When will we finally quench our thirst for the blood of Palestinian <u>women</u> and children?

YA, Tel Aviv, Israel

The operation is a result of just over a month of sporadic and senseless rocket fire by <u>Hamas</u> at Israel's southern cities. Its necessity has wide consensus in the Israeli public. However, it is correct to ask whether in the long run, violence will only breed more violence.

Adrian, Birmingham, UK

So they targeted Islamists? All I see is civilians being killed. Why is it always civilians paying the price for fools in our society?

Imus, Phoenix, USA

Israel will never be safe as its violence creates more violence. Hundreds of missiles will spawn thousands of orphans and widows who will be more than willing to give their lives to avenge their loved ones.

Gaza airstrikes Was Israel right to continue its bombing last week in response to Hamas rocket attacks?

MESSAGE BOARD The violence flared when a six-month truce....

To post your views, e-mail <u>debate@sunday-times.co.uk</u> or visit <u>www.timesonline.co.uk/feedback</u>

Load-Date: January 4, 2009



Israel pursues strikes on Gaza; toll mounts and outcry swells

The International Herald Tribune
December 29, 2008 Monday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1 Length: 1107 words

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

Dateline: GAZA

Body

Rina Castelnuovo contributed reporting from the Israel-Gaza border and Khaled Abu Aker contributed from Ramallah in the West Bank.

* Israeli warplanes struck <u>Hamas</u> facilities in Gaza on Sunday for a second day and medical officials said more than 280 Palestinians had been killed so far as Israel retaliated for rocket fire from the area with its most severe campaign against Palestinian militants in decades.

Palestinian officials said at least 600 people had been wounded in the onslaught.

Israeli military officials said the airstrikes were the start of what could be days or even months of an effort to force *Hamas* to end the rocket barrages into southern Israel.

After the shock of the massive assault that took <u>Hamas</u> by surprise Saturday, Israel appeared to be setting in for a longer haul. The government on Sunday approved the emergency call-up of thousands of army reservists in preparation for a possible ground operation as Israeli troops, tanks, armored personnel carriers and D-9 armored bulldozers massed along the border with Gaza.

Speaking before the weekly cabinet meeting in Jerusalem, Defense Minister Ehud Barak said the army would "deepen and broaden its actions as needed" and would "continue to act."

A number of governments and international officials, including leaders of Russia, Egypt, the European Union and the United Nations, condemned Israel's use of force and also called on <u>Hamas</u> to end its rocket fire. But the Bush administration blamed <u>Hamas</u> for the violence and demanded that it stop firing rockets.

A military operation had been forecast and demanded by Israeli officials for weeks, even before a rocky cease-fire with <u>Hamas</u> fully collapsed a week ago, leading again to rocket attacks in large numbers against Israel and isolated Israeli operations here.

But the ferocity of the Israeli assault Saturday was striking: It began in broad daylight as police cadets were graduating, **women** were shopping at the outdoor market and children were emerging from school.

The center of Gaza City was a scene of chaotic horror, with rubble everywhere, sirens wailing, and <u>women</u> shrieking as dozens of mutilated bodies were laid out on the pavement and in the lobby of Shifa Hospital so that

family members could identify the dead. They included several construction workers and at least two children in school uniforms.

By Saturday afternoon, shops were shuttered, funerals began and mourning tents were visible on nearly every major street of this densely populated city.

At dusk Sunday, Israeli fighter jets bombed what the military said were more than 40 tunnels along Gaza's border with Egypt. The military said the tunnels that were attacked, on the Gaza side of the border, were used for smuggling weapons, explosives and fugitives. Palestinians and Israeli officials said there are hundreds of tunnels running beneath the border. Gazans use many of them to import consumer goods and fuel to get around the Israeli economic blockade.

<u>Hamas</u> has been harshly critical of Egypt, accusing it of collusion with Israel for refusing to open the Rafah crossing on its border with Gaza.

Witnesses in Rafah described chaotic scenes along the border with young Palestinian men trying to dash across and sporadic exchanges of fire between Egyptian forces and *Hamas*.

The bloody images of Gaza's streets have already set off angry demonstrations across the Arab world, and hundreds of protesters turned out in London, Paris and Madrid.

Israel said that among 30 or more targets destroyed Saturday and Sunday were the main security compound and prison in Gaza City known as the Saraya, metal workshops and *Hamas* military posts.

The <u>Hamas</u>-owned television station Al Aqsa was also struck, as was a mosque that the Israelis said was being used as a terrorist base.

Fawzi Barhoum, a spokesman for <u>Hamas</u>, which runs Gaza, said that Israel had started a "war" but would not be able to choose how it would end. He called for revenge in the form of strikes reaching "deep into the Zionist entity using all means," including suicide attacks.

Militants in Gaza fired barrages of rockets and mortars into Israel on Sunday, extending their reach further than ever. One fell in Gan Yavneh, a village near the major port city of Ashdod, about 30 kilometers, or 20 miles, north of Gaza. Two landed in the coastal city of Ashkelon. Several Israelis were lightly wounded.

The hundreds of thousands of Israeli citizens now within rocket range have been told by the authorities to stay close to protected spaces.

One man was killed in a rocket attack in the town of Netivot on Saturday, the first such fatality in months.

The rocket firing had not reached the intensity predicted by some security officials of up to 200 a day. Many launch sites were attacked in the Israeli air raids on Saturday.

Briefing the cabinet, Yuval Diskin, chief of Israel's internal security agency Shin Bet, said, "*Hamas* is yet to respond and may even try to surprise us."

Israel has said that its goal was not to re-occupy Gaza, which it left unilaterally in 2005, but as Prime Minister Ehud Olmert put it Sunday to "restore normal life and quiet to residents of the south."

Barak, the defense minister and leader of the Labor Party, said Saturday that the military operation in Gaza would expand and deepen as necessary, adding, "There is a time for calm and a time for fighting, and this is the time for fighting." He said he was withdrawing from campaigning for February elections to focus on the operation.

A top security official said on condition of anonymity that Israel, "wanted to attack military targets while the terrorists were inside the facilities and before *Hamas* was able to get its rockets out that were stored in some of the targets."

Israel pursues strikes on Gaza toll mounts and outcry swells

He added: "Right now, we have to hit <u>Hamas</u> hard to stop the launching. I don't see any other way for <u>Hamas</u> to change its behavior."

<u>Hamas</u> had in recent weeks let it be known that because of the coming elections it doubted Israel would engage in a major military undertaking.

But in some ways the elections have made it impossible for officials like Barak not to react, because the public has grown anxious and angry over the rocket fire, which while causing no recent deaths and few injuries is deeply disturbing for those living near the Gaza border.

<u>Hamas</u> won Palestinian parliamentary elections in 2006 and seized control of Gaza from the Palestinian Authority of Mahmoud Abbas the next year.

An Egyptian-brokered six-month truce between Israel and <u>Hamas</u>, always shaky, began to seriously unravel in early November and expired altogether 10 days ago.

The purview of the Palestinian Authority is now confined to the West Bank.

Load-Date: January 6, 2009



Battleground Gaza; * Israeli troops in heavy fighting * UN fails to condemn attack

Sydney Morning Herald (Australia)

January 5, 2009 Monday

Third Edition

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Section: NEWS AND FEATURES; Pg. 1

Length: 979 words

Byline: JASON KOUTSOUKIS ON THE GAZA BORDER with agencies

Body

THE noise of gunfire and the dull thuds and sharp cracks of shells being fired and exploding could be heard on the Gaza-Israel border yesterday as Israeli forces pressed ahead with a pincer movement on Gaza City.

From a hill on the Israeli side of the border a dense expanse of apartments stretched uninterrupted from left to right across the horizon to the west: the cities of Beit Hanoun, Beit Lahiya, Gaza City and the refugee camp of Jabaliya.

From the columns of black smoke rising at several intervals, it was clear that some of those neighbourhoods were ablaze.

Israeli Army helicopters circled above, helping to direct the invasion below, and there was the faint buzz of propellers from the unmanned aircraft being used to fire missiles.

Israeli tanks continued pouring into Gaza yesterday along with military ambulances as artillery shells rained down on the Palestinian territory.

Troops were reported to be operating just three kilometres south of Gaza City, the main population centre of the densely populated enclave sandwiched between Israel and Egypt.

Late on Saturday thousands of Israeli troops and tanks invaded the <u>Hamas</u>-ruled Gaza Strip after eight days of punishing air strikes failed to halt the group's rocket fire into Israel.

<u>Hamas</u> remained defiant, vowing that the Israeli Army would pay a high price. "Gaza will become your cemetery," said a spokesman, Ismail Radwan.

Despite the huge show of force, <u>Hamas</u> was still firing shells into Israel. Two exploded 300 metres from foreign journalists covering the invasion on the Israeli side of the border. The Israeli military has barred the media from entering Gaza.

At least 19 people have been killed since Israel launched the night-time offensive on Saturday after eight days of air strikes in which at least 485 Palestinians died and more than 2400 were wounded, Gaza medics said. More than 80 children are among the dead.

Battleground Gaza * Israeli troops in heavy fighting * UN fails to condemn attack

About 30 Israeli soldiers and "several" <u>Hamas</u> fighters were reported to have been wounded in the ground offensive, the army and medics said.

Hamas said that nine Israeli soldiers had been killed in the operation. The Israeli military denied the claim.

As the invasion began, Israeli infantry kitted with night-vision goggles trotted alongside tank columns across the northern and north-eastern borders and into the *Hamas* stronghold.

<u>Hamas</u> fighters fired mortar rounds and detonated roadside bombs as the Israelis advanced.

Shortly after the ground offensive began, flames shot high into the night sky when warplanes bombed a gas depot near Beit Lahiya, causing a deafening blast.

Flares also streamed into the sky and exploded like fireworks, briefly lighting up the overcrowded territory.

The <u>Hamas</u>-run Al-Aqsa Television said yesterday that two Israeli soldiers had been captured by militants from the Izzidin Qassam Brigades. An Israel Defence Forces spokesman immediately denied the report.

A <u>Hamas</u> spokesman, Bushi el-Masri, told Al-Aqsa that <u>Hamas</u> was fighting back and that one of its main goals was to kidnap soldiers. Israeli troops were fighting near the northern towns of el-Atatra, Beit Hanoun, Beit Lahiya and Sajaiya, yesterday.

Israeli Defence Forces sources said that exchanges of fire continued through Sunday night, and that the army had hit dozens of Palestinian fighters, with the Israeli air force and navy striking at more than 45 targets.

Palestinian media inside Gaza reported that Israeli tanks had begun to advance along the Karni-Netzarim road to the south-east of Gaza City, advancing in the direction of the former Jewish settlement of Netzarim.

The sources speculated that the intention was to cut Gaza City off from the rest of the strip.

Cars and trucks filled with women and children headed south from the Netzarim area, witnesses said.

According to the Al-Jazeera television network there was a continuous flow of ambulances and firefighting trucks in Gaza. The network also reported that Israeli troops had entered Gaza from five roads.

Palestinian sources reported that the Israeli Defence Force was using loudspeakers to call on Gazans to evacuate their homes before they were bombed.

Tens of thousands of Israeli reservists were being called up yesterday, most of them for combat duty and for the Home Front Command. The Israeli military said it was prepared for the third stage of the operation if necessary. The Defence Minister, Ehud Barak, said Israel would escalate the attack "as much as necessary".

"This operation won't be easy and won't be simple. The operation will be expanded and intensified as much as necessary. War is not a picnic. We will not allow a humanitarian crisis to develop in the Gaza Strip. We will help supply food and medicine."

But in comments thought to be directed at Lebanon's Hezbollah movement he said: "Israel has no interest in opening new fronts other than the one in the south."

Meanwhile, Egypt has initiated fresh attempts to achieve a ceasefire with <u>Hamas</u> officials based in the Syrian capital, Damascus.

According to the Arabic newspaper Al-Hayat, a senior assistant of the Egyptian Intelligence Minister, Omar Suleiman, had telephoned *Hamas*'s political leader, Khaled Mashal, to discuss ways to resolve the crisis.

The newspaper said Iran was also working in several Arab states for the acceptance of its own formula for a ceasefire between Israel and *Hamas*.

Battleground Gaza * Israeli troops in heavy fighting * UN fails to condemn attack

Earlier the movement's radio output was interrupted by a man speaking in Hebrew-accented Arabic: "*Hamas* leaders are hiding in the tunnels and are leaving you on the front line of Israel's defence forces," he said.

"Hamas leaders are lying to you, and they are hiding in hospitals. Launching rockets puts civilians in danger."

The ground offensive was aimed primarily at *Hamas*'s rocket-launching facilities, Israeli officials said.

<u>Hamas</u>'s leaders appear to be gambling that they can withstand an onslaught by the Middle East's mightiest army and remain in power in Gaza.

Graphic

THREE PHOTOS: Israeli ground forces entered Gaza under cover of darkness. <u>Hamas</u> warned the strip would become their "cemetery". Photo: Reuters/Baz Ratner An Israeli artillery unit opens fire. Photo: Reuters/Yannis Behrakis Casualty . . . an Israeli soldier is rushed to hospital after he was wounded in the invasion of Gaza yesterday. Photo: AFP/Yehuda Raizner

Load-Date: January 4, 2009



Israel Is Forced To Defend Itself

The Tampa Tribune (Florida)

January 3, 2009 Saturday

FINAL EDITION

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Section: VIEWS; Pg. 2 Length: 632 words

Body

The key question in how to end Israel's attacks in Gaza cannot be answered by the Israelis. What must it do to convince the terrorist group, *Hamas*, which runs Gaza, to stop firing missiles into Israeli neighborhoods?

The missiles are small and inaccurate, but they have hit apartment buildings, playgrounds, even a kindergarten. The widespread condemnation of Israel for a disproportionate counterattack fails to say how Israel should respond.

Asked about calls for a balanced response, Israel's Consul General Ofer Bavly told us in a telephone interview from Miami, "It's not something a democracy does, to shoot 100 missiles into a civilian population."

Israel's goal in the fighting, he said, is to destroy the terrorist organization behind the missile and mortar attacks. Some of the missiles are homemade but the longer-range ones are believed to come from Iran and are smuggled through Egypt.

Egypt's government, too, fears the violence of <u>Hamas</u> and has kept its border with Gaza sealed except for humanitarian supplies. Egypt's foreign minister said any truce agreed to between Israel and <u>Hamas</u> must include a guarantee that <u>Hamas</u> stops firing rockets into Israel.

Arms have come under the Gaza-Egypt border through tunnels. Bavly said Israel in the past few days has destroyed 40 tunnels. "There are more," he said, "and we will destroy them all."

With the range and power of the rockets increasing, Israel has no effective alternative but to retaliate powerfully.

The worldwide criticism against Israel is based mostly on the scale of its response. In destroying <u>Hamas</u> headquarters and ammunition caches, more than 400 Palestinians have been killed. Only four Israelis have been killed recently by the <u>Hamas</u> rockets.

The imbalance seems unfair. Turkey's prime minister and many others are calling Israel's air assault a "crime against humanity." A Palestinian official in Gaza labeled the attacks a "massacre."

Yet civilian death is the last thing Israel wants. It continues to truck in medicine and food to Gaza, aid which Bavly noted is without precedent in the midst of combat.

Israel has begun making telephone warnings to occupants of houses it is targeting to give everyone a chance to evacuate to safety. In contrast, <u>Hamas</u> has been using <u>women</u> and children as shields, and turns collateral injuries and deaths into publicity weapons against Israel.

Israel Is Forced To Defend Itself

Such coverage leads to accusations that Israel is relentlessly destroying mosques and homes, killing children, and destroying Palestinian society.

Not mentioned are what the *Hamas* rockets have done to Israel.

About 250,000 people live within range of the missiles, which are fired from homes, schools and mosques. When a lookout spots a missile or radar picks it up, sirens are sounded. Upon hearing the alert, everyone has about 20 seconds to run to a bomb shelter or safest possible place.

The missiles come at all hours of the day and night, disrupting business life, ruining sleep, and terrorizing much of the nation.

Many calls are heard for Israel to agree to a cease-fire, but they ignore the reality that <u>Hamas</u> won't stop the launchings that began shortly after Israel pulled out of Gaza and allowed it to be policed by Palestinians.

An effective six-month truce expired last month and <u>Hamas</u> leaders refused to renew it. Their motive is to provoke Israel into fighting back so that they can enlist outside allies in their goal of destroying Israel, something they could never do alone.

It's an evil agenda made more effective by a worldwide unwillingness to recognize and condemn it.

Photo credit: AP photo

Photo: Intent on stopping <u>Hamas</u> rocket attacks, the Israelis have struck back hard against Palestinian militants in Gaza.

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Load-Date: January 6, 2009



Getting in the way of war

The Times (South Africa)
January 8, 2009 Thursday

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Section: OPINION & EDITORIAL

Length: 774 words

Byline: Nkululeko Ncana

Body

Israel claims civilians in Gaza are the victims of <u>Hamas</u>, writes We just decided enough is enough ... this is self-defence

PALESTINIANS in Gaza are caught between a rock and a hard place, as the saying goes. The Israeli government argues that <u>Hamas</u> militants are holding civilians hostage and using them as human shields, resulting in soaring casualties, many of whom are children.

The Israeli government remains unapologetic for its decision to attack Gaza. Despite a flurry of criticism from around the world, it has intensified its attacks with the aim of destroying <u>Hamas</u> infrastructure used to house arms and ammunition.

During a working political meeting with the European Union this week, Israeli President Shimon Peres told foreign ministers his country was not in the business of improving its image but of "fighting a comprehensive war against murderous terror".

He argued that no European country would sit back and accept the slaughter of its citizens by unprovoked attacks.

"Hamas is a terror organisation of the worst order that uses its population of women and children as human shields," Peres said.

But EU commissioner for external relations Benita Ferraro-Waldner said that, as much as every nation has the right to protect itself and its citizens, Israel had used way too much force in Gaza in its attempt to destroy <u>Hamas</u> military bases.

"... Mr President, you have a serious problem with international advocacy, and that Israel's image is being destroyed," Ferraro-Waldner said.

The Israeli government has turned a blind eye to the harsh criticism of its attacks on Gaza, dismissing them as "one-sided, unbalanced views".

Israel's ambassador to South Africa, Dov Segev-Steinberg, says that while the world is crying foul and accusing it of disproportionate attacks, Gaza would have been flattened if it had gone on a full attack.

"If we had gone with our full might into Gaza, the situation would have been much worse. We just decided that enough is enough and had to protect our people. They were being killed without reason ... this is self-defence."

The attacks are to continue.

Segev-Steinberg says the only time his government will desist from attacking Gaza is the day <u>Hamas</u> halts the shelling of his country - until then, it will "fight fire with fire".

Unfortunately, the body count is on the increase and the Palestinians in Gaza are stuck with a conundrum - forced loyalty to *Hamas* and the desire for peace.

Reports from Gaza say <u>Hamas</u> is firing rockets from people's backyards and any attempt to question them is tantamount to treason.

According to Segev-Steinberg, this is one of the reasons Israel has sent in ground troops, to get close to targets and minimise casualties.

Segev-Steinberg says Israeli surveillance has shown that missiles are being launched in many instances from civilian homes, schools and mosques.

"It's difficult to avoid civilian casualties in this instance because, despite the area being densely populated, *Hamas* is using the people of Gaza to shield themselves and hide arms and ammunition."

The ambassador vows that Israel will not stop its operation as long as *Hamas*'s military infrastructure is intact.

"We have made serious progress in destabilising <u>Hamas</u> because most of the strategic infrastructure has been destroyed.

"It is a matter of time before they realise that they have been defeated and will not be able to continue their fight against Israel," Segev-Steinberg says.

Israel yesterday agreed to temporarily cease fire in the Gaza Strip to allow those living there to stock up on necessities and to allow humanitarian aid to reach the affected.

During the ceasefire, Israeli politicians were pondering whether to accept a truce proposal by Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, who called for an urgent meeting of both sides to plan an end to military action and deal with the root causes of the attacks that have left almost 700 people dead.

The most unfortunate part about this war between Israel and <u>Hamas</u> is that the civilians in Gaza have had nowhere to run. And even with the strongest of condemnations, the attacks are unlikely to be called off any time soon.

The least that can be done for the civilian population, which is the most affected in any war, is to try to get the sides negotiating.

But that is a long shot because neither Israel nor *Hamas* is willing to be the first to lay down arms.

NOWHERE TO RUN: Palestinians in Gaza have no way to escape the attacks by Israel, which have claimed almost 700 lives. Israel says it has sent in ground troops to minimise civilian casualties as it targets <u>Hamas</u> military infrastructure Picture: KHALIL HAMRA/AP

Load-Date: June 2, 2009



ACRI protests civilian casualties

The Jerusalem Post
December 31, 2008 Wednesday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 8

Length: 324 words

Byline: ETGAR LEFKOVITS

Body

The damage inflicted on the civilian population in Gaza as a result of the IDF's aerial attack against <u>Hamas</u> must stop, an Israeli human rights group said Tuesday.

"The ongoing, unlawful attacks from Gaza on the civilian population in Israel do not provide legal or moral justification for indiscriminate damage inflicted on innocent Palestinian civilians," the Association for Civil Rights in Israel said in a press release.

The rights group said the fact that civilians were not the target of the four-day-old operation was "insufficient" in light of the "heavy toll" on Palestinian civilians, including **women** and children, who were not involved in the conflict.

More than 360 Palestinians have been killed in the assault. Most of these were <u>Hamas</u> security forces, but at least 64 were civilians, according to a UN agency.

Four Israelis, including three civilians and an IDF officer, have also been killed since the operation began.

"The distinction between civilians and combatants is a fundamental principle of human morality and a central tenet in international humanitarian law.ÊAs such, attacking or bombing a civilian population is strictly prohibited - whether in Gaza, Sderot or anywhere else," the organization said.

ACRI's statement did not distinguish between <u>Hamas</u> attacks that deliberately target Israeli civilians, and Israel's attacks against <u>Hamas</u>, which seek to avoid civilian casualties.

"<u>Hamas</u> is deliberately targeting kindergartens and schools and citizens and civilians because this goes according to their values," Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni said Monday. "Our values are completely different. EWe are trying to target <u>Hamas</u>, which hides among civilians."

On Tuesday, President Shimon Peres said that "Israel is not fighting the Palestinian population, but a terrorist organization whose raison d'etre is continued violence and destabilizing the region." Ê

He added that *Hamas* bore responsibility for the situation unfolding in Gaza.

Load-Date: October 4, 2011



Massive strike against Gaza

Sunday Tribune (South Africa)

December 28, 2008

e2 Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 6 **Length:** 773 words

Body

Israeli warplanes retaliating against rocket fire from Gaza pounded security compounds across the <u>Hamas</u>-ruled territory in unprecedented waves of air strikes yesterday, killing at least 195 and wounding more than 310 in the bloodiest day in Gaza in decades.

<u>Hamas</u> said all its security installations were hit and in response fired medium-range Grad missiles at Israel, reaching deeper than in the past. One Israeli was killed and at least four wounded.

The offensive began eight days after a six-month truce between Israel and the militants expired.

During that time, the military says, rocket and mortar squads have fired 200 projectiles at Israeli targets. In recent days, Israeli leaders had been voicing strong threats to launch a major offensive.

Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak said "the operation will last as long as necessary", but it was not clear if it would be coupled with a ground offensive. Asked if <u>Hamas</u> political leaders might be targeted next, military spokeswoman Maj Avital |Leibovich said, "Any <u>Hamas</u> target is a target."

The strikes, which targeted more than 100 security compounds and rocket-launching pads, caused widespread panic and confusion in Gaza, ruled by Islamic *Hamas* militants for the past 18 months.

Some Israeli missiles struck densely populated areas as children were leaving school, and <u>women</u> rushed into the streets frantically looking for their children.

Black clouds of smoke rose above the territory.

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

One survivor raised his index finger in a show of Muslim faith, uttering a prayer. The Gaza police chief was among those killed. One man, his face bloodied, sat dazed on the ground as a fire raged nearby.

Later, some of the dead, rolled in blankets, were laid out on the floor of Gaza's main hospital for identification. *Hamas* police spokesman Ehad Ghussein said about 140 *Hamas* security forces were killed.

Israeli military officials said more than 100 tons of bombs were dropped on Gaza by mid-afternoon.

Massive strike against Gaza

Defiant <u>Hamas</u> leaders threatened revenge, including suicide attacks. <u>Hamas</u> "will continue the resistance until the last drop of blood," vowed spokesman Fawzi Barhoum.

Israel told its civilians near Gaza to take cover as militants began retaliating with rockets, and moderate Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas called for restraint. Egypt summoned the Israeli ambassador to express condemnation and opened its border with Gaza to allow ambulances to drive out some of the wounded.

Israeli leaders approved military action against Gaza earlier in the week.

Previous limited ground incursions and air strikes had not halted rocket barrages from Gaza. But with 200 mortars and rockets raining down on Israel since the truce expired a week ago, and 3 000 since the beginning of the year, according to the military's count, pressure had been mounting in Israel for the military to crush the gunmen.

Gaza militants fired 30 rockets and mortars yesterday after the air offensive began. A missile hit the town of Netivot, killing an Israeli man and wounding four people.

Stunned residents gathered around the house that took the deadly rocket hit. Many wept.

Israel declared a state of emergency in Israeli communities within a 20km range of Gaza, putting the area on a war footing.

Barak said the coming period "won't be easy and won't be short for the communities in the south (of Israel)".

Protests against the campaign erupted in the Abbas-ruled West Bank and across the Arab world.

Several hundred angry Jordanians poured out on the streets in the capital Amman and protested outside a nearby UN complex. "*Hamas*, go ahead. You are the cannon, we are the bullets," they cried, some waving the signature green *Hamas* banners.

In Ein Hilweh, a Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon, youths hit the streets and set fire to tyres.

In Syria's al-Yarmouk camp, outside Damascus, Palestinian protesters vowed to continue fighting Israel.

The first round of air strikes on Gaza came just before noon.

Hospitals were crowded with people, civilians rushing in wounded people in cars, vans and ambulances. "We are treating people on the floor, in the corridors. We have no more space," said a doctor at Shifa Hospital in Gaza.

In the West Bank, *Hamas*' rival, Abbas, said he "condemns this aggression" and called for restraint.

Abbas, who has ruled only the West Bank since the Islamic <u>Hamas</u> seized power in Gaza in 2007, was in contact with Arab leaders, and his West Bank Cabinet convened an emergency session.

Israel has targeted Gaza in the past, but the number of simultaneous attacks was unprecedented. - Sapa-AP

Load-Date: December 28, 2008



Shocking cynicism or a legitimate right to defend one's homeland?

Sydney Morning Herald (Australia)

January 8, 2009 Thursday

First Edition

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Section: NEWS AND FEATURES; Opinion; Pg. 11

Length: 1517 words

Byline: SARA DOWSE. Sara Dowse is an author who wrote Sapphires, a novel about three generations of Jewish

women. VIC ALHADEFF. Vic Alhadeff is chief executive officer of the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies.

Body

It has taken me days to begin writing this, so horrified have I been by Israel's latest actions. My sense of justice, however - as a mother, a Jew, and above all as a human being - impels me to try.

The massacre in Gaza has its roots in virulent European anti-Semitism and the 1917 Balfour declaration, when the British government promised Zionists that Jewish people would have a homeland in Palestine if Britain was victorious in World War I.

The key word here is homeland, and it should be remembered that the promise was qualified by the condition that such a homeland would "not be to the detriment" of the Palestinians. The steady increase in Jewish immigration under the British mandate provoked riots and protests, but Palestinians were still in majority until, in the aftermath of the Holocaust, the Zionists unilaterally declared an Israeli state.

Despite the suffering of the Palestinians, whose land was taken from them, for many years the sympathy of the developed world was with Israel, refuge for the survivors of the Nazi slaughter of European Jews, and beleaguered by surrounding hostile Arab states.

With the 1967 occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, Israel could no longer be accepted as a victim. Yet it has continued to play on the sympathies of Western governments, most particularly the US, and Jews of the diaspora. In reality, Israel has been a colonising state, masquerading as the most democratic, most humane, most modern nation in the region. It has served the Western powers to have such a proxy in the Middle East, and most recently, under the Bush Administration and in concert with the Israelis, they have played a cynical game of divide and rule, encouraging the Israelis in their blind refusal to negotiate with <u>Hamas</u>, just as for years Israel refused to negotiate with the Palestine Liberation Organisation, the forerunners of Fatah, whom they now support.

<u>Hamas</u> is not a terrorist organisation, but the legitimate, democratically elected government of the Palestinian Authority. We may not like what it stands for, but that is no reason for sidelining it. Undermining that government by Israel and the West is but one of a string of cynical actions on their part.

The rationale that <u>Hamas</u> has refused to accept Israel's existence or to eschew violence is yet another example of how the truth has been twisted. What <u>Hamas</u> rejected was the continued, barbaric Israeli occupation of the West Bank, and the laying down of arms against an aggressive military occupation. I have heard with my own ears the <u>Hamas</u> Prime Minister, Ismail Haniyeh, say exactly that. Is he to be trusted? It would have been worth a try.

And who now would trust Israel?

So here we have it: a tough, technocratically savvy, nuclear power with the backing of the largest military power the world has known, bombing, then invading, a territory the size of a small city, with a population of 1.5 million, most of whom are civilians, to "defend our citizens".

The ceasefire was meant to lift the Israeli blockade on Gaza, but it didn't. It was meant to facilitate the release of Palestinian prisoners, many of whom were members of the elected *Hamas* Government, but it didn't.

Israeli planes raided southern Gaza in November. The <u>Hamas</u> rockets continued. Which side broke the ceasefire? <u>Hamas</u> may not be blameless, but the situation is far more complex than Israel claims. The fact that more than 600 people have died because in a couple of weeks the US will have a new government and next month Israel will have an election, is the most shocking form of cynicism the Palestinian people have yet faced.

Since the 2006 invasion of Lebanon I have undergone what for me, as a Jew, has been an agonising realignment of my feelings about Israel. I have come to believe that a specifically Jewish state has been a terrible mistake.

A homeland is different from a state. There have been examples throughout history and there are in our own time polities with mixed ethnic populations and official sanction for their living in harmony together. Australia is one.

I don't know how it will come about - I hope with as little bloodshed as possible - but I look forward to the distant day when the land becomes a multicultural country again, perhaps as a federation, perhaps in another form, but similar to what it was before it was destroyed with the poison of ethnic territorial nationalism.

Sara Dowse is an author who wrote Sapphires, a novel about three generations of Jewish women.

Imagine if an offshore terrorist organisation starts firing rockets at towns in northern Australia, aimed at killing and terrorising as many civilians as possible. Australia offers a truce, but the offer is rejected. How long would we expect our Government to wait before using force to defend its citizens? Imagine that Australian forces attack the terrorists. Most of the casualties are operatives, but there are civilian casualties.

Does this mean Australia has used disproportionate force?

For six months a truce was in effect between Israel and <u>Hamas</u>. In truth, the rocket attacks from Gaza aimed at Israeli civilians only declined; they did not cease. <u>Hamas</u> continued to smuggle weapons from Egypt into Gaza. Israel did not respond with force, but restricted movement into and out of Gaza to slow the gunmen and weapons.

It continued to allow humanitarian supplies into Gaza and to supply Gazans with more than half of their electricity needs. Incredibly, rocket attacks from Gaza targeted the crossing-points through which humanitarian relief was provided.

The truce ended on December 19, and Israel sought an extension. Between December 24 and 27, <u>Hamas</u> fired 80 rockets a day at Israel and declared it would not renew the truce. The attacks continued unabated. By December 27, Israelis had had enough.

Backed by Iran, <u>Hamas</u>'s attacks against Israel are a crime against humanity because they aim to kill civilians. <u>Hamas</u> and its accomplices have fired about 8000 rockets and mortars at Israel since 2001, forcing 250,000 civilians to spend the past eight years in and out of bomb shelters. Children and elderly people in towns within range of <u>Hamas</u> missiles dare not venture outdoors, for when a siren signals an incoming missile, they have just 15 seconds to take cover.

Some accuse Israel of using disproportionate force in defending itself, even though the majority of casualties have been *Hamas* operatives. Israel's intention is always to avoid harming civilians.

Shocking cynicism or a legitimate right to defend one's homeland?

International law imposes a requirement of proportionality on the use of force in self-defence. The force must be limited to halting or repelling the attack and preventing a recurrence. But it is erroneous to think this means the force used must be equivalent to the extent of the force used in the initial attack.

According to the former International Court of Justice chief judge, Robert Ago, the action needed to halt and repulse the attack may have to assume dimensions disproportionate to those of the attack. What matters is the result to be achieved by the "defensive" action, not the forms, substance and strength of the action itself.

It follows that Israel may lawfully use whatever force is needed to remove the danger of <u>Hamas</u> rockets and prevent a recurrence of the attacks on its civilians. As long as the attacks continue, Israel is entitled to respond. It is time to direct some hard questions at <u>Hamas</u>. Why does it deliberately locate its weapons factories and rocket-launching sites in densely populated civilian areas? Gaza may be crowded, but there are vacant areas where it could relocate these items. But that would make it easier for Israel to destroy them.

What kind of leadership does <u>Hamas</u> offer when it uses its people as human shields? <u>Hamas</u> shoots at Israeli civilians while hiding behind Palestinian civilians. That is a double war crime, right there.

Why did <u>Hamas</u> refuse to extend the truce? Was it seeking to re-establish its street credibility in the face of competition from al-Qaeda and Islamic Jihad?

Is <u>Hamas</u> trying to harden Israeli opinion to secure the election of Likud? Historically, it has tried to influence opinion in Israel against more moderate governments because they undermine its absolutist message.

Finally, since there has been no Israeli presence in Gaza since 2005, why does <u>Hamas</u> use its resources to attack Israel, instead of building up Gaza? By comparison, the West Bank - not under <u>Hamas</u> control - has undergone significant improvement in all these areas.

We come to the ugly heart of what <u>Hamas</u> is about and why its military wing is listed as a terrorist organisation in Australia and elsewhere. Its charter makes it clear that destroying Israel and killing its Jewish citizens takes higher priority than founding a Palestinian state.

If <u>Hamas</u> called off its war on Israel, Gaza's situation would dramatically improve. There would be no need for Israel to resort to military action to defend its citizens or restrict movement into and out of the area. Gazans and Israelis could get on with building their lives and a future for their children.

Vic Alhadeff is chief executive officer of the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies.

Load-Date: January 7, 2009



Israel threatens escalation

Financial Times (London, England)

December 29, 2008 Monday

USA Edition 1

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Section: FRONT PAGE - FIRST SECTION; Pg. 1

Length: 608 words

Byline: Tobias Buck in Jerusalem and Harvey Morris at the United Nations

Highlight: Tanks move close to Gaza Strip border

At least 285 killed in two days of air raids

Body

Israel threatened to escalate its attacks on the <u>Hamas</u>-controlled Gaza Strip yesterday, positioning tanks and armoured personnel carriers close to the border and calling up 6,700 reservists for a possible incursion into the territory.

The moves followed the biggest military offensive against Gaza since the 1967 war and one of the bloodiest days for the Palestinians in more than six decades of conflict with Israel.

After a second consecutive day of air strikes, at least 285 Gazans were dead and medical agencies in the territory said that there were at least 900 wounded, of which 120 were said to be critically injured.

Israel said that the offensive, aimed at security services and government headquarters, was designed to stop the recent surge in rocket and mortar fire from Gaza-based militants on nearby Israeli towns. One Israeli was killed and several more wounded by rocket fire on Saturday, as <u>Hamas</u> bombarded Israeli targets throughout the weekend.

Khaled Meshal, political leader of <u>Hamas</u> who lives in exile in Damascus, urged Palestinians to launch a third intifada against Israel, in a reference to uprisings in 1987 and 2000. He told a television station that <u>Hamas</u>'s response would include suicide bombings inside Israel.

Tzipi Livni, Israel's foreign minister and leader of the governing Kadima party, rejected international appeals to halt the attacks, and urged governments to support Israel. "I don't accept these calls. *Hamas* is a terror organisation and Israel is a country that is defending its -citizens. The only possible way to cut the offensive short is to make it clear that Israel has the right to protect itself and that the international community backs Israel."

Ms Livni, one of the front-runners to succeed Ehud Olmert as prime minister after elections on February 10, stressed that Israel had no intention of reoccupying the strip. However, other senior government officials made it clear that the country was ready to send in ground troops.

Ehud Barak, defence minister, told a US television station that "if boots on the ground will be needed, they will be there".

Israel threatens escalation

The Israeli air force yesterday also bombed more than 40 tunnels linking Gaza and Egypt, which officials said were used for smuggling weapons and explosives. Two Palestinians were reportedly killed in the strikes.

The United Nations Security Council yesterday issued a unanimous statement voicing concern for the situation and calling for an immediate halt to all violence. It echoed statements from world leaders calling for calm and for a renewal of the ceasefire agreed in June between Israel and <u>Hamas</u>.

There were protests and demonstrations against the offensive throughout the Arab world, as well as in several European capitals. In the occupied West Bank as well as in Israel, Palestinian demonstrators clashed repeatedly with Israeli forces. One protester was killed.

However, some voices in the Arab world indicated that <u>Hamas</u> bore some responsibility. Mahmoud Abbas, Palestinian president and head of Fatah - <u>Hamas</u>'s rival - said: "We talked to them [<u>Hamas</u>] and told them 'please, we ask you, do not end the truce. Let the truce continue and not stop' so that we could have avoided what happened."

The US administration, Israel's closest ally, blamed the recent escalation on <u>Hamas</u> alone, saying that Israel had the right to defend itself against what George W. Bush's National Security Council called "thugs".

It was not clear how many of the casualties in Gaza were civilians. The Reuters news agency quoted a <u>Hamas</u> official saying that there were 15 <u>women</u> and children among the dead.

Reports, Page 2 Editorial Comment, Page 6 www.ft.com/arabisrael

Load-Date: December 28, 2008



Israel sends negotiator to Egypt; U.S. opinion solidly behind Israel: poll

Edmonton Journal (Alberta)

January 14, 2009 Wednesday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. F12

Length: 550 words

Byline: McClatchy Newspapers

Dateline: JERUSALEM

Body

Israeli officials said on Tuesday that they would send a top negotiator to Cairo on Thursday for what they described as "decisive" talks, but Israel's military advances in the Gaza Strip appeared to be outpacing diplomacy.

Israel is expected to send top negotiator Amos Gilad to Cairo for indirect talks with <u>Hamas</u>, led by Omar Suleiman, Egypt's intelligence chief. Gilad, a defence ministry official, led Israel's original Gaza cease-fire talks and is key to any deal taking shape.

Gilad had been expected to head to Cairo earlier, but Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak's talks with <u>Hamas</u> faltered, apparently because <u>Hamas</u> balked at tough conditions to stop future weapons smuggling.

Should Gilad return without significant progress, it is more likely that Israel would intensify its military operation in Gaza.

So far, nearly 1,000 Palestinians and 13 Israelis have died since the campaign began Dec. 27.

Keeping up the pressure on <u>Hamas</u>, Israeli forces are methodically closing in on the heart of Gaza City, where soldiers are facing stronger resistance from Palestinian militants. On Tuesday, Israeli units pushed to within a mile of central Gaza City before pulling back.

So far, Israeli forces have taken lighter-than-expected losses. Nine Israeli soldiers have been killed fighting in Gaza, while the Israeli military estimates that more than 300 Palestinian fighters have been killed.

Nearly 1,000 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli strikes in the past 18 days, according to Gaza health officials. More than 40 per cent of those killed were **women** and children.

International pressure on Israel is building for an end to the fighting, although a new poll shows that U.S. public opinion is solidly behind Israel.

A McClatchy/lpsos poll released Tuesday showed that 44 per cent of Americans blamed <u>Hamas</u> for the current conflict, and only 14 per cent blame Israel. Also, 57 per cent of Americans thought that <u>Hamas</u> had used "excessive" force, whereas 44 per cent thought that Israel had used "appropriate" force.

Israel sends negotiator to Egypt; U.S. opinion solidly behind Israel: poll

As part of a renewed push to bring the fighting to a halt, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon flew to the Middle East with renewed appeals for Israel and *Hamas* to agree to UN calls for an immediate cease-fire.

Israel and *Hamas* rebuffed the UN Security Council cease-fire resolution passed last week.

Israeli leaders have vowed to expand military operations in Gaza unless <u>Hamas</u> ends its rocket attacks on southern Israel and new steps are taken to ensure that Palestinian militants can't dig tunnels between Gaza and Egypt to smuggle weapons.

<u>Hamas</u> leaders said they would end their attacks when Israel reopens its borders with Gaza and allows supplies to flow back into the isolated Mediterranean strip.

If diplomats are unable to bridge the significant differences, Israel has threatened to bring its fight into the heart of the Gaza Strip.

"Israel cannot end this without a ceasefire and an end to the weapons smuggling," said Yossi Alpher, a former official with Israel's Mossad spy agency. "Otherwise the Israeli government will have a hard time explaining itself -- and it will be a blow to Israeli deterrence."

The deepening military campaign is raising concerns that Israeli politicians don't have a game plan for ensuring that they'll come out of Gaza with a decisive victory.

Load-Date: January 14, 2009



U.N. warns of crisis in Gaza Strip

Deseret Morning News (Salt Lake City)

January 3, 2009 Saturday

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Length: 1337 words

Byline: Aron Heller and Brahim Barzak Associated Press

Body

EREZ CROSSING, Israel -- Israel allowed several hundred Palestinians with foreign passports to flee Gaza on Friday, even as its warplanes bombed a mosque it said was used to store weapons and destroyed homes of more than a dozen <u>Hamas</u> operatives.

The evacuees told of crippling shortages of water, electricity and medicine, echoing a U.N. warning of a deepening humanitarian crisis in the besieged Gaza Strip in the seven-day-old Israeli campaign. The U.N. estimates at least a quarter of the 400 Palestinians killed by Israeli airstrikes on *Hamas* militants were civilians.

Jawaher Hajji, a 14-year-old U.S. citizen who was allowed to cross into Israel, said her uncle was one of them -killed while trying to pick up some medicine for her cancer-stricken father. She said her father later died of his illness.

"They are supposed to destroy just the *Hamas*, but people in their homes are dying too," Hajji, who has relatives in Virginia, said at the Erez border crossing between Gaza and Israel.

President George W. Bush on Friday branded the <u>Hamas</u> rocket attacks an "act of terror," while Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice accused <u>Hamas</u>' leaders of holding the people of Gaza hostage.

"The <u>Hamas</u> has used Gaza as a launching pad for rockets against Israeli cities, and has contributed deeply to a very bad daily life for the Palestinian people in Gaza and to a humanitarian situation that we have all been trying to address," she said.

International calls for a cease-fire have been growing, and French President Nicolas Sarkozy is expected in the region next week.

Bush said no peace deal would be acceptable without monitoring to halt the flow of smuggled weapons to terrorist groups.

"The United States is leading diplomatic efforts to achieve a meaningful cease-fire that is fully respected," Bush said Friday in his weekly radio address, released a day early. "Another one-way cease-fire that leads to rocket attacks on Israel is not acceptable. And promises from <u>Hamas</u> will not suffice -- there must be monitoring mechanisms in place to help ensure that smuggling of weapons to terrorist groups in Gaza comes to an end."

Israel has targeted <u>Hamas</u> leaders in the past but halted the practice during a six-month truce that expired last month. Most of <u>Hamas</u>' leaders went into hiding at the start of the Israeli offensive on Dec. 27.

Israeli troops in bases in southern Israel are awaiting orders to invade Gaza.

Exiled <u>Hamas</u> leader Khaled Mashaal, speaking in Syria, warned that any ground assault would lead Israel to "a black destiny of dead and wounded."

However, he said <u>Hamas</u> was "ready to cooperate with any effort leading to an end to the Israeli offensive against Gaza, lifting the siege and opening all crossings."

Israel appears to be open to the intense diplomatic efforts by Arab and European leaders, saying it would consider stopping its punishing aerial assaults if international monitors were brought in to track compliance with any truce with *Hamas*.

Israel began its campaign to try to halt weeks of intensifying Palestinian rocket fire from Gaza. The offensive has dealt a heavy blow to <u>Hamas</u> but has not stopped the rockets, which continue to strike deeper and deeper into Israel. Three Israeli civilians and one soldier have been killed in the rocket attacks.

More than 30 rockets were fired into southern Israel on Friday, slightly injuring four. Sirens warning Israelis to take cover when military radar picks up an incoming rocket have helped reduce casualties in recent days.

Israeli TV showed video of a table set for the traditional Sabbath meal covered with shrapnel and broken glass.

After destroying <u>Hamas</u>' security compounds early in the operation, Israel has turned its attention to the group's leadership. Israeli warplanes on Friday hit about 20 houses believed to belong to <u>Hamas</u> militants and members of other armed groups, Palestinians said.

Israel also bombed a mosque it said was used to store weapons. The mosque was known as a *Hamas* stronghold and was identified with Nizar Rayan, the *Hamas* militant leader killed Thursday when Israel dropped a one-ton bomb on his home. Rayan, 49, ranked among *Hamas* top five decision-makers. The explosion killed 20 people, including all four of Rayan's wives and 11 of his children.

Israel's military said the bombing of Rayan's house triggered secondary explosions from the weapons stockpile there.

Fear of Israeli attacks led to sparse turnout at Friday's communal prayers at mosques throughout Gaza. Still, thousands attended a memorial service for Rayan, with throngs praying over the rubble of his home and the nearby destroyed mosque.

An imam delivered his sermon over a car loudspeaker as the bodies of Rayan and other family members were covered in green *Hamas* flags. Explosions from Israeli airstrikes and the sound of warplanes could be heard.

Following the prayers, mourners marched with the bodies, with many people reaching out to touch and kiss them.

"The Palestinian resistance will not forget and will not forgive," said <u>Hamas</u> lawmaker Mushir Masri. "The resistance's response will be very painful."

Israel also destroyed homes of more than a dozen <u>Hamas</u> operatives. Most appeared to be empty, but one man was killed in a strike in the Jebaliya refugee camp in northern Gaza.

Fourteen other Palestinians died Friday -- killed in airstrikes or dying of wounds from earlier violence, officials said. Among them were two teenagers as well as three children -- two brothers and their cousin -- who were playing in southern Gaza, according to Health Ministry official Dr. Moaiya Hassanain.

Maxwell Gaylard, U.N. humanitarian coordinator for the Palestinians Territories, said 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.

U.N. warns of crisis in Gaza Strip

The U.N. World Food Program began distributing bread in Gaza to Palestinian families. It said there had been a drastic deterioration in living conditions, with shortages of food, cooking gas and fuel, as well as frequent power cuts.

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.

The military has called some houses ahead of time to warn inhabitants of an impending attack. In some cases, aircraft also fired sound bombs to warn away civilians before flattening the homes with their missiles, Palestinians and Israeli defense officials said.

Israeli planes also dropped leaflets east of Gaza giving a confidential phone number and e-mail address for people to report locations of rocket squads. Residents appeared to ignore the leaflets.

In all, Israel allowed 270 Palestinians to cross the border from Gaza to flee the fighting. The evacuees all held foreign passports, and were expected to join their families in the U.S., Russia, Turkey, Norway, Belarus, Kazakhstan and elsewhere.

Nashwa Hajji, Jawaher's 13-year-old younger sister, said her family left their home following Israeli warnings, but others refused. "People said, 'We don't want to go. We will die where we are," she said.

The Hajji family was notified Thursday by the U.S. consulate that it was being evacuated. After crossing Erez, they and others boarded buses taking them to Amman, Jordan. Hajji said she, her mother and five siblings would fly to Virginia from there.

The State Department said it had assisted 27 U.S. citizens and members of their immediate families to leave Gaza on Friday and make their way to Jordan and stood ready to help others. Department officials said earlier this week they were aware of roughly 30 Americans in Gaza but that there could be others.

Many of the evacuees were foreign-born <u>women</u> married to Palestinians and their children. Spouses who did not hold foreign citizenship were not allowed out.

"I feel happy and sad," said Caroline Katba, 15, A Russian citizen. "Happy, because I am going to Russia, and sad, because my father is left behind."

Load-Date: January 3, 2009



As fighting rages, Olmert says Israel 'must not miss out'

The International Herald Tribune January 12, 2009 Monday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 3

Length: 958 words

Byline: Steven Erlanger and Ethan Bronner - The New York Times Media Group

Dateline: JERUSALEM

Body

Taghreed El-Khodary contributed reporting from Gaza.

*

Israeli troops pushed into a heavily populated area of the city of Gaza from the south early on Sunday in what the army and locals described as fierce fighting. In Jerusalem, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel told the nation that Israel is "getting close to achieving the goals it set for itself," but that "more patience, determination and effort is still demanded."

Olmert was speaking in the public part of the regular Sunday cabinet meeting, and his words were broadcast to an Israeli public that supports the war against *Hamas* in Gaza but is uneasy about how and when it will end.

In his remarks, Olmert gave no time frame for the conflict but said that Israel "must not miss out, at the last moment, on what has been achieved through an unprecedented national effort."

Olmert and his two top cabinet ministers, Defense Minister Ehud Barak and Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, are reported to disagree about the best way to win the war and consolidate Israeli gains. But they are under pressure from the army to decide on whether to expand the war or end it, in part because the soldiers become easier targets on the ground unless they are constantly moving.

An expansion of the war would likely mean Israeli troops moving into southern Gaza to take a strip of land at least 450 meters, or 1,500 feet, wide inside the Egyptian border. Israel has been bombing the area to try to destroy smuggling tunnels between Gaza and Egypt, one of the main aims of the war.

The fighting started before dawn on Sunday in the Sheikh Ajleen neighborhood, in the southwestern edge of the city of Gaza, with Israeli troops moving from Netzarim, where they had earlier cut the Gaza Strip in two.

At least eight people died - four fighters, two <u>women</u> and two children, according to Palestinian hospital officials. The fighting was described as fierce and close to Al Quds Hospital in Sheikh Ajleen. <u>Hamas</u> and Islamic Jihad said they had ambushed the Israelis, but there was no immediate indication that any Israeli soldiers had been hurt. Palestinian medical workers said that another three militants were killed by airstrikes.

On Saturday, the <u>Hamas</u> political director in exile, Khaled Meshal, said in Damascus that <u>Hamas</u> would not consider a cease-fire until Israel ended the assault and opened all crossings into Gaza. He said that the ferocity of the Israeli campaign had crossed the line and called it a "holocaust," adding: "You have destroyed the last chance for negotiations."

Still, a <u>Hamas</u> delegation was holding talks in Egypt on an Egyptian plan for a truce, and a senior Israeli defense official, Amos Gilad, is expected to make a second trip to Cairo in the next day or so, Israeli officials said.

Israel and Washington are trying to secure agreement on a deal that would mean a <u>Hamas</u> commitment to stop all rocket firing into Israel and an Egyptian commitment to block smuggling tunnels into Gaza to stop a resupply of <u>Hamas</u>. In return, Israel would agree to a cease-fire and the opening up of its crossings for goods and fuel into Gaza and the opening of the Rafah crossing into Egypt, with European Union supervision.

There was a new development on Sunday in the investigation into one of the deadliest incidents so far, an Israeli mortar strike near a United Nations school on Tuesday that killed up to 43 Palestinians. On Sunday, Israeli officials told the Haaretz newspaper that a military investigation concluded that an Israeli mortar shell, despite having a guidance system, was 30 meters off its target and hit near the school.

Two other mortars hit their target, a <u>Hamas</u> cell that had fired mortars at Israeli troops, killing at least two of the fighters, the army said.

An initial effort to use an even more precise weapon failed because of a malfunction, the army told Haaretz. The army appeared to drop its contention that the *Hamas* mortars came from within the school compound.

On Saturday, UN relief operations resumed after a daylong suspension prompted by fears for the safety of the drivers. On Thursday, a UN driver was killed and two others were wounded from what the agency said was Israeli fire. Israel issued a statement on Saturday saying it was certain that the shooting had not come from its forces. It also redoubled its assurances to the United Nations on holding its fire around aid convoys.

On Saturday, Israel had warned Gaza residents that it was preparing the next phase of its war against <u>Hamas</u> - a deeper ground force operation .

Tank and artillery fire pounded Gaza all night and day, with plumes of black smoke visible especially in the eastern part of the city of Gaza. A tank shell landed outside the home of a family in Jabaliya, northeast of the city, killing eight members of the same family who were sitting outside, hospital officials said.

More long-range rockets hit Israel on Saturday, including two in open areas in Ashdod, a city of 200,000 people.

The Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, whose Fatah faction opposes <u>Hamas</u>, was in Cairo pressing a call for a cease-fire, and he discussed with President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt the idea of international troops along the Gaza-Egypt border. <u>Hamas</u> representatives were also there, but the plan, also urged by the French, seemed to be losing steam. Egypt is unenthusiastic about the presence of foreign troops on its soil, while <u>Hamas</u> is unwilling to have the troops inside Gaza.

Both Israel and *Hamas* rejected a UN Security Council resolution on Friday calling for a cease-fire.

In the city of Gaza over the weekend, residents reported getting phone calls that said: "We are going to intensify the military strike against *Hamas*. Our intention is not to harm civilians. If you live near *Hamas*, evacuate."

Load-Date: January 20, 2009



The New York Times

December 29, 2008 Monday

Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section A; Column 0; Foreign Desk; Pg. 1

Length: 1325 words

Byline: By TAGHREED EL-KHODARY and ISABEL KERSHNER; Taghreed El-Khodary reported from Gaza, and Isabel Kershner from Jerusalem. Reporting was contributed by Robert F. Worth and Hwaida Saad from Beirut, Lebanon, Nazila Fathi from Tehran, Rina Castelnuovo from the Israel-Gaza border, Khaled Abu Aker from Ramallah, West Bank, and an employee of The New York Times from Syria.

Dateline: GAZA

Body

Israeli troops and tanks massed along the Gaza border and the government said it had called up reserves for a possible ground operation, as the death toll increased to nearly 300 after Israeli aircraft pounded Gaza for a second day on Sunday.

The continued strikes, which Israel said were in retaliation for sustained rocket fire from Gaza into its territory, unleashed a furious reaction across the Arab world, raising fears of greater instability in the region.

Much of the anger was also directed at Egypt, seen by <u>Hamas</u> and some nearby governments as having acceded to Israel's military action by sealing its border with Gaza and forcing back many Palestinians at gunpoint who were trying to escape the destruction.

Witnesses at the Rafah border crossing described a chaotic scene as young men tried to force their way across into Egypt, amid sporadic exchanges of gunfire between <u>Hamas</u> and Egyptian forces. Egyptian state television reported that one Egyptian border guard was killed by a <u>Hamas</u> gunman. A Palestinian man was killed by an Egyptian guard near Rafah, Reuters reported.

In Gaza, officials said medical services, stretched to the breaking point after 18 months of Israeli sanctions, were on the verge of collapse as they struggled to care for the more than 600 people wounded in two days.

At Shifa Hospital in Gaza City, <u>women</u> wailed as they searched for relatives among bodies that lay strewn on the hospital floor. One doctor said that given the dearth of facilities, not much could be done for the seriously wounded, and that it was "better to be brought in dead."

The International Committee of the Red Cross appealed on Sunday for urgent humanitarian assistance, including medical supplies, to be allowed to enter Gaza. Israeli officials said that some aid had been allowed in through one of the crossings. Egypt temporarily opened the Rafah crossing on Saturday to allow some of the wounded to be taken to Egyptian hospitals.

Israel made a strong push to justify the attacks, saying it was forced into military action to defend its citizens. At the same time, the supreme religious leader of Iran and the leader of Hezbollah expressed strong support for *Hamas*.

Across Gaza, families huddled indoors as Israeli jets streaked overhead. Residents said that there were long blackouts and that they had no cooking gas. Some ventured out to receive bread rations at bakeries or to brave the streets to claim their dead at the hospitals. There were few mass funerals; rather, families buried the victims in small ceremonies.

At dusk on Sunday, Israeli fighter jets bombed over 40 tunnels along Gaza's border with Egypt. The Israeli military said that the tunnels, on the Gaza side of the border, were used for smuggling weapons, explosives and fugitives. Gazans also use many of them to import consumer goods and fuel in order to get around the Israeli-imposed economic blockade.

In the first two days of the operation Israeli jets destroyed at least 30 targets in Gaza, including the main security compound and prison in Gaza City known as the Saraya, metal workshops throughout Gaza that were suspected of manufacturing rockets, and *Hamas* military posts.

<u>Hamas</u> said Israel bombed a government ministry compound and the Islamic University in Gaza, a stronghold of <u>Hamas</u>, late Sunday night. The <u>Hamas</u>-owned television station Al Aqsa was also struck, as was a mosque that the Israeli military said was being used as a terrorist base.

On Monday, Israeli warplanes bombed the <u>Hamas</u>-run Interior Ministry, Reuters reported, based on a <u>Hamas</u> statement.

Israel appeared to be settling in for a longer haul. The government on Sunday approved the emergency call-up of thousands of army reservists in preparation for a possible ground operation as Israeli troops, tanks, armored personnel carriers and armored bulldozers massed at the border.

Speaking before the weekly cabinet meeting in Jerusalem, Israel's defense minister, Ehud Barak, said the army "will deepen and broaden its actions as needed" and "will continue to act." Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said Israel's goal was not to reoccupy Gaza, which it left unilaterally in 2005, but to "restore normal life and quiet to residents of the south" of Israel.

Tzipi Livni, Israel's foreign minister, appeared on American talk shows to press Israel's case. She said on "Fox News Sunday" that the operation "is needed in order to change the realities on the ground, and to give peace and quiet to the citizens in southern Israel."

Militants in Gaza fired barrages of rockets and mortar shells the farthest yet into Israel on Sunday. One rocket fell in Gan Yavneh, a village near the major port city of Ashdod, almost 20 miles north of Gaza. Two landed in the coastal city of Ashkelon. Several Israelis were wounded.

Fawzi Barhoum, a spokesman for *Hamas*, told reporters that Israel had started a "war" but that it would not be able to choose how it would end. He called for revenge in the form of strikes reaching "deep into the Zionist entity using all means," including suicide attacks.

The hundreds of thousands of Israeli citizens now within rocket range have been instructed by the authorities to stay close to protected spaces.

In Lebanon, the leader of the Shiite militant group Hezbollah, Sheik Hassan Nasrallah, put his fighters on alert, expressing strong support for *Hamas* and saying that he believed Israel might try to wage a two-front war, as it did in 2006. He called for a mass demonstration in Beirut on Monday. And he, too, denounced Egypt's leaders. "If you don't open the borders, you are accomplices in the killing," he said in a televised speech.

Iran's supreme religious leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, condemned the silence of some Arab countries, which he said had prepared the grounds for the "catastrophe," an Iranian news agency, ISNA, reported.

"The horrible crime of the Zionist regime in Gaza has once again revealed the bloodthirsty face of this regime from disguise," he said in a statement. "But worse than this catastrophe is the encouraging silence of some Arab countries who claim to be Muslim," he said, apparently in a reference to Egypt and Jordan.

Egypt has mediated talks between Israel and the Palestinians and between <u>Hamas</u> and <u>Hamas</u>'s rival, Fatah, leaving it open to criticism that it is too willing to work with Israel. In turn, Egypt and other Western-allied Sunni Arab nations are deeply opposed to Hezbollah and <u>Hamas</u>, which they see as extensions of Iran, their Shiite nemesis.

Across the region, the Israeli strikes were being broadcast in grisly detail almost continually on Arab satellite networks.

In the Syrian capital, Damascus, a large group of protesters marched to Yusuf al Azmeh Square, where they chanted slogans and burned Israeli and American flags.

In Beirut, protesters were bused to a rally outside the United Nations building, holding up Palestinian flags and <u>Hamas</u> banners. Muhammad Mazen Ibrahim, a 25-year-old Palestinian who lives in one of the refugee camps here, choked up when asked about the assault on Gaza.

"There's an agreement between Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Israel against <u>Hamas</u>," he said. "They want to end them; all the countries are in league against <u>Hamas</u>, but God willing, we willwin."

That sentiment is widespread here. Many see Ms. Livni's visit to Cairo last week as evidence that Egypt, eager to be rid of *Hamas*, had consented to the airstrikes.

The anger echoes what happened in July 2006, when the leaders of Saudi Arabia and Egypt publicly blamed Hezbollah for starting the conflict with Israel. Popular rage against Israel soon forced the leaders to change their positions.

Hamas, sworn to the destruction of Israel, took control of Gaza when it ousted Fatah last year. An Egyptian-brokered six-month truce between Israel and **Hamas**, always shaky, began to unravel in early November. It expired 10 days ago.

http://www.nytimes.com

Graphic

PHOTOS: Palestinian rescue workers helped a wounded prisoner on Sunday in Gaza City after an Israeli missile attack at the main security compound and prison, the Saraya. (PHOTOGRAPH BY MAJED HAMDAN/ASSOCIATED PRESS) (pg.A1)

A Palestinian family in the Rafah refugee camp rushed from the scene of a building hit by an Israeli missile strike Sunday, the second day of an air barrage in Gaza. (PHOTOGRAPH BY HATEM OMAR/MAANIMAGES, VIA ASSOCIATED PRESS)

Palestinian youths clashed, left, with Israeli border police on Sunday in the West Bank. In Gaza City, Palestinians tried to reach the body of a *Hamas* security officer. (PHOTOGRAPHS BY AMMAR AWAD/REUTERS

FADI ADWAN/ASSOCIATED PRESS) (pg.A10) MAP: Some Palestinians tried to flee from the Gaza Strip to Egypt. (pg.A10)

Load-Date: December 29, 2008



Israel warns of wider offensive in Gaza Strip

St. Louis Post-Dispatch (Missouri)

January 11, 2009 Sunday

FOURTH EDITION

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A11

Length: 479 words

Byline: By Ibrahim Barzak and Christopher Torchia The Associated Press

Body

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip - Israel dropped bombs and leaflets on the Gaza Strip 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 held 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. *Hamas* 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 Authority President Mahmoud Abbas predicted a "waterfall of blood" unless all parties adhere to a U.N. 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 it was not consulted.

A top <u>Hamas</u> leader said Saturday the Gaza war has ended chances of settlement and negotiations with Israel, though <u>Hamas</u> has always opposed both, and urged Arabs to pressure the Jewish state to end attacks in Gaza.

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."

"We are living the hardest moments of the resistance now, we want another intifada (uprising) in Palestine and on the Arab street," he said.

Still, *Hamas* teams were in Cairo to discuss a cease-fire proposed by Egypt.

At least 814 Palestinians, roughly half of them civilians, have died since the latest fighting 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.

Israel warns of wider offensive in Gaza Strip

"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 *Hamas* and to stay away from its members.

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 orders.

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

Graphic

PHOTO - Palestinian children are rushed away from the scene of Israeli shelling in Beit Lahiya, northern Gaza Strip, on Saturday. The Associated Press

Load-Date: January 11, 2009



200 DEAD IN GAZA RAIDS; Israel in revenge attacks

Sunday Sun (UK)
December 28, 2008
1st Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 11

Length: 485 words

Byline: LUCY WEST

Body

ISRAELI warplanes pounded security buildings on the Gaza Strip yesterday, killing more than 200 people in retaliation for rocket fire.

In the single bloodiest day of fighting in years, nearly 400 people were injured.

Most of those killed were security men, but an unknown number of civilians also died.

<u>Hamas</u>, which rules the Strip, said all of its security installations were hit and it threatened to resume suicide attacks.

Hamas sent at least 50 rockets crashing into Israeli border communities, according to the Israeli military's count.

One Israeli was killed and at least six people were wounded in the rocket attacks.

With so many wounded, the Palestinian death toll is likely to rise.

The strikes caused widespread panic and confusion in Gaza, as black clouds of smoke rose above the territory, ruled by *Hamas* for the past 18 months.

Some of the Israeli missiles struck in densely populated areas as children were leaving school, and <u>women</u> rushed into the streets frantically looking for their children.

One woman, Said Masri, 57, sat in the middle of Gaza City, close to a security compound, alternately slapping her son's face and covering his head with dust from the bombed-out building.

"My son is gone, my son is gone," she wailed.

The offensive began eight days after a six-month truce between Israel and *Hamas* expired.

During that time, the military says, rocket and mortar squads have fired 200 projectiles at Israeli targets and, in recent days, Israeli leaders had been voicing strong threats to launch a major offensive.

Israeli defence Minister Ehud Barak said Israel would expand the operation if necessary. "There is a time for calm and there is a time for fighting, and now is the time for fighting," he told a news conference.

200 DEAD IN GAZA RAIDS Israel in revenge attacks

Asked earlier if <u>Hamas</u> political leaders might be targeted next, military spokeswoman Major Avital Leibovich said: "Any **Hamas** target is a target."

Prime Minister Gordon Brown, the Vatican, the UN and special Mideast envoy Tony Blair all called for an immediate restoration of calm, and the Arab League scheduled an emergency meeting, to take place today.

By early evening, 205 Gazans were known to be dead and 388 wounded. Some of the dead, rolled in blankets, were laid out on the floor of Gaza's main hospital for identification.

Israeli military officials said more than 100 tons of bombs were dropped on Gaza by mid-after noon.

Defiant <u>Hamas</u> leaders threatened revenge. <u>Hamas</u> "will continue the resistance until the last drop of blood," vowed spokesman Fawzi Barhoum.

The most violent West Bank response came in the city of Hebron, where dozens of youths, many of them masked, hurled rocks for hours at Israeli forces, who lobbed tear gas and stun grenades in response.

Officials in Bethlehem, traditionally thought to be the birthplace of Jesus, turned off Christmas lights and traders shuttered shops to protest at the Israeli attack.

Graphic

PANIC: Israeli warplanes struck populous areas

RESISTANCE: masked youths hurl rocks at soldiers, as, right, Palestinians grieve over a dead member of the security forces

POUNDED: Hamas security buildings were targeted

Load-Date: December 28, 2008



The New York Times

January 4, 2009 Sunday

Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section A; Column 0; Foreign Desk; Pg. 1

Length: 1631 words

Byline: By ISABEL KERSHNER and TAGHREED EL-KHODARY; Isabel Kershner reported from Jerusalem, and

Taghreed El-Khodary from Gaza. Rina Castelnuovo contributed reporting from the Israel-Gaza border.

Body

JERUSALEM -- Israeli tanks and troops swept across the border into Gaza on Saturday night, opening a ground war against the militant group *Hamas* after a week of intense airstrikes.

Israel's stated goal was to destroy the infrastructure of <u>Hamas</u>, the militant Islamic group that controls Gaza's government, and the military warned that the campaign could take "many long days."

The assault brings new risks and the prospect of many new casualties on both sides in a confrontation that, before this phase began, had already cost the lives of more than 430 Palestinians and 4 Israelis.

While a ground war in densely populated Gaza is likely to increase the civilian toll there, the Israeli Army also faces new threats. Since seizing 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.

Sharp explosions rang out across Gaza, and tank fire and airstrikes lit the darkened sky well into Sunday as Israel continued to pound the area by land, air and sea. The <u>Hamas</u> military wing said it was firing mortars at approaching Israeli troops.

Palestinian hospitals reported three civilians killed by midnight, and Al Aksa television, run by <u>Hamas</u>, reported that five Israeli soldiers had been killed. An Israeli military spokesman rejected that claim. Israel did say, though, that 30 of its soldiers had been wounded since the start of the ground campaign.

World leaders called on <u>Hamas</u> and Israel to accept an immediate cease-fire, and in several European cities tens of thousands of protesters demanded that Israel end its campaign. Meanwhile, the Bush administration said it was working toward a new cease-fire, but rather than calling for a halt to military action urged Israel to "be mindful of the potential consequences to civilians."

In a statement, the Israeli military said a key objective was "taking control" of the rocket launching sites <u>Hamas</u> has used to fire at southern Israel. 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.

Israeli officials have said repeatedly that it is 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 said.

<u>Hamas</u> leaders in Gaza were in hiding, but a <u>Hamas</u> spokesman said Saturday night by video that the "moment of decision has arrived" and that Gaza would be the Israeli Army's "graveyard."

<u>Hamas</u> has also threatened to use the invasion as an opportunity to capture Israeli soldiers. The group has been holding an Israeli corporal, Gilad Shalit, hostage for more than two years.

The exact number of troops entering Gaza was not being publicized, but the military said the operation involved "large numbers" of forces including infantry, tanks, engineering and artillery corps. On Saturday night, the Israeli prime minister's office said that a call-up of thousands of army reserve troops, approved earlier, had begun.

Before Israel started the invasion, warplanes and ground artillery carried out heavy strikes on Saturday. Many of those attacks were on open areas around Beit Hanoun and the main route connecting the north and south of Gaza, most likely to clear those areas of mines and tunnels and to hamper movement before troops entered.

A mosque in northern Gaza was also hit, during evening prayer time, in what witnesses said was an Israeli airstrike. At least 11 worshipers were killed and about 30 wounded, according to Palestinian hospital officials. The Israeli military had no immediate comment.

The air force has struck several mosques in the past week, with the military saying they served as <u>Hamas</u> bases and weapons stores.

The Israeli Army also dropped thousands of leaflets into some residential districts warning inhabitants to evacuate their homes. Because of "the activity of terrorist groups," the leaflets said in Arabic, the army "is obliged to respond quickly and work from inside your residential area." Many residents of one apartment block in Gaza City said they had nowhere else to go and would stay in their homes.

An Egyptian-brokered truce between Israel and <u>Hamas</u>, which took effect last June, began to break down in November, and <u>Hamas</u> declared it over on Dec. 19. Since then, rocket fire out of Gaza has intensified.

On Saturday, a rocket hit an apartment building in the major port city of Ashdod, about 20 miles north of Gaza, lightly wounding two Israelis. Other rockets landed in the coastal city of Ashkelon and in the Negev Desert town of Netivot.

The latest round of rocket fire has demonstrated the extent to which <u>Hamas</u> has been able to upgrade its arsenal with weapons parts smuggled into Gaza, according to American and Israeli officials. Compared with the crude, homemade Qassam rockets it had used in the past, the latest rockets have been more accurate and have flown farther -- close to two dozen miles, enough to reach the southern Israeli cities of Ashdod and Beersheba.

President Bush, in his weekly radio address to the nation on Saturday, said <u>Hamas</u> had instigated the violence last week with rocket barrages "that deliberately targeted innocent Israelis."

Expressing concern about the humanitarian situation facing the people of Gaza, he added that the United States was "leading diplomatic efforts to achieve a meaningful cease-fire that is fully respected."

President-elect Barack Obama continued to defer publicly to the Bush administration after the ground campaign began. "The president-elect is closely monitoring global events, including the situation in Gaza," said Brooke Anderson, his chief national security spokeswoman. "There is one president at a time, and we intend to respect that."

The United Nations Security Council held a closed meeting, called by France, on Saturday. Earlier, Secretary General Ban Ki-moon called for "an immediate end" to Israel's ground operation, and asked Israel to "ensure the protection of civilians and that humanitarian assistance is able to reach those in need."

Before the ground war began, hospital officials in Gaza City put the first week's Palestinian death toll at more than 430, including 26 **women**, 74 children and an unknown number of male civilians. Three Israeli civilians and one soldier had been killed by rocket fire.

World reaction was intense and mixed. 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."

Other European 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 has gained worldwide currency since an Iraqi journalist hurled his shoes at President Bush last month 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.

The Israeli military said Saturday evening that the air force had struck about 40 <u>Hamas</u> targets during the day, including weapons storage facilities, smuggling tunnels, rocket launchers and launching sites. Palestinians said the airstrikes also hit the American International School, a private institution in northern Gaza, killing a school guard.

Israel has also been firing on the homes of <u>Hamas</u>'s military leaders, and on Saturday struck a vehicle in Khan Yunis carrying Mohammed Maaruf, whom the Israeli military described as an officer in the <u>Hamas</u> ground forces. Another strike killed Mohammad al-Jammal, 40, who was said in Gaza to be a <u>Hamas</u> military commander, according to the news service Agence France-Presse. Israel said he was responsible for the entire rocket-launching operation in all of Gaza City.

But in Shifa Hospital in Gaza City, most of the wounded being brought in on Saturday seemed to be civilians.

Salah Abu Rafia, 38, was accompanying wounded relatives, including his 10-year-old son, Zeid. Mr. Abu Rafia said that an F-16 warplane fired missiles around his house in the Zeitoun neighborhood, west of Gaza City, while the family was sitting outside. He said that *Hamas* fighters had been in the area, but that he had been afraid to tell them to go away. They disappeared as soon as they heard the planes, he said, escaping without injury.

"We are the ones paying the price," he added.

http://www.nytimes.com

Graphic

PHOTOS: Israeli soldiers near the Gaza border late Saturday. The <u>Hamas</u> military wing said it was firing mortars as the Israelis approached. (PHOTOGRAPH BY BAZ RATNER/REUTERS) (pg.A1)

A Palestinian firefighter tried to douse the flames on Saturday in a printing building in Gaza City. Israeli airstrikes were said to have killed two <u>Hamas</u> officers. (PHOTOGRAPH BY MAHMUD HAMS/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE -- GETTY IMAGES)

In Ashdod, Israel, people were evacuated Saturday from a building struck by a rocket from Gaza, about 20 miles away. (PHOTOGRAPH BY URIEL SINAI/GETTY IMAGES) (pg.A10) MAPS: Israel said that its goal is to end the rocket attacks from Gaza. (pg.A10)

Load-Date: May 27, 2011



Mideast violence spurs calls for a new cease-fire

Deseret Morning News (Salt Lake City)

December 28, 2008 Sunday

Copyright 2008 The Deseret News Publishing Co.

Length: 770 words

Byline: Deb Riechmann Associated Press

Body

CRAWFORD, Texas -- The U.S. on Saturday blamed the militant group <u>Hamas</u> for breaking a cease-fire and attacking Israel, which retaliated with strikes of its own during what became the single bloodiest day of fighting in years.

The White House called for the cease-fire to be restored, yet there were few indications that the violence, which has left more than 200 people dead and nearly another 400 wounded, was waning. Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak warned that the operation in Gaza would widen if necessary.

It was "completely unacceptable" for <u>Hamas</u>, which controls Gaza, to launch attacks on Israel after a truce lasting several months, said Gordon Johndroe, a spokesman for the National Security Council.

"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," Johndroe said in Texas as President George W. Bush was spending the week before New Year's at his ranch here. "They need to stop. We have said in the past that they have a choice to make. You can't have one foot in politics and one foot in terror."

President-elect Barack Obama was receiving an intelligence briefing on Saturday from various security agencies, Johndroe said, and Bush has spoken to regional leaders and the administration will remain in close contact.

Brooke Anderson, Obama's national security spokeswoman, said Saturday that Obama "is closely monitoring global events, including the situation in Gaza, but there is one president at a time."

As Israel bombed Gaza, defiant <u>Hamas</u> leaders threatened revenge. <u>Hamas</u> "will continue the resistance until the last drop of blood," vowed spokesman Fawzi Barhoum.

Moderate Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, who controls the West Bank, condemned Israel. Egypt summoned the Israeli ambassador to express condemnation and opened its border with Gaza to allow ambulances to drive out some of the wounded.

Asked if the United States would back a continuation of the retaliatory strikes by Israel, Johndroe said: "The U.S. doesn't want to see any more violence. I think what we've got to see is <u>Hamas</u> stop firing rockets into Israel. That's what precipitated this."

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice kept the president abreast of the situation. At the ranch, the president took a call from King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, who wanted to discuss the violence that began eight days after a six-month truce between Israel and the militants expired.

Mideast violence spurs calls for a new cease-fire

"The United States strongly condemns the repeated rocket and mortar attacks against Israel and holds <u>Hamas</u> responsible for breaking the cease-fire and for the renewal of violence in Gaza," Rice said in a statement. "The cease-fire should be restored immediately. The United States calls on all concerned to address the urgent humanitarian needs of the innocent people of Gaza."

Israeli warplanes launched counterattacks on dozens of security compounds across the <u>Hamas</u>-ruled territory in unprecedented waves of airstrikes. Most of those killed were security men, but an unknown number of civilians were also among the dead.

<u>Hamas</u> said all of its security installations were hit, threatened to resume suicide attacks, and sent at least 70 rockets and mortar shells crashing into Israeli border communities, according to the Israeli military. One Israeli was killed and at least six people were hurt.

With so many wounded, the Palestinian death toll was likely to rise. The strikes caused widespread panic and confusion in Gaza. Some of the Israeli missiles struck in densely populated areas as children were leaving school, and <u>women</u> rushed into the streets frantically looking for their children.

Johndroe said the U.S. was concerned that humanitarian needs were being met in Gaza. He urged Israel to avoid striking civilians, but he refrained from commenting specifically on positions that had been hit on the ground.

"I know they are targeting security and <u>Hamas</u> headquarters facilities," Johndroe said. "We urge them (the Israelis) to avoid civilian casualties."

"The message from the United States is that <u>Hamas</u> is a terrorist organization that is firing rockets into Israel and they fired them onto their own people as well," Johndroe said, noting reports he'd seen about the death of two Palestinian girls. "<u>Hamas</u> has done nothing for the people of Gaza."

The offensive has sparked angry protests throughout the Arab world. British Prime Minister Gordon Brown, the Vatican, the U.N. secretary-general and special Mideast envoy Tony Blair called for an immediate restoration of calm. The Arab League scheduled an emergency meeting Sunday to discuss the situation.

Load-Date: December 28, 2008



Bush and Olmert on same page: US

The Australian
January 2, 2009 Friday
1 - All-round Country Edition

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Section: WORLD; Pg. 7

Length: 354 words

Body

CRAWFORD: The White House is backing Israel's refusal to cease its assault on Gaza, saying US President George W.Bush and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert are ``on the same page".

White House deputy press secretary Gordon Johndroe said <u>Hamas</u> must agree to stop firing rockets into Israel -- now and in the future -- before any potential ceasefire.

"I think President Bush thinks that <u>Hamas</u> needs to stop firing rockets, and that is what will be the first steps in a ceasefire," Mr Johndroe told reporters at Mr Bush's ranch in Crawford, Texas.

He said *Hamas* should also stop smuggling weapons, to show ``they don't intend to continue to target Israel".

"So I think they're certainly on the same page on that," Mr Johndroe said of Mr Bush and Mr Olmert after the leaders' phone call on the Gaza hostilities and the humanitarian situation in the territory.

Mr Johndroe repeated that, for the US, any ceasefire would have to be a "durable" one, in contrast to the six-month agreement that expired on December 19.

"President Bush got an assurance from Prime Minister Olmert that Israel is, as they have said they are doing, only targeting <u>Hamas</u> and that terrorist organisation ... and that they are working to minimise any civilian casualties," Mr Johndroe said.

He added that ``the onus is onHamas".

Mr Johndroe would not indicate whether Mr Bush and Mr Olmert had discussed a possible Israeli ground offensive, in light of Israel's move to mass tanks on the Gaza border and authorise the calling-up of 9000 reservists for what it named its ``all-out war" on <u>Hamas</u>. But Mr Johndroe said such an offensive would be ``just part and parcel" of the anti-<u>Hamas</u> operation.

Libya yesterday presented a draft resolution from the Arab League to a UN Security Council emergency meeting that called for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza between Israel and *Hamas*.

The draft resolution ``strongly condemns all military attacks and the excessive, disproportionate and indiscriminate use of force by Israel, the occupying power, which have led to the death and injury of scores of innocent Palestinian civilians, including <u>women</u> and children".

Bush and Olmert on same page: US

Load-Date: January 1, 2009



End the cant and hypocrisy

The Jerusalem Post January 6, 2009 Tuesday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 16

Length: 1237 words

Byline: ISI LEIBLER

Highlight: Candidly Speaking

Body

Anyone seeking a case study of the forces of good facing evil incarnate would not find a better template than our current confrontation with <u>Hamas</u>. And yet, having for years endured bias and the application of double standards from the amoral international community, we are pained that much of the global media continues relating to us in a malevolent and hypocritical manner. In lieu of being commended for defending ourselves against terrorists, we are portrayed as the heartless killers while the barbarians committed to murdering us are depicted as innocent victims.

Self-styled liberals refuse to face the brutal truth that that our <u>Hamas</u> neighbors have created a criminal society based on death and destruction. Like the Nazis, <u>Hamas</u> is committed to destroying the Jewish people and willing to transform its own citizens into martyrs to promote this goal. "A Palestinian who kills one Jew will be rewarded as if he killed 30 million," proclaimed <u>Hamas</u> legislator Fathi Hamad at a press conference. Whereas we grieve over the death of fellow Israelis and innocent Palestinians, <u>Hamas</u> celebrates the murder of both - the first as "apes and pigs," the latter as prized martyrs of Allah whom they gleefully exploit for propaganda purposes.

An independent state of Palestine is not <u>Hamas</u>'s primary goal. Its charter unequivocally prioritizes the destruction of the Jewish state and killing as many Jews as possible: "The annihilation of the Jews in Palestine is one of the most splendid blessings for Palestine," said Palestinian cleric Muhsen Abu Ita recently on Al Aksa TV. Only last week on <u>Hamas</u> TV, masked <u>women</u> clad in explosive belts and holding rifles vowed to become "martyrs" and blow themselves up among the "apes and pigs." From kindergarten, their children are brainwashed to sanctify their lives by becoming martyrs to the cause of killing the hated Jews.

In our desperate quest for peace, we elected successive governments which tried to achieve "peace in our time" by appeasing these fanatical terrorists - even unilaterally dismantling Jewish settlements which were subsequently transformed into launching pads for intensified missile attacks on our civilians.

During the past year, our government entered into a truce with <u>Hamas</u> despite repeated proclamations by its leaders that they accepted a cease-fire only to regroup and obtain more sophisticated weapons from Iran to be employed at a time of their choosing. Even that "truce" was never honored and **Hamas** continued targeting Israelis.

When <u>Hamas</u> formally abrogated the "period of calm" and began intensifying missile attacks, Israel finally responded militarily. Despite unprecedented efforts to minimize civilian casualties, even warning Palestinian noncombatants in advance of an attack, civilian loss of life in war is inevitable. However, had the IDF, with its enormous firepower, been targeting civilians as the biased media alleges, tens of thousands would have fallen. Besides in the midst of hostilities would the truckloads of humanitarian aid to Gaza have been approved.

End the cant and hypocrisy

Most casualties could have been avoided had <u>Hamas</u> not deliberately located its missile launchers, weapons factories and arms caches in densely populated residential areas, schools, mosques, hospitals and homes, cynically utilizing <u>women</u> and children as human shields. <u>Hamas</u> representative Fathi Hamad openly told Al-Aksa TV: "Palestinians formed human shields of <u>women</u>, children, the elderly and the mujahedeen in order to challenge the Zionist bombing machine. It was as if they were saying to the Zionist enemy: We desire death like you desire life." Not surprisingly, those human rights groups continuously castigating Israel refuse to concede that such behavior would qualify as war crimes under international law.

NO COUNTRY whose citizens are continuously under missile attack from its neighbor would match the restraint displayed by Israel. I take no pride in this because I believe that the government's failure to respond earlier was unconscionable. It emboldened *Hamas* terrorists, accustomed the world to accepting that as long as many people were not killed, launching missiles against Israel was "tolerable" and effectively eliminated our deterrent capability. Moreover it doomed close to a million citizens in the South to becoming refugees in their own land as they took refuge from missile attacks which, by any benchmark, were acts of war.

Now, in a rare display of unity so far including even the most dovish Knesset parties, Israelis have affirmed that the outcome of this conflict must ensure that their citizens will never again be targeted by missiles. An imposed unilateral cease-fire with *Hamas* that fails to implement this would be akin to the US and its allies consummating an unconditional truce with a victorious Taliban in Afghanistan.

That is why international public opinion is so important. If the victims who defend themselves by killing *Hamas* terrorists and the perpetrators who target and kill innocent civilians are viewed as morally equivalent, that would represent a clear victory for the global jihadists.

Regrettably, there are sectors of the international community who once again are burying their heads. While the United States, Germany, the Czech Republic and Australia hold <u>Hamas</u> responsible, UN Secretary-General Ban Kimoon condemned Israel for invading Gaza and employing "disproportionate" force and harming civilians.

Other Europeans, led by the retiring head of the European Union, French President Nicolas Sarkozy, also accused Israel of responding in a disproportionate manner. One can only speculate how Sarkozy would have reacted had neighboring Belgium been launching thousands of missiles targeting French civilians. Or the Russians, whose response to the Chechnya uprising and mauling of Georgia hardly qualifies them to preach to anyone about proportionality.

<u>Hamas</u> is not a terrorist splinter group. It is the controlling authority in Gaza and determines what happens. Were it to curtail missile attacks and come to terms with the existence of a Jewish state, a cease-fire would instantaneously come into effect. Until then, it is responsible for every single Palestinian casualty.

Besides, since when is proportionality determined as tit for tat? And how does that apply to an entity which proclaims that its objective is to destroy the Jewish state? Would the inadvertent death of noncombatants become "more justifiable" if only more targeted Israelis were killed? Does Israel have to experience a mega massacre before implementing deterrence? What sort of sick thinking is this? As Barack Obama said in June when he visited Sderot, "If somebody was sending rockets into my house where my two daughters sleep at night, I would do everything to stop that, and would expect Israel to do the same thing."

Today, as never before, we need the international community to act in a responsible manner. We therefore appeal to our friends and people of goodwill everywhere. Raise your voices now and support our struggle to overcome terrorism. *Hamas* is not merely another brand of Taliban. It is also the surrogate of Iran. If Western governments appease this criminal organization at the expense of the security of Israel, they strengthen the forces of global jihad, signal moderate Muslims that it is futile to resist the fanatics and expose citizens in their own capitals to increased bombing attacks.

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End the cant and hypocrisy

Load-Date: October 4, 2011



<u>ISRAEL REJECTS GAZA CEASE-FIRE, BUT OFFERS AID</u>

The New York Times

January 1, 2009 Thursday

Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section A; Column 0; Foreign Desk; Pg. 1

Length: 1343 words

Byline: By ETHAN BRONNER; Reporting was contributed by Taghreed El-Khodary from Gaza; Steven Erlanger from Cairo; Mark Landler from Washington; Robert Pear from Crawford, Tex.; Alan Cowell from London; and

Graham Bowley from New York.

Dateline: JERUSALEM

Body

Israel sought on Wednesday to fend off growing international pressure over civilian casualties from its military assault on Gaza, saying it would expedite and increase humanitarian aid and work with its allies to build a durable, long-term truce. But Israel would not agree to a proposed 48-hour cease-fire.

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."

A strike Thursday morning included the Parliament building among its targets, news agencies reported.

During the five 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 the homes of militants, smuggler tunnels and even money exchange shops to choke off <u>Hamas</u> from its suppliers.

The 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.

In the Jabalya Refugee Camp north of Gaza City, 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.

ISRAEL REJECTS GAZA CEASE-FIRE, BUT OFFERS AID

The rockets that have been sent some 20 miles into the Israeli cities of Ashkelon, Ashdod and Beersheba in recent days are known as grads. They measure nine feet in length with warheads that weigh 30 to 40 pounds and were not manufactured in Gaza but were bought abroad and smuggled through tunnels from Egypt, Israeli officials said.

In Shifa Hospital in Gaza City, emergency personnel engaged in a brutal form of triage, allowing the worst cases to fade as they found themselves unable to cope.

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 here and allowed in some 100 trucks of food and medicine.

He also said that one limitation on the aid was that crossing points had come under attack by *Hamas*. A second, he said, is that donors are not bringing enough goods. Of the donations so far, some come from United Nations agencies, but most are from private donors.

Tens of thousands of Gazans have received recorded phone calls from the Israeli Army warning them that their houses have been marked as targets because they harbored either militants or weapons facilities like rocket workshops. Noncombatants were urged to clear out. Hundreds of thousands of leaflets gave the same message.

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 as well as 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, Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni was expected to fly to Paris to meet with Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner and President Nicolas Sarkozy, who are seeking ways to promote a cease-fire.

From his ranch in Crawford, Tex., President Bush called Prime Minister Ehud Olmert. A White House spokesman, Gordon D. Johndroe, said Mr. Olmert had "assured President Bush that Israel is taking appropriate steps to avoid civilian casualties" in Gaza. In addition, he said, the Israeli leader told Mr. Bush that Israel was "targeting only *Hamas*"

They discussed prospects for a cease-fire -- "what steps could lead to a cessation of violence," Mr. Johndroe said -- but did not "get into specific timetables."

"It all begins with <u>Hamas</u> agreeing to stop firing rockets" into Israel, Mr. Johndroe added. "The onus is on <u>Hamas</u>."

The White House praised the diplomatic efforts of Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, but denounced Iran and Syria, saying they had supplied weapons to terrorist groups.

"<u>Hamas</u> is pretty well supplied by Iran and, to a certain extent, Syria," Mr. Johndroe said. "Neither Iran nor Syria is playing a helpful role. They're not playing a constructive role in this current crisis, which is pretty typical for their actions with regard to <u>Hamas</u> and Hezbollah."

Israel's Supreme Court told the government on Wednesday to allow foreign journalists limited access to Gaza, which had been closed to them since early November. The ruling, which urged the government to allow in a group of up to a dozen foreign journalists, came in response to a petition filed by the Foreign Press Association.

Mahmoud Abbas, the president of the Palestinian Authority, based in the West Bank, appealed to the United Nations Security Council for a cease-fire. Mr. 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.

ISRAEL REJECTS GAZA CEASE-FIRE, BUT OFFERS AID

In a speech delivered on Wednesday, Mr. 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 the West Bank, the Palestinian police and security forces have had their leaves canceled. Some men associated with <u>Hamas</u> have been detained, and strict rules have been established for demonstrations in support of Gaza to avoid their turning into support for <u>Hamas</u>. Slogans and flags are limited, and close contact with Israeli forces and checkpoints has been barred to prevent trouble.

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, Saudi Arabia's foreign minister, Prince Saud al-Faisal, criticized the Palestinians for their inability to remain unitedbehind President Abbas of 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," Prince 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."

http://www.nytimes.com

Graphic

PHOTO: A member of <u>Hamas</u> on Wednesday raised the group's flag on the rubble of a mosque that was destroyed by Israeli warplanes in raids south of Gaza City. (PHOTOGRAPH BY MOHAMMED SABER/EUROPEAN PRESSPHOTO AGENCY) (pg.A13)

Load-Date: January 1, 2009



Bombings a 'crime against humanity'; Civilians targeted, says UN envoy

The Age (Melbourne, Australia)

December 30, 2008 Tuesday

First Edition

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Section: NEWS; International News; Pg. 6

Length: 744 words

Byline: Ian Munro, New York, with AP

Body

ISRAEL'S bombing of the Gaza Strip is a massive violation of international law because it is punishing an entire population for the actions of a few.

That is the assessment of the United Nations regional envoy, Professor Richard Falk.

Yesterday, Professor Falk accused Israel of targeting civilians and of a disproportionate response to the threat posed by *Hamas*' equally illegal rocket attacks on its southern border.

An emeritus professor of international law at Princeton University and a trenchant critic of the Bush Administration's foreign policy, Professor Falk was again at odds with the White House, which has blamed <u>Hamas</u> for breaking the Gaza ceasefire.

The US used veto rights to block a UN Security Council resolution demanding an end to the Israeli attacks. The council instead issued a statement calling for a halt to violence.

While Israel said it targeted <u>Hamas</u> militants, Professor Falk said its air strikes hit the most densely populated area of the Middle Fast.

He said Israel's blockade of Gaza led to food shortages and prevented medical aid from reaching the injured.

"Certainly the rocket attacks against civilian targets in Israel are unlawful," Professor Falk said.

"But that illegality does not give rise to any Israeli right ... to violate international humanitarian law and commit war crimes or crimes against humanity in its response. The entire 1.5million people who live in the crowded Gaza Strip are being punished for the actions of a few militants."

As the raids continued and the death toll passed 300, Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni appeared on US television saying the attacks were needed "to change the reality on the ground".

That reality, she said, was one in which <u>Hamas</u> continued rocket attacks on the people of southern Israel without retaliation. Ms Livni would not comment on whether a ground invasion was imminent or under consideration, but she would not rule it out.

Bombings a 'crime against humanity' Civilians targeted, says UN envoy

She said Israel was trying to minimise civilian casualties. The clear message to <u>Hamas</u> was that it would be held responsible for aggression against Israel and it was responsible for civilian casualties.

Her view was endorsed by US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who issued a statement condemning repeated rocket and mortar attacks against Israel.

"The US ... holds <u>Hamas</u> responsible for breaking the ceasefire and for the renewal of violence in Gaza," Dr Rice said. "The ceasefire should be restored immediately."

Over the weekend, Dr Rice briefed President-elect Barack Obama, who is holidaying in Hawaii, on the crisis.

Mr Obama's senior adviser, David Axelrod, appeared cautious when interviewed about the incoming administration's approach to the Middle East, although he described Israel as the most important ally of the US in the region.

He said that as president, Mr Obama would recognise the important bond and special relationship that the two nations shared.

"I think he recognises that special relationship. He is going to work closely with Israel, which is a great ally of ours, the most important ally in the region, and that is a fundamental principal from which he'll work," Mr Axelrod said.

"He wants to be a constructive force in helping to bring about the peace and security that both the Israelis and the Palestinians want and deserve. Obviously, this situation has become even more complicated in the past couple of days and weeks. As *Hamas* began its shelling, Israel responded."

<u>Hamas</u> said 180 of its members had been killed and that civilians comprised the rest of the fatalities, which included 16 <u>women</u> and some children.

The Palestinian envoy to the UN, Riyad Mansour, said Israel had provoked <u>Hamas</u> with covert incursions into Gaza to commit assassinations, and with its blockade.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called for an immediate halt to all acts of violence. The Palestinian casualties included eight trainees and a staff member of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

The Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, which keeps researchers at all hospitals in the Gaza Strip, said it had counted 251 dead by midday on Sunday, and that among them were 20 children under the age of 16, and nine **women**.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said the military operation against <u>Hamas</u> was likely to continue indefinitely. -- with AP

KEY POINTS

UN envoy says Israel's response is disproportionate.

US Administration blames <u>Hamas</u> for breaking ceasefire.

Israel vows to continue military action against **Hamas**.

Load-Date: December 29, 2008



<u>Israel prepares to invade Gaza; * Reservists called up and tanks mobilised</u> as death toll rises to 298 'Save me Hazem': dying words of innocent victim

The Independent (London)

December 29, 2008 Monday

First Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 4

Length: 1125 words

Byline: Donald Macintyre ON THE ISRAEL/GAZA BORDER

Body

As Israel's fierce bombardment of the <u>Hamas</u>-controlled Gaza Strip continued into a second day, the United Nations called yesterday for an independent investigation into how eight young Palestinian students at its main vocational training centre in Gaza City were killed by an air strike as they waited to take the bus home from classes.

With Israel's Prime Minister, Ehud Olmert, warning that the offensive was "liable to take longer than we can foresee", ministers authorised the call-up of 6,500 army reservists. Tanks and armoured vehicles took positions along the border, poised for a possible ground invasion, which defence chief Ehud Barak has warned will take place if rocket fire from Gaza is not halted. The Palestinian death toll rose to 298 as the Israeli attack widened to include more than 40 tunnels used by <u>Hamas</u> to circumvent an Israeli blockade and smuggle vital supplies including, Israel is convinced, weapons across the border from Egypt. <u>Hamas</u> also said that Israeli warplanes had bombed the Islamic University in the Gaza Strip last night.

Earlier, Israeli emergency services said Gazan militants fired more than 80 rockets and mortars at southern Israel, including two that penetrated deeper into its territory than ever before and landing in the port city of Ashdod. The strike which killed the eight students - some thought to be as young as 16 - and wounded 20 others came during the height of Saturday's bombardment at about 1.20pm. They were waiting for buses close to the main headquarters of the UN refugee agency, UNRWA, when they were hit by shrapnel and debris. UN officials believe the single, massive explosion that killed the students could have been aimed at a <u>Hamas</u> policeman in the area or a nearby regional government building used by the previous Fatah administration.

Speaking from his hospital bed, an injured engineering student, Hazem Sami Rikhawi, 20, of Rafah, described what happened in the attack. He was waiting with other students after finishing a design exam. "Suddenly, a large missile fell among the girls. Two of them died. I was holding a notebook, covering my face. There was a big boom. My friend, Ahmad Halaby, fell on me. He was vomiting blood from his nose and mouth. 'Save me Hazem' - these were his last words before he died. I will never forget his eyes and his faint voice asking for help.

Israel prepares to invade Gaza * Reservists called up and tanks mobilised as death toll rises to 298 'Save me Hazem': dying words of innocent victim

"Then I was taken to hospital. They took me to the room of the dead. They were about to put me on the shelf of the refrigerator. I heard a noise. I opened my eyes. Then people said: 'He is alive'. There is still shrapnel in my legs and arms."

Ahmed Abu Neiji, a UNRWA security guard who witnessed the carnage, said the strike looked "deliberate". He added: "I tried to revive some of the people. I didn't see much blood - just bodies lying on the ground." Christopher Gunness, a UNRWA spokesman, said: "Whatever was targeted, the fact is that it happened near a large crowd of young civilians. We need an investigation which will establish the full facts and deliver accountability."

Israel's Foreign Minister, Tzipi Livni, who had been pressing for tougher action against <u>Hamas</u> before the bombardment, insisted yesterday that "our goal is not to reoccupy Gaza Strip". Asked on Fox News if Israel was out to "topple" *Hamas*, which seized control in June 2007, she replied: "Not now."

Mark Regev, a spokesman for Mr Olmert, said Israel would press on "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".

The Israeli military said the "vast majority" of victims in this weekend's attack were uniformed <u>Hamas</u> personnel but the UNRWA's call for an inquiry into the deaths of its students will fuel debate about civilian casualties. Israel refused foreign journalists entry into Gaza to report on the aftermath of one of the bloodiest days for Palestinians in 60 years of conflict.

Captain Benjamin Rutland, of the Israel Defence Forces, said precision targeting of <u>Hamas</u> installations was designed to minimise civilian casualties. "Obviously, there are going to be some ... because <u>Hamas</u> cynically and specifically builds its facilities in residential areas," he said. "But we do our utmost to avoid them." Many of the targeted *Hamas* police moonlighted as "terrorists".

Hamdi Shaqura, of the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, said at least 20 of the victims were under 18 and nine were <u>women</u>. He said he did not accept the bombardment was hurting <u>Hamas</u> more than ordinary people; most of the <u>Hamas</u> personnel attacked were civil policemen and not from the armed Izzedine al Qassam brigades.

At least one Palestinian was reported killed by Egyptian forces as hundreds of Gazans tried to flee the Strip through what one Egyptian security officer said were four breaches they had made in the border. There were earlier reports that *Hamas* officers had prevented wounded people from leaving that way.

Explainer Israel's attack on Gaza

* Why has Israel launched the deadliest attacks on Palestinian territory since the 1967 Six Day War?

Israel's onslaught is a reprisal for a week-long barrage of rocket and mortar attacks from Gaza. Israel says it had to safeguard the lives in towns bordering the strip. Palestinians, and many others, believe the Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert also ordered the raids to achieve what his government had failed to achieve through other means: the removal from power of <u>Hamas</u>, the Islamist political movement elected to run Gaza in 2006, which it accuses of being controlled by Iran and Syria.

* Was the timing a surprise?

The scale and ferocity of the attacks came as a shock to many but tensions had been building after the expiry on 18 December of a ceasefire.

* Why did the ceasefire collapse?

<u>Hamas</u> had offered to renew the ceasefire if Israel reopened Gaza's border crossings. The strip had been sealed by Israel in an economic siege aimed at toppling <u>Hamas</u>. The blockade has brought the territory near economic collapse.

Israel prepares to invade Gaza * Reservists called up and tanks mobilised as death toll rises to 298 'Save me Hazem': dying words of innocent victim

* Are Israeli domestic politics a factor?

Very much so. Israel is preparing for general elections on 10 February. The prospect of a return to power by the hawk Benjamin Netanyahu, leader of the right-wing Likud party, promising tough action against <u>Hamas</u>, has hardened the positions of Israel's more moderate political leaders.

* Can Israel achieve its security aims by attacking *Hamas* so forcefully?

It is difficult to see Israel's action as being anything other than counterproductive, particularly if it escalates and widens the assault. Unless a fresh truce can be negotiated quickly, the hopes raised by the election of Barack Obama to the US Presidency and the possibility of a more engaged US policy seem to have dimmed again.

Katherine Butler

Foreign Editor

Load-Date: December 28, 2008



<u>CAMPAIGN Ground forces prepare to invade Gaza Strip Israel set to throw</u> `iron fist'

The Advertiser (Australia)

January 3, 2009 Saturday

1 - State Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 5

Length: 260 words

Byline: DION NISSENBAUM, ASHKELON, ISRAEL

Body

ISRAELI soldiers were poised yesterday to launch a Gaza Strip ground offensive as their political leadership appeared divided over how to bring the devastating six-day-old military campaign against *Hamas* to an end.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert has vowed to use an ``iron fist" to pummel the <u>Hamas</u> militants, and Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni has rebuffed French efforts to broker a truce that might make a ground offensive unnecessary.

More than 400 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli air strikes that are taking an increasing toll on civilians. According to the *Hamas*-led Ministry of Health in Gaza, the latest Israeli attacks have killed 11 children and six *women* since Wednesday.

As rockets fired by Gaza Strip militants sent people nearby scrambling for cover in the coastal Israeli city of Ashkelon, the country's deputy prime minister said the fighting had reached ``the end of the beginning" and endorsed the idea of sending international forces in to oversee any truce with *Hamas*.

"We have to find a way that this war will end while <u>Hamas</u> is not exclusively controlling the area," said Haim Ramon.

Olmert aides dismissed the idea and said it was too early to consider how the fighting might end.

"It's all very fluid," said spokesman Mark Regev. "We're not there yet."

On a visit yesterday to a southern Israeli city recently hit by more advanced Palestinian rockets, Mr Olmert said the military was doing all it could to avoid civilian casualties.

"We will treat the population with silk gloves, but will apply an iron fist to Hamas," he said.

Load-Date: January 2, 2009



<u>Israeli bombs kill hundreds in Gaza's bloodiest day</u>

Sunday Herald

December 28, 2008 Sunday

Final Edition

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sundayherald

Section: NEWS; Pg. 1 Length: 1218 words

Byline: David Pratt Foreign Editor

Body

ISRAELI warplanes and helicopters pounded the <u>Hamas</u>-ruled Gaza Strip yesterday in unprecedented waves of air strikes that killed at least 208 people and wounded 400 more. It was one of the single bloodiest days for the Palestinians in 60 years of conflict with the Jewish state.

Israel says the air strikes were in response to rocket attacks by militants in Gaza which have continued since a six-month-old truce with *Hamas* expired just over a week ago.

A senior Israeli military source insisted the strikes marked the "opening stage" of a campaign that could be expanded to include ground forces surrounding Gaza.

"We should be prepared for an ongoing operation that may last for a long time, " the source said. "We don't have time limits for that and we are determined to go all the way if needed with all of our options, air, ground, whatever."

Most of those killed in Gaza were security men, but an unknown number of civilians were also among the dead. **Hamas** said all its security installations were hit and threatened to resume suicide attacks.

Black smoke billowed over Gaza City, where the dead and wounded lay scattered on the ground after Israel bombed more than 40 security compounds, including two where <u>Hamas</u> was hosting graduation ceremonies for new recruits. At the main Gaza City graduation ceremony, uniformed bodies lay in a pile and the wounded writhed in pain. Some rescue workers beat their heads and shouted "God is great". One badly wounded man quietly recited verses from the Koran.

Israel said the operation, dubbed Solid Lead, targeted "terrorist infrastructure" following days of rocket attacks on southern Israel which in the past few days have killed one Israeli man and wounded several others.

Asked if <u>Hamas</u> political leaders might be targeted, military spokeswoman Major Avital Leibovich said: "Any <u>Hamas</u> target is a target."

Israeli bombs kill hundreds in Gaza's bloodiest day

In Gaza itself the Israeli strikes caused widespread panic and confusion. Some of the Israeli missiles hit densely populated areas as children were leaving school .

Said Masri sat in the middle of a Gaza City 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 Masri, 57. The shopkeeper said he sent his nine-year-old son out for cigarettes minutes before the airstrikes began and now could not find him. "May I burn like the cigarettes, may Israel burn, " Masri moaned.

The first round of air strikes came just before noon. Hospitals were crowded with people and civilians rushed in wounded people in cars, vans and ambulances. "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 of Shifa Hospital, Gaza's main treatment centre.

Some of the dead, rolled in blankets, were laid out on the hospital floor for identification. Gaza hospitals said they were running out of medical supplies because of the Israeliled blockade, increasing the chances that the death toll will rise. Aid groups said they feared the Israeli operation could fuel a humanitarian crisis in the impoverished coastal enclave, home to 1.5 million P, half of them dependent on food aid.

<u>Hamas</u> estimated that at least 100 members of its security forces had been killed, including police chief Tawfiq Jabber and the head of <u>Hamas</u>'s security and protection unit. The Islamist group, which won a 2006 parliamentary election but was shunned by Western powers over its refusal to renounce violence and recognise Israel, said all of its security compounds in the Gaza Strip were destroyed or seriously damaged.

<u>Hamas</u> threatened to unleash "hell" to avenge the dead, including possible suicide bombings inside Israel.

"We will not leave our land, we will not raise white flags and we will not kneel except before God, " said Ismail Haniyeh, leader of *Hamas*'s government in the Gaza Strip. "Palestine has never witnessed an uglier massacre."

Palestinians staged protest rallies in Arab East Jerusalem and in the West Bank cities of Ramallah and Hebron, leading to scuffles with Israeli forces. The most violent West Bank response came in Hebron, where dozens of youths hurled rocks for hours at Israeli forces, who lobbed tear gas and stun grenades in response.

Officials in Bethlehem, traditional birthplace of Jesus, turned off Christmas lights, and traders shuttered their shops to protest the Israeli attack.

In Amman, several hundred Jordanians protested outside a UN complex in the capital Amman. "*Hamas*, go ahead. You are the cannon, we are the bullets, " they cried In Ein al-Hilweh, a Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon, dozens of youths hit the streets and set fire to tyres. In Syria's al-Yarmouk camp outside Damascus, Palestinian protesters vowed to continue fi ghting Israel.

In the West Bank, <u>Hamas</u>'s rival, President Mahmoud Abbas, who heads secular Fatah forces, said the Israeli air campaign was "criminal" and urged world powers to intervene. Abbas, who has ruled only the West Bank since the Islamic <u>Hamas</u> seized power in Gaza in June 2007, was in contact with Arab leaders, and his West Bank Cabinet convened an emergency session.

Israeli analyst Ron Ben-Yishai meanwhile said the strike was "shock treatment . . . aimed at securing a long-term ceasefire between *Hamas* and Israel on terms that are favourable to Israel".

Israeli political leaders are also under pressure however to stop the rocket attacks as the country's February 10 election approaches.

"There is a time for calm and a time for fighting, and now the time has come to fight, " said Defence Minister Ehud Barak Before the day was out Gaza militants had fi red 30 rockets and mortars into Israel after the air offensive began, killing an Israeli man and wounding four people, rescue services said.

Israeli bombs kill hundreds in Gaza's bloodiest day

Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, a leading candidate to become Israel's next prime minister, called for international support against "an extremist Islamist organisation . . .

that is being supported by Iran."

Past limited ground incursions and air strikes by Israeli forces have not halted rocket barrages from Gaza. But with 200 mortars and rockets raining down on Israel since the truce expired a week ago, and 3000 since the beginning of the year, according to the military's count, pressure had been mounting in Israel for the military to crush the gunmen.

The US appeared to put the onus on <u>Hamas</u> to prevent a further escalation. "The United States strongly condemns the repeated rocket and mortar attacks against Israel and holds <u>Hamas</u> responsible for breaking the ceasefire and for the renewal of violence in Gaza, " Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said. "The ceasefire should be restored immediately."

Israel has targeted Gaza in the past, but the number of simultaneous attacks yesterday was unprecedented. Israel left Gaza in 2005 after a 38-year occupation, but the withdrawal did not lead to better relations with Palestinians in the territory as Israeli officials had hoped. Instead, the evacuation was followed by a sharp rise in militant attacks on Israeli border communities that on several occasions provoked harsh Israeli reprisals.

The last, in late February and early March, spurred both sides to agree to a truce that was to have lasted six months but began to unravel in early November.

Graphic

A wounded child awaits medical treatment outside Shifa Hospital in Gaza City Photograph: Abid Katib/Getty Clockwise from left: Palestinians at a destroyed <u>Hamas</u> security compound; the aftermath of a missile strike on <u>Hamas</u> security HQ; Israeli soldiers monitor Palestinian protesters; the protesters clash with Israeli troops. Photographs: AP, AP, EPA, EPA

Load-Date: December 29, 2008



Israel is an oppressor not a victim

Sowetan (South Africa)
January 5, 2009 Monday

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Section: OPINION & EDITORIAL

Length: 221 words **Byline:** Anver Suliman

Body

Israel is an oppressor not a victim

<u>Hamas</u> will survive the 60 years colonialist occupation by the Zionist state of Israel. Israel is terrorising the Palestinian people, killing their leaders and killing <u>women</u> and children by targeting their heads and chests.

Hamas' crime is not to recognise Israel. The people of Gaza's crime is to have elected *Hamas*.

For this, Israel has unleashed its terror more than ever before with American F16 and helicopter gunships, violating the agreement that they will not use the arms against Palestinians.

Under international law - the Geneva Convention - an occupied people resisting occupation may use any means at their disposal to fight an occupying power. *Hamas* is using the only means at its disposal.

Israel violated the truce in November. Since the Annapolis Conference, hundreds of Palestinians have been killed. <u>Hamas</u> rockets are no comparison to the world's fourth most powerful army.

Israel has always portrayed itself as victims. Victims of whom, what? It is the occupier and victimiser of defenseless people by occupation of their land, subjugating them to an open-air prison in Gaza, starving them by controlling their sea route and border crossings.

Ronnie Kasrils said even the brutal apartheid regime never used helicopter gunships in the townships.

Media Review Network

Load-Date: January 22, 2009



Prof defends Israel attacks

Waikato Times (Hamilton, New Zealand)

January 13, 2009 Tuesday

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Section: NEWS; NATIONAL; Pg. 3

Length: 602 words

Byline: HOLLOWAY Bruce

Body

A Jewish Waikato University lecturer who sheltered from <u>Hamas</u> rocket attacks on a recent visit to the Gaza border is defending Israel's "collective punishment" against the Palestinian population.

Israel has imposed a crippling two-year economic blockade on Gaza's 1.6 million population since they elected <u>Hamas</u> to power. That has trig- gered renewed home-made rocket attacks from Gaza, and Israel's subsequent military response, from which the Palestinian death toll now stands at more than 900. Meanwhile Israel says 10 of its soldiers and three civilians have been killed.

Collective punishment violates international humanitarian law, as laid down in the Fourth Geneva Convention.

But Dov Bing, a professor of political science and former president of the Waikato Jewish Foundation, defended Israel's policies and military incursion, pointing to the impact rockets have had on life in Israel.

Late last year Professor Bing visited his brother, Gershon, and his four children who live in Kibbutz Kfar Assa, 3 kilometres from Gaza. For several years they have endured Kassam rockets and Grad missiles being fired at them, and have been regularly forced to take refuge in bunkers.

"What do you do if a group of people sit on your border and say 'we are going to pop off your people'?" Professor Bing said of the *Hamas* rocket attacks, of up to 80 a day.

"Israel is fighting for its existence, with its back to the wall.

"While I was there, there were two red alarms and we had 15 seconds to find a bunker to hide. Three times I hid in the strong room at the kibbutz."

Professor Bing rejected suggestions that Israel was "a spoiled brat" that felt it could do what it liked, and defended the Israeli assault even though it has been widely condemned internationally for being out of all proportion.

He rejected Arab views that the Israeli military were happy to tolerate civilian casualties under a "mowing the grass" doctrine, whereby collateral damage from military action usefully trimmed the ranks of Palestinian militants and stopped the population from growing. "But if buildings are occupied by *Hamas* operatives, you go after them. Otherwise you get killed."

Prof defends Israel attacks

But he predicted the Israeli campaign would halt within "two or three days" once a 300m strip of land near the Egyptian border had been completely bombed, <u>Hamas</u> infrastructure had been destroyed and an international agreement drawn up.

Professor Bing was critical of Israel's refusal to allow the media into Gaza to cover the war.

"As a result, all the news comes from *Hamas*," he said, in acknowledging Israel's reputation was suffering.

"You have a war fought in front of the TV, and people don't like to see women and children killed.

"Of course it is a bit more complicated than that. The casualty figures for a three-week war is actually very low. What it means is Israel is taking incredible care."

He said comparing blockaded Gaza with the Warsaw Ghetto - where tens of thousands of Jews were walled in during WWII - was "ridiculous".

"That is comparing Gaza with the Holocaust. The Israelis have no systematic plan to kill off Palestinians. There is a war going on, but after this has finished there will be peace and quiet. *Hamas* will have learned its lesson."

See *Hamas* claims victory close, page 6

CAPTION:

Professor Dov Bing: <u>Hamas</u>' casualties low.

Make way: A wounded Palestinian is carried into Shifa hospital during Israel's offensive in Gaza overnight (NZ time). Israeli troops are fighting gun battles with <u>Hamas</u> fighters but avoiding all-out urban warfare that would complicate diplomatic efforts to end the Gaza war.

Picture: REUTERS

Load-Date: January 22, 2009



Bangladesh: Victims of heinous crime

Right Vision News

January 1, 2009 Thursday

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Length: 1083 words **Dateline:** Pakistan

Body

Pakistan, Jan. 01 -- A year has passed since Israel launched a three-week war against Gaza Strip, leaving in its wake 1,400 Palestinian dead, mostly <u>women</u> and children, many thousands injured and maimed and at least 400,000 homeless. More than 40,000 homes were destroyed in "Operation Cast Lead," which saw the use of forbidden weapons and stark violations of international laws. Against these haunting figures 13 Israelis were reported killed as a result of <u>Hamas</u> rockets.But it would be wrong to think that Israel's assault on Gaza had ended on Jan.

18, 2009. In effect the war goes on until today; through an air-tight blockade that has prevented the reconstruction of Gaza and left millions living a subhuman life. A Time magazine report quoted a senior official in the Benjamin Netanyahu's government who summed up Israel's goal in Gaza as: "No development, no prosperity, no humanitarian crisis!"Amid suspicious international silence and absence of pressure on Israel that goal is being achieved. Not a single dollar of the \$4 billion donated by world countries for the reconstruction of Gaza's homes, schools and hospitals has reached the besieged strip. For Gaza's 1.5 million inhabitants, the world has forgotten about them and left them to die a slow death. Gaza's plight is complex and multifaceted. Since *Hamas* took over the strip in 2006, Gaza became President Mahmoud Abbas' nightmare and gadfly. The two sides exchanged bloody blows; rounding up supporters, shutting down each other's institutions and accusing one another of collusion with enemies. It is no wonder that the PNA has resisted initiatives that would legitimize Hamas' grip-hold over Gaza or reward the group politically. The PNA had insisted that it must have a say on any agreement between Egypt and Hamas over the opening of the Rafah land pass in northeastern Sinai. Accordingly, the passage is closed most of the time, and the Egyptians open it only for dire humanitarian cases. Hamas' reluctance to sign an Egyptiansponsored reconciliation agreement, that took months to negotiate, with the PNA, and other Palestinian factions, has not endeared them to Cairo as well. Ever since Israel's unilateral withdrawal from Gaza in 2005, relations with the Strip has been tenuous. The overwhelming victory by *Hamas*, that has never endorsed the Oslo process or dropped the resistance option, in Palestinian elections in 2006 united Abbas, the Israelis and Washington against them. Finally the *Hamas*-led government was sacked, triggering an inevitable showdown between *Hamas* and the PNA in Gaza. And when *Hamas* declared last December an end to a six-month cease-fire with Israel, claiming that the government of Ehud Olmert never respected the truce, the stage was set for a military operation to uproot Hamas and destroy its rising rocket capabilities. The truth is that the people of Gaza are paying the price of an ineffective Israeli policy, endorsed by the US and tacitly supported by the PNA, to remove *Hamas* from power. It wouldn't take a genius to realize that such a policy has been a total failure for all accomplices, and has in effect yielded opposite results. The Goldstone report on the Gaza war has been a historical milestone by accusing Israel of war crimes and kick-starting a long and complex legal process that threatens to implicate Israeli politicians and generals. Attempts by Israel to bury the report may succeed in the end, but the fact that Israel has been associated with war crimes will have impacts on its policies for a long time to come. Meanwhile, the change-over in Israel with

Bangladesh : Victims of heinous crime

the election of a right-wing government supported by extremists has flummoxed supporters of a negotiated settlement and the two-state solution. Mahmoud Abbas' hopes to deliver something meaningful to his people have been dashed, first by an intransigent Netanyahu and second by a weak US president. In the absence of hope Abbas lost his only winning card in the face-off with *Hamas*. By abandoning Abbas, Israel and the US, gave *Hamas* a super boost, not only in Gaza but also in the West Bank and beyond. And if Hamas succeeds in concluding a major deal to release thousands of Palestinians in Israeli jails in return for Gilad Shalit, the group may end up delivering a knock-out blow to Abbas and his followers. But none of these developments is likely to change the fortunes of the people of Gaza for the better. The Israeli blockade, which includes cement, schoolbooks, tools, iron and others, will not ease or be lifted any time sooner. On the other side of the strip Egypt is constructing a subterranean iron wall, which aims at sealing off tunnels which are the only viable source of munitions into Gaza today. Once this iron curtain is completed millions of Gazans will be stuck in 360 sq. kilometer prison. The figures are chilling: Over 80 percent of Gazans live on humanitarian handouts, unemployment is over 40 percent and all but few of Gaza's factories are closed. Only a handful of homes were rebuilt, the rest have been replaced by mud shacks. Thousands have no access to electricity or clean running water. Millions of liters of raw sewage are dumped into the sea every day. Hospitals are chronically under staffed and suffer from an endemic shortage of lifesaving medicines. No wonder that extremism and despair are rife. Hamas remains in control and younger generations are becoming aggressive. This is what Israel is raising behind barbed wires and it is only a matter of time before this angry tide of Palestinians finds ways to breach the walls. But Gazans are not only victims of Israel and its allies in this heinous crime of collective punishment. The international community has failed the people of Gaza in a shameful way. One year later and the siege is still holding, while Israel's recalcitrance shows no sign of wavering. The casualty count did not stop on Jan.18, when Israel halted its aggression. It continues to run every second of every hour of every day. Israel is not alone in killing the people of Gaza. The international community has become its accessory. Hamas' grip-hold over Gaza will not be dislodged soon. But the suffering of Gazans will continue. A year has passed so briskly and the tragedy is that we could soon be marking the second anniversary of the war while the people of Gaza remain incarcerated. Published by HT Syndication with permission from Right Vision News. For more information on news feed please contact Sarabiit Jagirdar htsyndication@hindustantimes.com

For any query with respect to this article or any other content requirement, please contact Editor at httsyndication@hindustantimes.com

Load-Date: December 31, 2009



Israel lets hundreds flee Gaza; U.N. warns of crisis

St. Louis Post-Dispatch (Missouri)

January 3, 2009 Saturday

THIRD EDITION

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A17

Length: 473 words

Byline: By Aron Heller and Ibrahim Barzak The Associated Press

Body

EREZ CROSSING, Israel - Israel allowed several hundred Palestinians with foreign passports to flee from Gaza on Friday, even as its warplanes bombed a mosque it said was used to store weapons and destroyed the homes of more than a dozen *Hamas* operatives.

The evacuees told of crippling shortages of water, electricity and medicine, echoing a U.N. warning of a deepening humanitarian crisis in the besieged Gaza Strip in the 7-day-old Israeli campaign. The U.N. estimates at least a quarter of the 400 Palestinians killed by Israeli airstrikes on *Hamas* militants were civilians.

President George W. Bush on Friday branded rocket attacks by <u>Hamas</u> as an "act of terror," while Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice accused <u>Hamas</u>' leaders of holding the people of Gaza hostage.

International calls for a cease-fire have been growing, and French President Nicolas Sarkozy is expected in the region next week.

Bush said no peace deal would be acceptable without monitoring to halt the flow of smuggled weapons to terrorist groups.

"The United States is leading diplomatic efforts to achieve a meaningful cease-fire that is fully respected," Bush said Friday in his weekly radio address, released a day early. "Another one-way cease-fire that leads to rocket attacks on Israel is not acceptable. And promises from <u>Hamas</u> will not suffice - there must be monitoring mechanisms in place to help ensure that smuggling of weapons to terrorist groups in Gaza comes to an end."

Israel has targeted <u>Hamas</u> leaders in the past but halted the practice during a six-month truce that expired last month.

Israeli troops in bases in southern Israel are awaiting orders to invade Gaza.

Exiled <u>Hamas</u> leader Khaled Mashaal, speaking in Syria, warned that any ground assault would lead Israel to "a black destiny of dead and wounded." However, he said <u>Hamas</u> was "ready to cooperate with any effort leading to an end to the Israeli offensive against Gaza, lifting the siege and opening all crossings."

Israel lets hundreds flee Gaza; U.N. warns of crisis

Israel appears to be open to the intense diplomatic efforts by Arab and European leaders, saying it would consider stopping its punishing aerial assaults if international monitors were brought in to track compliance with any truce with <u>Hamas</u>.

Maxwell Gaylard, U.N. humanitarian coordinator for the Palestinians Territories, said 2,000 people have been wounded in the past week and that a "significant number" of the dead were **women** and children.

The U.N. World Food Program began distributing bread in Gaza to Palestinian families. It said there had been a drastic deterioration in living conditions, with shortages of food, cooking gas and fuel, as well as frequent power cuts.

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.

Graphic

PHOTO - In the southern Gaza Strip Friday, a Palestinian man carries a blanket from a house that was hit in an Israeli missile strike in the Rafah refugee camp. The Associated Press

Load-Date: January 3, 2009



<u>Iran's proxy war; Gaza's militant Palestinians marching to orders from their</u> Middle Eastern masters

therecord.com

January 7, 2009 Wednesday

Final Edition

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Section: INSIGHT; Pg. A9

Length: 1102 words

Byline: Yossi Klein Halevi and Michael B. Oren, Los Angeles Times

Body

The images from the fighting in Gaza are harrowing but ultimately deceptive. They portray a mighty invading army, one equipped with F-16 jets that have bombed a civilian population defended by a few thousand fighters armed with primitive rockets.

But widen the lens and the true nature of this conflict emerges. <u>Hamas</u>, like Hezbollah in Lebanon, is a proxy for the real enemy Israel is confronting: Iran. And Israel's current operation against <u>Hamas</u> represents a unique chance to deal a strategic blow to Iranian expansionism.

Until now, the Iranian revolution has appeared unstoppable. The Iran-Iraq War of the 1980s ended with Iranian troops occupying Iraqi territory. Iranian influence then spread to Saudi Arabia's heavily Shiite and oil-rich eastern province, and to Lebanon through Hezbollah.

Since the fall of their long-standing enemy, Saddam Hussein, Iranians have deeply infiltrated Iraq. Syria has been drawn into Iran's sphere, and even the Sunni sheikdoms of the gulf now defer to Iran, dispatching foreign ministers to Tehran and defying international sanctions against it. Iran has co-opted *Hamas*, a Sunni organization closely linked to the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, transforming the Israeli-Palestinian conflict into a jihad against the Jewish state. But Iran's boldest achievement has been to thwart world pressure and approach the nuclear threshold. Once fortified with nuclear weapons, Iranian hegemony in the Middle East would be complete.

All of which helps explain the public statements from moderate Arab leaders, such as Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and Palestinian Authority head Mahmoud Abbas, who have blamed the end of the tenuous Israel-<u>Hamas</u> ceasefire on <u>Hamas</u>. Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit has even called on the Arab world to stop using the United Nations as a forum for blaming Israel alone for the fighting, surely a first. Those leaders understand what many in the West have yet to grasp: The Middle East conflict is no longer just about creating a Palestinian state but about preventing the region's takeover by radical Islam. Indeed, Palestinian statehood is impossible without neutralizing the extremists who oppose any negotiated solution.

If Israel successfully overthrows <u>Hamas</u> in Gaza, it would strengthen anti-Iranian forces throughout the Mideast and signal to the region that Iranian momentum can be reversed. The Israeli military operation could begin the process that topples a terrorist regime that seized power in the Gaza Strip in 2007 and has fired thousands of rockets and mortar shells into Israeli neighbourhoods.

Iran 's proxy war; Gaza's militant Palestinians marching to orders from their Middle Eastern masters

And whether or not <u>Hamas</u> is ultimately overthrown, Israel can achieve substantial goals. The first is an absolute ceasefire. Previous ceasefires allowed <u>Hamas</u> to launch two or three rockets a week into Israel and to smuggle weapons into Gaza through tunnels.

To obtain a ceasefire now, the international community should recognize Israel's right to respond to any aggression over its international border and monitor the closure of *Hamas*' weapons-smuggling tunnels.

Above all, the goal is to ensure that <u>Hamas</u> is unable to proclaim victory and thereby enhance Iranian prestige in the Arab world.

Yet even those limited goals are far from guaranteed. An earlier opportunity to check Iran -- during Israel's war against Hezbollah in 2006 -- was squandered through a combination of Israeli incompetence and international pressure. Hezbollah manipulated the Western media by grossly inflating the number of civilian casualties and even "recycling" corpses from one bombed site to another.

The international community responded by imposing a ceasefire before Israel could achieve its goals and installing a peacekeeping force that has since allowed Hezbollah to more than double its pre-war arsenal. Although the Israeli army killed one-quarter of Hezbollah's troops and destroyed its headquarters, Israel was widely perceived as the loser. The winner was Iran.

Israel learned the bitter lesson of Lebanon. For the last two years, the Israeli army has gone back to basics, rigorously training and restoring its fighting spirit. Israeli leaders drew on that spirit to attack <u>Hamas</u> bases in one of the most impressive airstrikes since the 1967 Six-Day War.

Yet the question remains whether the international community has learned its Lebanon lesson, or will once again allow the jihadists to win.

<u>Hamas</u> is attempting to portray the Israeli invasion as a war against the Palestinian people. Television viewers are being presented with heartbreaking images of dead and injured children and supposedly indiscriminate devastation. Palestinian doctors claim that Israel has blocked the supply of vital medicines, and humanitarian organizations warn of imminent starvation. In fact, many of those claims are exaggerated.

Although civilians have, tragically, been hurt, about three-quarters of the Palestinians killed so far have been gunmen -- an impressive achievement given that <u>Hamas</u> fires rockets from apartments, mosques and schools and uses hospitals as hideouts.

Israel recently has allowed nearly 200 truckloads of food and medicine to enter Gaza, even under shellfire. It is in Israel's urgent interest to minimize civilian suffering and forestall international criticism. For that same reason, <u>Hamas</u> welcomes the suffering of Palestinian civilians. According to a BBC report on Dec. 30, dozens of ambulances were dispatched by Egypt to its border with Gaza, only to remain empty because, according to Egyptian authorities, *Hamas* wasn't allowing wounded Palestinians to leave.

The international community must not be duped again. If <u>Hamas</u> is successful in manipulating world opinion into the imposition of a premature ceasefire, it will proclaim victory and continue to stockpile long-range missiles for the next round of fighting. That would mean another triumph for Iran.

No less crucially, the international community must not allow the Gaza crisis to divert its attention from the imminent -- and ultimate -- threat of a nuclear Iran. Intelligence sources now measure that threat in months rather than years.

U.S. president-elect Barack Obama has declared his intention to confront Iran through diplomacy. Ideally, that process should begin in the aftermath of an Iranian defeat. If Israel is allowed to achieve its goals in Gaza, the Obama administration will be better poised to achieve its goals in Iran.

Klein Halevi is a senior fellow at the Adelson Institute for Strategic Studies of the Shalem Center in Jerusalem; Oren is a distinguished fellow at the Shalem Center and a professor at the foreign service school of Georgetown University.

Graphic

Photo: Associated Press , Palestinian <u>women</u> react outside the Shifa Hospital in Gaza City after learning a family member has been killed in the conflict with the Israelis.

Load-Date: January 7, 2009



Israel defiant as Gaza toll soars

The Age (Melbourne, Australia)

January 6, 2009 Tuesday

Second Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1

Length: 676 words

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

Body

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

As the number of Palestinians killed since the start of the operation 11 days ago soared towards 550, Israeli leaders continued to reject international demands for a ceasefire, saying they would press ahead until the goal of destroying *Hamas*' 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.

French President Nicolas Sarkozy, who has criticised Israel's military offensive, was due to meet Prime Minister Ehud Olmert in Jerusalem overnight, Melbourne time, to try to negotiate a halt to the fighting.

<u>Hamas</u> also announced it had accepted an invitation from Egypt to send a delegation there for ceasefire negotiations.

As the ground offensive in Gaza intensified, the United Nations' Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs said 20 per cent of those killed and 40 per cent of the 2400 injured since the start of the operation were <u>women</u> and children.

<u>Hamas</u> fighters continued to launch Qassam 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.

Israel defiant as Gaza toll soars

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.

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.

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... 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."

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 top <u>Hamas</u> leader in the Gaza Strip, vowed last night that the Islamists were heading to victory. "Victory is coming, God willing," he said in an address on <u>Hamas</u>'s 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.

Meanwhile, Egypt called for the creation of humanitarian corridors into Gaza to allow food and medicine to be brought in, as air strikes forced the closure of its Rafah crossing. -- With AGENCIES

Graphic

THREE 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

Load-Date: January 5, 2009



<u>Israel warns of Gaza escalation; 30 Palestinians die in latest fighting as</u> diplomacy fails

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (Pennsylvania)

January 11, 2009 Sunday

TWO STAR EDITION

Copyright 2009 P.G. Publishing Co.

Section: WORLD; Pg. A-4

Length: 529 words

Byline: Ibrahim Barzak and Christopher Torcha The Associated Press

Body

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip -- Israel dropped bombs and leaflets on Gaza yesterday, 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.

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.

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 Gaza escalation 30 Palestinians die in latest fighting as diplomacy fails

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 today, Israeli tanks were heard moving near the central Gaza border as Israeli artillery pounded the area, indicating the possibility of a larger operation.

Israeli 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.

Graphic

PHOTO: Khalil Hamra/Associated Press: Palestinians react after hearing news that their mother had been killed during Israeli shelling yesterday in Beit Lahiya, northern Gaza.

Load-Date: January 12, 2009



Israel to escalate assault on Gaza

Scotland on Sunday

January 11, 2009, Sunday

4 Edition

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Section: Pg. 1

Length: 528 words

Byline: Ibrahim Barzak in Gaza City and Jeremy Watson

Body

ISRAEL warned the citizens of Gaza yesterday that an escalation of its brutal two-week military campaign was imminent despite a new wave of global protests against the fighting.

As the Gaza death toll exceeded 800 - most of them civilians - after another day of bombardment of <u>Hamas</u> positions, the Israeli government signalled that a third phase of its attack was about to start.

Thousands of reservists have been mobilised to take part in an assault on <u>Hamas</u> strongholds inside Gaza City, where fighting conditions for Israeli units are expected to be tougher.

A leaflet dropped by the Israeli air force over the city read: "The IDF [Israeli Defence Force] will escalate the operation in the Gaza Strip. The IDF is not working against the people of Gaza but against <u>Hamas</u> and the terrorists only. Stay safe by following our orders."

It urged Gaza residents not to help *Hamas*, the Islamic militant group that rules Gaza.

To add to the week's slaughter, nine members of one family - including two <u>women</u> and two children - were killed yesterday when a tank fired on their garden.

"Residents brought them to the hospital in a civilian car," said Adham el-Hakim, administrator of Kamal Adwan hospital. "They put them all in the trunk because their bodies were mangled."

The Israeli military said more than 15 militants were killed in fighting on Friday and yesterday, and aircraft had attacked more than 40 targets.

Despite two weeks of air and ground assault, <u>Hamas</u> fighters still fired at least 15 rockets into southern Israel yesterday. One hit an apartment building in the city of Ashkelon, wounding three people, one of them seriously.

Both Israel and <u>Hamas</u> continued to ignore a UN resolution passed on Thursday calling for an immediate and durable ceasefire. Israel has dismissed the Security Council resolution as impractical, while <u>Hamas</u> is angry it was not consulted in the diplomatic efforts.

Egyptian peace attempts were similarly ignored. In Cairo, Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian Authority president and head of *Hamas*'s political rival movement Fatah, urged both Israel and *Hamas* to agree to an Egypt-brokered truce.

Israel to escalate assault on Gaza

Aid agencies also renewed their calls for an immediate ceasefire yesterday, claiming that three-hour halts in fighting offered by the Israelis were not long enough for humanitarian efforts. Jerusalem-based Michael Bailey, spokesman for Oxfam International, said: "Three hours gives no opportunity to get the food in."

Angry protests at the Israeli military campaign again erupted in Britain and other countries, with 20,000 marchers taking to the streets in Berlin. In Edinburgh, protesters hurled shoes and red paint at the American consulate and thousands of demonstrators also took part in a rally calling for an end to the military onslaught.

In London around 12,000 protestors marched through the capital and violence flared outside the Israeli embassy. A police officer was knocked unconscious as demonstrators clashed with riot police.

Earlier, campaigner Annie Lennox said: "I'm taking a humanitarian stance. I do not believe in a militaristic approach. It's very important that people in society at large see that we can use our voices collectively."

Load-Date: January 12, 2009



Israel lets Palestinians flee; UN warns of crisis

The Telegraph-Journal (New Brunswick)
January 3, 2009 Saturday

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Section: NEWS; NEWS; Pg. A10

Length: 1123 words

Byline: Aron Heller and Ibrahim Barzak THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Body

Israel allowed several hundred Palestinians with foreign passports to flee Gaza on Friday, even as its warplanes bombed a mosque it said was used to store weapons and destroyed homes of more than a dozen *Hamas* officials.

The evacuees told of crippling shortages of water, electricity and medicine, echoing a UN warning of a deepening humanitarian crisis in the besieged Gaza Strip in the seven-day-old Israeli campaign. The United Nations estimates at least a guarter of the 400 Palestinians killed by Israeli air strikes on *Hamas* militants have been civilians.

Jawaher Hajji, a 14-year-old U.S. citizen who was allowed to cross into Israel, said her uncle was one of them - killed while trying to pick up some medicine for her cancer-stricken father. She said her father later died of his illness.

"They are supposed to destroy just the <u>Hamas</u>, but people in their homes are dying too," Hajji, who has relatives in Virginia, said at the Erez border crossing between Gaza and Israel.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice accused <u>Hamas'</u> leaders of holding the people of Gaza hostage and said an end to violence would only be possible once <u>Hamas</u> stopped firing rockets into Israel. She said the United States continues to seek a "durable and sustainable" ceasefire.

International calls for a ceasefire have been growing, and French President Nicolas Sarkozy is expected in the region next week. Rice said she had no plans to go to the region.

Israel has targeted <u>Hamas</u> leaders in the past but halted the practice during a six-month truce that expired last month. Most of <u>Hamas</u>' leaders went into hiding at the start of the Israeli offensive on Dec. 27.

Israeli troops in bases in southern Israel are awaiting orders to invade Gaza. But Israel also appears to be open to the intense diplomatic efforts by Arab and European leaders, saying it would consider stopping its punishing aerial assaults if international monitors were brought in to track compliance with any truce with <u>Hamas</u>.

Israel began its campaign to try to halt weeks of intensifying Palestinian rocket fire from Gaza. The offensive has dealt a heavy blow to <u>Hamas</u> but has not stopped the rockets, which continue to strike deeper and deeper into Israel. Three Israeli civilians and one soldier have been killed in the rocket attacks.

More than 30 rockets were fired into southern Israel on Friday, slightly injuring four people. Sirens warning Israelis to take cover when military radar picks up an incoming rocket have helped reduce casualties in recent days.

Israel lets Palestinians flee; UN warns of crisis

After destroying <u>Hamas</u>' security compounds early in the operation, Israel has turned its attention to the group's leadership. Israeli warplanes on Friday hit about 20 houses believed to belong to <u>Hamas</u> militants and members of other armed groups, Palestinians said.

Israel also bombed a mosque it said was used to store weapons. The mosque was known as a <u>Hamas</u> stronghold and was identified with Nizar Rayan, the <u>Hamas</u> militant leader killed Thursday when Israel dropped a 900-kilogram bomb on his home. Rayan, 49, was ranked among <u>Hamas</u>' top five decision-makers.

The explosion killed 20 people, including all four of Rayan's wives and 11 of his children.

Israel's military said the bombing of Rayan's house triggered secondary explosions from the weapons stockpile there.

Fear of Israeli attacks led to sparse turnout at Friday's communal prayers at mosques throughout Gaza. Still, thousands attended a memorial service for Rayan, with throngs praying over the rubble of his home and the nearby destroyed mosque.

An imam delivered his sermon over a car loudspeaker as the bodies of Rayan and other family members were covered in green <u>Hamas</u> flags. Explosions from Israeli air strikes and the sound of warplanes could be heard in the background.

Following the prayers, mourners marched with the bodies, with many people reaching out to touch and kiss them.

Israel also destroyed homes of more than a dozen <u>Hamas</u> members. Most appeared to be empty, but one man was killed in a strike in the Jebaliya refugee camp in northern Gaza.

Separate air strikes 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, according to Health Ministry official Dr. Moaiya Hassanain.

Maxwell Gaylard, UN humanitarian co-ordinator for the Palestinians Territories, said 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.

The UN World Food Program began distributing bread in Gaza to Palestinian families. It said there had been a drastic deterioration in living conditions, with shortages of food, cooking gas and fuel, as well as frequent power cuts.

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.

The military has called some houses ahead of time to warn inhabitants of an impending attack. In some cases, aircraft also fired sound bombs to warn away civilians before flattening the homes with their missiles, Palestinians and Israeli defence officials said.

Israeli planes also dropped leaflets east of Gaza giving a confidential phone number and e-mail address for people to report locations of rocket squads. Residents appeared to ignore the leaflets.

Israel also opened a border crossing with Gaza to allow 270 Palestinians to flee the fighting. The evacuees all held foreign passports, and were expected to join their families in the U.S., Russia, Turkey, Norway, Belarus, Kazakhstan and elsewhere.

Nashwa Hajji, Jawaher's 13-year-old younger sister, said her family left their home following Israeli warnings, but others refused. "People said, 'We don't want to go. We will die where we are,'" she said.

Israel lets Palestinians flee; UN warns of crisis

The Hajji family was notified Thursday by the U.S. consulate that it was being evacuated. After crossing Erez, they and others boarded buses taking them to Amman, Jordan. Hajji said she, her mother and five siblings would fly to Virginia from there.

The State Department said it had assisted 27 U.S. citizens and members of their immediate families to leave Gaza on Friday and make their way to Jordan and stood ready to help others. Department officials said earlier this week they were aware of roughly 30 Americans in Gaza but that there could be others.

Many of the evacuees were foreign-born <u>women</u> married to Palestinians and their children. Spouses who did not hold foreign citizenship were not allowed out.

"I feel happy and sad," said Caroline Katba, 15, a Russian citizen. "Happy, because I am going to Russia, and sad, because my father is left behind."

Load-Date: January 3, 2009



Some Palestinians are allowed to flee

The Bismarck Tribune
January 3, 2009 Saturday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1A

Length: 1168 words

Byline: ARON HELLER and IBRAHIM BARZAK Associated Press Writers

Body

EREZ CROSSING, Israel - Israel allowed several hundred Palestinians with foreign passports to flee Gaza on Friday, even as its warplanes bombed a mosque it said was used to store weapons and destroyed homes of more than a dozen *Hamas* operatives.

The evacuees told of crippling shortages of water, electricity and medicine, echoing a U.N. warning of a deepening humanitarian crisis in the besieged Gaza Strip in the 7-day-old Israeli campaign. The U.N. estimates at least a quarter of the 400 Palestinians killed by Israeli airstrikes on *Hamas* militants were civilians.

Jawaher Hajji, a 14-year-old U.S. citizen who was allowed to cross into Israel, said her uncle was one of them - killed while trying to pick up some medicine for her cancer-stricken father. She said her father later died of his illness.

"They are supposed to destroy just the *Hamas*, but people in their homes are dying too," Hajji, who has relatives in Virginia, said at the Erez border crossing between Gaza and Israel.

International calls for a cease-fire have been growing, and French President Nicolas Sarkozy is expected in the region next week.

Israel has targeted <u>Hamas</u> leaders in the past but halted the practice during a six-month truce that expired last month. Most of <u>Hamas</u>' leaders went into hiding at the start of the Israeli offensive on Dec. 27.

Israeli troops in bases in southern Israel are awaiting orders to invade Gaza.

Exiled <u>Hamas</u> leader Khaled Mashaal, speaking in Syria, warned that any ground assault would lead Israel to "a black destiny of dead and wounded."

However, he said <u>Hamas</u> was "ready to cooperate with any effort leading to an end to the Israeli offensive against Gaza, lifting the seige and opening all crossings."

Israel appears to be open to the intense diplomatic efforts by Arab and European leaders, saying it would consider stopping its punishing aerial assaults if international monitors were brought in to track compliance with any truce with *Hamas*.

Some Palestinians are allowed to flee

Israel began its campaign to try to halt weeks of intensifying Palestinian rocket fire from Gaza. The offensive has dealt a heavy blow to <u>Hamas</u> but has not stopped the rockets, which continue to strike deeper and deeper into Israel. Three Israeli civilians and one soldier have been killed in the rocket attacks.

More than 30 rockets were fired into southern Israel on Friday, slightly injuring four. Sirens warning Israelis to take cover when military radar picks up an incoming rocket have helped reduce casualties in recent days.

Israeli TV showed video of a table set for the traditional Sabbath meal covered with shrapnel and broken glass.

After destroying <u>Hamas</u>' security compounds early in the operation, Israel has turned its attention to the group's leadership. Israeli warplanes on Friday hit about 20 houses believed to belong to <u>Hamas</u> militants and members of other armed groups, Palestinians said.

Israel also bombed a mosque it said was used to store weapons. The mosque was known as a *Hamas* stronghold and was identified with Nizar Rayan, the *Hamas* militant leader killed Thursday when Israel dropped a one-ton bomb on his home. Rayan, 49, ranked among *Hamas* top five decision-makers. The explosion killed 20 people, including all four of Rayan's wives and 11 of his children.

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Following the prayers, mourners marched with the bodies, with many people reaching out to touch and kiss them.

"The Palestinian resistance will not forget and will not forgive," said <u>Hamas</u> lawmaker Mushir Masri. "The resistance's response will be very painful."

Israel also destroyed homes of more than a dozen <u>Hamas</u> operatives. Most appeared to be empty, but one man was killed in a strike in the Jebaliya refugee camp in northern Gaza.

Fourteen other Palestinians died Friday - killed in airstrikes or dying of wounds from earlier violence, officials said. Among them were two teenagers as well as three children - two brothers and their cousin - who were playing in southern Gaza, according to Health Ministry official Dr. Moaiya Hassanain.

Maxwell Gaylard, U.N. humanitarian coordinator for the Palestinians Territories, said 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.

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In all, Israel allowed 270 Palestinians to cross the border from Gaza to flee the fighting. The evacuees all held foreign passports, and were expected to join their families in the U.S., Russia, Turkey, Norway, Belarus, Kazakhstan and elsewhere.

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Load-Date: January 5, 2009



'Medieval backwater'

The Leader-Post (Regina, Saskatchewan)

January 10, 2009 Saturday

Final Edition

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Section: LETTERS; Pg. B7

Length: 313 words

Byline: Lance Irvine, The Leader-Post

Body

In 1948, the United Nations proposed to establish a number of Jewish communities scattered throughout an Arab Palestine under the governance of Jordan, but had to abandon that promise to the Jews when the Palestinians threatened violence.

In the subsequent Partition of 1948, therefore, Palestine was to be divided into parallel Jewish and Arab segments in economic union with Jordan. Nevertheless, the entire Arab world went to war.

The Arab world freely chose to remain a medieval backwater rather than become part of a Europeanized, prosperous modern country. Allah had already determined that 7th Century Islam was the one true way.

Nothing has changed. There can be only death for the Jews. But it is the callousness of <u>Hamas</u> that takes one's breath away, for every Palestinian death is regarded as a victory for <u>Hamas</u>. Why? Because it can be used to suck in the gullible and functionally illiterate in the Western media.

When the Israelis warned a landlord that his house would be bombed because rockets were stored there, he notified <u>Hamas</u>, who rushed <u>women</u> with small children to the residence. When refugees occupied a school, <u>Hamas</u> immediately ordered a force of rocket launchers to a position beside the yard, and gleefully reported to the Western media when the school was hit by Israeli return fire.

Every time Israel finally decides that thousands of rockets fired during a so-called truce is too much, some loony-left lamebrain decides that it is a murderous medieval ideology that deserves sympathy rather than the Israelis. They are in good company: Hugo Chavez, the neocommunist Venezuelan dictator, expelled the Israeli ambassador a few days ago.

If this is not outrageous enough, <u>Hamas</u> also recently passed a Sharia criminal law recognizing, among other things, crucifixion.

There is no proposition so stupid that some intellectual can't accept it.

Lance Irvine

Yorkton

Graphic

Photo: Getty Images; Gaza under fire: why is *Hamas*'s culpability ignored?;

Load-Date: January 10, 2009



As Gaza Battle Goes On, Israel Is Set to Negotiate With Egypt on Cease-Fire

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: 1112 words

Byline: By STEVEN ERLANGER; Reporting was contributed by Taghreed El-Khodary from Gaza, Katrin Bennhold

from Paris and Neil MacFarquhar from the United Nations.

Dateline: JERUSALEM

Body

Israel said Wednesday that it would send senior officials to talk with Egypt about halting the conflict in Gaza, but there were no immediate signs of a diplomatic breakthrough. Fighting between Israel and <u>Hamas</u> militants continued after a brief pause earlier in the day.

International pressure for a negotiated cease-fire intensified a day after Israeli shells killed some 40 people at a United Nations school in Gaza. Israel said <u>Hamas</u> militants had fired mortar shells from the school compound prior to Israel's shelling.

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

But fighting resumed soon afterward. In the evening, the Israeli Army dropped leaflets warning the citizens 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.

<u>Hamas</u> fired 22 rockets into Israel, but no one was wounded.

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

There were early signs that a formal diplomatic negotiation could begin after 12 days of fighting. Egypt's chief of intelligence, Omar Suleiman, is expected to serve as a go-between for Israel and <u>Hamas</u>. Two Israeli officials -- a senior aide to Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, Shalom Turgeman, and a senior defense official, Amos Gilad -- are expected to go to 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 Mr. Olmert, according to one Israeli official.

In Washington, the White House spokeswoman, Dana M. 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 now had enough votes to approve a Security Council resolution calling for an immediate cease-fire. That would likely put the United States and other Western powers, which oppose a binding resolution, in the awkward position of having to veto a cease-fire.

A senior French official in Paris said that Mr. Sarkozy's earlier comment about an agreement on a cease-fire was misunderstood: "The plan is not a cease-fire; the plan is a road map toward a cease-fire." One crucial aspect of any deal is how to prevent new smuggling tunnels from being built under Egypt's 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.

<u>Hamas</u> wants to control the crossing itself and is not eager to cooperate with Fatah, its -rival.

In Washington, 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, the 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 reiterated that <u>Hamas</u> had been using the school as a base. Mr. 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 City and the Gazan Ministry of Health said 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 under had died. The United Nations estimated a few days ago that a quarter of the dead were civilians.

As Gaza Battle Goes On, Israel Is Set to Negotiate With Egypt on Cease-Fire

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.

http://www.nytimes.com

Graphic

PHOTO: A woman in Rafah, Gaza, ventured into the rubble-strewn streets on Wednesday. Israel suspended its assault for three hours to allow humanitarian deliveries.(PHOTOGRAPH BY EYAD BABA/ASSOCIATED PRESS)

Load-Date: January 8, 2009



Israeli strikes on Gaza: What are the motives?

Guardian.com

December 29, 2008

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theguardian

Length: 761 words

Highlight: Mark Tran examines the media analysis of Israel's major air attacks on the Palestinian territory

Body

As Israel steps up its bombing campaign in Gaza, commentators have been examining the motivations and implications of its decision to launch the airstrikes in which more than 300 people have been killed in the space of a few days.

Ethan Bronner, in the New York Times, says Israel's main aim is to force <u>Hamas</u> to end its rocket attacks and military build-up. He also sees another goal: for Israel to expunge the ghost of its flawed summer 2006 war against Hezbollah in Lebanon and re-establish Israeli deterrence.

Along the same lines, Meir Javedanfar at the Jerusalem Post says one of the reasons Israel has acted with overwhelming force is that it does not want <u>Hamas</u> to turn into another Hezbollah, which was able to boast that it had defeated Israeli forces in the 2006 conflict.

"In other words," he writes, "Israel does not want <u>Hamas</u> to develop a deterrence capability, which it can later use to change the strategic rules of the game."

Javedanfar, however, warns of the potential for a <u>Hamas</u> public relations victory should Israel's actions result in huge casualties.

"What Israel has to watch out for is the level of force it applies. There is a very fine line of diminishing returns when it comes to application of massive military force against guerrilla organisations that operate among civilians. This is especially true when it comes to *Hamas*, which has become expert at using its own population as a human shield.

"Any excess on Israel's part could turn the recent fighting into a *Hamas* PR victory."

Palestinian sources put the number of deaths in Gaza so far at more than 300, vastly exceeding past casualty numbers. The UN's aid agency in the Palestinian territories, UNWRA, has put the number of civilian deaths at 51, which it says is a conservative tally. Two Israelis have died in rocket attacks since Saturday.

Juan Cole, writing on his Informed Comment blog, reminds us - if we needed reminding - that, since the second intifada broke out in 2000, Israelis have killed nearly 5,000 Palestinians, almost 1,000 of them minors.

Israeli strikes on Gaza: What are the motives?

"Since fall of 2007, Israel has kept the 1.5 million Gazans under a blockade, interdicting food, fuel and medical supplies to one degree or another. Wreaking collective punishment on civilian populations such as hospital patients denied needed electricity is a crime of war," he says.

Tom Segev, writing in Ha'aretz, thinks Israel is repeating the mistakes of the past by believing it can defeat <u>Hamas</u> militarily.

"It is admittedly impossible to live with daily missile fire, even if virtually no place in the world today enjoys a situation of zero terror," he says.

"But <u>Hamas</u> is not a terrorist organisation holding Gaza residents hostage: It is a religious nationalist movement, and a majority of Gaza residents believe in its path. One can certainly attack it, and with Knesset elections in the offing, this attack might even produce some kind of ceasefire.

"But there is another historical truth worth recalling in this context: since the dawn of the Zionist presence in the Land of Israel, no military operation has ever advanced dialogue with the Palestinians."

Seth Freedman, a frequent critic of Israeli policy, sees little option for the Israeli government other than to act as it did.

"As soon as the six-month ceasefire ended, with <u>Hamas</u> refusing to lay down their weapons and resuming their attacks on Israeli civilians, it was plain that Israel was being invited, if not provoked into, an operation to cut the head off the hydra.

"<u>Hamas</u> knew that, with tens of thousands of Israeli men, <u>women</u> and children within range of the Kassam rockets, public opinion would demand action to protect those in the line of fire."

For Jackson Diehl, in the Washington Post, Israel's course of action means Ehud Olmert, the outgoing prime minister, "will be remembered for fighting two bloody and wasteful mini-wars in less than three years in power".

He adds: "The first one, in Lebanon during the summer of 2006, punished but failed to defeat or even permanently injure Hezbollah, which is politically and militarily stronger today than it was before Olmert took office. This one will probably have about the same effect on *Hamas*, which almost certainly will still control Gaza and retain the capacity to strike Israel."

Writing before the end of the six-month truce in Egyptian weekly al-Ahram, Saleh Al-Naami speculated that <u>Hamas</u> was banking on a high number of civilians casualties causing deep embarrassment for the Palestinian Authority, led by Mahmoud Abbas, and the so-called moderate Arab axis, of which Egypt is a leading member.

Load-Date: December 29, 2008



Gaza fighting is taking a heavy toll on children

Deseret Morning News (Salt Lake City)

January 2, 2009 Friday

Copyright 2009 The Deseret News Publishing Co.

Length: 453 words

Byline: Ibrahim Barzak Associated Press

Body

BEIT HANOUN, Gaza Strip -- 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 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 U.N. official in Gaza.

Israel says it is only targeting *Hamas* militants and the rockets they send streaking into southern Israel. More than 400 Palestinians have been killed in the strikes, many of them from the Islamic militant group's security forces.

But at least 37 children and 17 **women** have died, according to the **Hamas**-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.

Israel says *Hamas* militants fire rockets from residential areas and schools, aware that the Israeli military response may cause civilian casualties.

"Hamas uses civilians as human shields," said an Israeli military spokeswoman, Maj. Avital Leibovich. "The targets we picked are military."

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 *Hamas* 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.

<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.

Gaza fighting is taking a heavy toll on children

For the Hamdan children, however, the attack was random. The three victims, Haya, 12, Lama, 4, and Ismail, 11, were dumping garbage in an empty field near their home Tuesday morning, not knowing that Gaza militants nearby had just fired rockets at Israel.

An Israeli warship fired a missile at the site. The two girls were killed instantly, but Ismail lingered on until Wednesday.

At his funeral, his sister Samar tried to follow his flag-wrapped body, until the mourners stopped and took her home to her devastated mother.

"My children are dead, why am I alive?" the mother wailed.

Load-Date: January 2, 2009



Israel launches well-coordinated PR blitz to garner support for Gaza action

The Jerusalem Post
December 28, 2008 Sunday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 5

Length: 820 words

Byline: HERB KEINON

Body

The Foreign Ministry launched a public relations blitz Saturday to counter the pictures coming out of Gaza, stressing that the goal of the operation was to strike a major blow to Hamasâ terror infrastructure and protect Israeli citizens.

Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni and spokespeople from the Foreign Ministry, the Prime Minister's Office and the IDF Spokesman's Office took to the airwaves - including the Arab satellite stations - with the message that Israel has been patient up until now, but could not tolerate the unending attacks, and that <u>Hamas</u> was the party responsible for the suffering that would incur.

In the afternoon, Livni read a statement to foreign television outlets saying that Israel had been under daily attack from Gaza for years, and that this week, "hundreds of missiles and mortars shells were fired at Israeli civilian communities, including 80 missiles fired on a single day.

"Until now, we have shown restraint," she said. "But today there is no other option than a military operation.

"We need to protect our citizens from attack through a military response against the terror infrastructure in Gaza. This is the translation of our basic right to self- defense."

Similar messages were delivered at a press conference she held in the early evening with the foreign press.

"<u>Hamas</u> is a terrorist organization, supported by Iran, that does not represent the legitimate national interests of the Palestinian people, but a radical Islamist agenda that seeks to deny peace for the peoples of this region," Livni said.

Diplomatic officials said the purpose of the public diplomacy campaign was to give Israel as much diplomatic legitimacy for the operation as possible.

The Foreign Ministry has been preparing for the offensive for a number of days, sending to its representatives background material on <u>Hamas</u>, talking points, and instructions to its representatives to return from holiday vacations even though their counterparts in many of the world's capitals were away for Christmas and New Year's.

On Sunday, the ministry will be setting up a media center in Sderot to deal with the crisis.

Among the messages that Israel's representatives abroad have been armed with are the following:

- n "The reason for the operation is the ongoing and insufferable terrorist fire on a quarter of a million Israeli citizens. Those citizens have been under incessant terror attacks from the Gaza Strip with thousands of missiles fired over the past eight years. No country in the world would be willing to accept this kind of onslaught on its citizens."
- * "The goal of the operation is to strike a major blow to <u>Hamas</u>'s terror infrastructure and the ability of <u>Hamas</u> and its allied organizations to launch missiles and mortar shells at Israeli citizens and execute terror attacks of various kinds, such as kidnapping Israeli civilians."
- * "<u>Hamas</u> is responsible for the situation, since it violated the calm, is firing against and attacking Israeli citizens, and is investing all its resources in arming itself and gathering power."
- * "The terrorist organizations work out of the Palestinian population centers and cynically exploit them, so the responsibility for Palestinian civilians getting hurt rests on their shoulders. <u>Hamas</u> brings <u>women</u> and children up to the roofs of buildings housing terrorist activity in an attempt to prevent air strikes; it sends civilians to the line of fire; it works out of schools and mosques; it fires rockets out of crowded population centers; and it sends Palestinian mothers to murder Israeli children in suicide attacks."
- * "The truce brokered by Egypt was exploited by <u>Hamas</u> not only to employ terror against Israel's citizens, but also to gain strength and massively arm itself with the intention of increasing their capacity for terror and expanding the range of the threat against Israeli citizens. <u>Hamas</u> men were being smuggled out and were being trained in Iran and Syria."
- * "Israel does not want a humanitarian crisis, and <u>Hamas</u> is the cause of the suffering and distress of the population there."
- * "Most of the countries in the world and the United Nations have pronounced <u>Hamas</u> to be a terrorist organization, and they are boycotting all contact with it. Israel expects the world's nations to support Israel's war against this terror organization and even join the campaign."
- * "At the same time Israel is fighting terror, the government is deliberately and openly maintaining a political process with the elected Palestinian government headed by PA President Mahmoud Abbas and Prime Minister [Salaam] Fayad. <u>Hamas</u> opposes these negotiations and any settlement with Israel, and constitutes an unstable element in the region."
- * "Israel is prepared and ready to respond harshly to any attack or provocation by any factor in the region. This is a fight between Israel and terrorist elements acting against Israel's citizens, so there is no cause for any outside party to intervene."

Load-Date: October 4, 2011



Israeli Attack Kills Scores Across Gaza

The New York Times

December 28, 2008 Sunday

The New York Times on the Web

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Section: Section; Column 0; Foreign Desk; Pg.

Length: 855 words

Byline: By TAGHREED EL-KHODARY and ISABEL KERSHNER; Taghreed El-Khodary reported from Gaza City

and Isabel Kershner from Jerusalem.

Dateline: GAZA CITY

Body

The Israeli Air Force on Saturday launched a massive attack on <u>Hamas</u> targets throughout Gaza in retaliation for the recent heavy rocket fire from the area, hitting mostly security headquarters, training compounds and weapons storage facilities, the Israeli military and witnesses said.

Dr. Muawiya Hassanein, the head of emergency services at the Gaza Ministry of Health, said that at least 195 Palestinians were killed in the Israeli air strikes.

Most of the fatalities were among members of the security forces of <u>Hamas</u>, the Islamic group that controls Gaza, but a few civilians were also among the dead, including children. Scores more Palestinians were wounded.

The reaction to the punishing attacks was swift and varied. A spokesman for President Bush called on Israel to avoid inflicting civilian casualties, although he did not call for a halt to the attacks on <u>Hamas</u>. Egypt condemned the raid and opened its border crossing so that the wounded could be treated, and a spokesman for Javier Solana, the foreign policy chief of the European Union, condemned Israel's action and called for an immediate halt to the strikes.

For its part, Israel said the strikes would not only continue, but that they would be intensified.

The air attack came after days of warnings by Israeli officials that Israel would retaliate for intense rocket and mortar fire against Israeli towns and villages by *Hamas* and other militant groups in Gaza.

On Wednesday alone, more than 60 rockets and mortars were fired, some reaching further than previously. While the rockets are meant to be deadly, and several houses and a factory were hit, sowing widespread panic, no Israelis were killed or seriously injured in the recent attacks. A shaky Egyptian-brokered truce between Israel and *Hamas* started to break down in early November. *Hamas* had originally agreed to a six-month lull, and declared it officially over when the six-month period expired on Dec. 19.

Though Israel had been threatening to end its policy of restraint that saw only limited strikes against rocket launchers and squads in recent days, the timing of the raid came as a surprise to Gazans. It came in mid-morning,

Israeli Attack Kills Scores Across Gaza

when official buildings and security compounds were filled with personnel and children were at school, and not, as many had anticipated, at night.

Expecting some kind of Israeli response, the *Hamas* leaders in Gaza had already been in hiding for two days.

In a statement issued immediately after the raid, the Israeli military warned that "This operation will be continued, expanded and intensified as much as will be required."

"We face a period that will be neither easy nor short, and will require determination and perseverance until the necessary change is achieved in the situation in the south," Ehud Barak, the Israeli defense minister, said.

In Waco, Tex., where President Bush is vacationing, a White House spokesman, Gordon Johndroe, said: "<u>Hamas</u> must end its terrorist activities if it wishes to play a role in the future of the Palestinian people. The United States urges Israel to avoid civilian casualties as it targets <u>Hamas</u> in Gaza."

President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, who was sharply critical of the Israeli attack, said in a statement, "Egypt condemns the Israeli military aggression on the Gaza Strip and blames Israel, as an occupying force, for the victims and the wounded."

The spokesman for Mr. Solana said the European Union, "condemns the disproportionate use of force."

At Shifa Hospital in Gaza City, scores of dead bodies were laid out in front of the morgue waiting for family members to identify them. Many were dismembered.

Inside the hospital, relatives carried a five-month old baby who had suffered a serious head wound from shrapnel. Overwhelmed, the hospital staff seemed unable to offer help.

At the Gaza City police station, at least 15 traffic police who had been training in a courtyard were killed on the spot.

Tamer Kahrouf, 24, a civilian who had been working on a construction site in Jabaliya, north of Gaza City, said he saw his two brothers and uncle killed before his eyes when the Israeli planes bombed a security post nearby. Mr. Kharouf was wounded and bleeding from the head.

<u>Women</u> were wailing as they searched for their relatives among the dead. Sawsan Al-Ajab, 50, was looking for two sons, aged 32 and 24, who both worked at the Gaza police station.

The Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert appealed to the Gazans to reject <u>Hamas</u> and the rocket launchers in an interview with the Al Arabiya Arabic satellite television station on Thursday.

But Ms. Ajab's anger was not initially directed against *Hamas*.

"Egypt, the United States and Israel have agreed together to destroy *Hamas*," she said.

In Israel, the authorities seemed braced for yet more rocket fire from <u>Hamas</u>. The Home Front Command declared a "special situation" in all communities up to 12 miles from the Gaza border, Israel Radio said. Bomb shelters in all those communities have been opened, and residents have been asked not to congregate out of doors and to remain in protected areas, the radio said.

http://www.nytimes.com

Load-Date: December 28, 2008



Israeli jets kill 'more than 200' in revenge strikes on Gaza; nChildren among victims nFirst test for Obama The stink of death hangs over 'Black Saturday'

The Sunday Times (London)

December 28, 2008

Edition 1

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 1

Length: 1724 words

Byline: Marie Colvin; Tony Allen- Mills; Uzi Mahnaimi Tel Aviv

Body

ISRAEL yesterday launched its largest raid on Gaza with two waves of air attacks that killed at least 205 people and injured more than 700, according to Palestinian doctors.

Children on their way home from school and policemen parading for a graduation ceremony were the principal victims of a bloody few hours that left the territory in flames.

The short but brutal aerial blitz was aimed at targets held by the Islamic fundamentalists of <u>Hamas</u>, which seized control of the Gaza Strip 18 months ago.

After weeks of rising tension and repeated <u>Hamas</u> rocket attacks on Israeli territory, the air force struck with warplanes and unmanned drones loaded with guided missiles.

They hit at least 100 security compounds and rocket-launching bases across the heavily populated Strip.

The strikes caused panic and confusion as black clouds of smoke rose above the territory.

Most of those killed were security men - including Gaza's police chief - but an unknown number of civilians were also among the dead.

One perfectly aimed missile demolished the <u>Hamas</u>-controlled Rafah police station. But the building next door was a school and several pupils were on the street outside when a huge explosion sent shards of shrapnel and concrete hurtling in all directions. Parents rushed into the streets frantically looking for their children..

The strikes on Gaza yesterday were unparalleled. Israeli warplanes screamed in from the sea across Gaza in wave after wave, pounding at least 30 security compounds in the strip controlled by the *Hamas* government.

Israeli jets kill 'more than 200' in revenge strikes on Gaza nChildren among victims nFirst test for Obama The stink of death hangs over 'Black Saturday'

At 11.30am Israeli time, the first wave of 60 F-16s screamed low over Gaza, launching rockets at 50 targets. Israeli military sources said a total of 100 missiles were fired at <u>Hamas</u> police stations, command centres, training bases and illicit manufacturing warehouses.

In the second wave, 20 Israeli jets returned, following up intelligence received from drones in the skies over the Strip. They launched 50 missiles aimed almost entirely at militants who had come out with makeshift rockets to hit back.

The offensive took <u>Hamas</u> by surprise. The Islamic fundamentalist government had expected retaliation for the 200 rockets that <u>Hamas</u> and other extremist groups have launched into southern Israel since a six-month truce expired earlier this month. It had believed, however, that the attack would follow an Israeli cabinet meeting today.

According to military sources, the Israeli leadership decided to attack after intelligence revealed that <u>Hamas</u> leaders and military officials were still inside key buildings.

So unprepared was *Hamas* that two graduation ceremonies for new police recruits were being held in the open air.

In one strike, on a graduation ceremony in Gaza City, scores of police cadets were killed along with General Tawfiq Jabr, chief of the Palestinian police force, who had been presiding over the ceremony. At the parade ground uniformed bodies lay in piles, the wounded writhed in pain and cars and jeeps screamed up to carry the wounded to the hospitals.

"I was driving by when two or three jets came in with so much noise I didn't know where to hide," said Hamed Keshta. "The whole building went up into the sky. There was smoke everywhere. I ran to the area and there were just bodies, bodies and pieces of bodies." In Gaza City's main security compound, the bodies of more than a dozen uniformed *Hamas* police lay on the ground. One survivor raised his index finger in a show of Muslim faith, uttering a prayer. One man, his face bloodied, sat dazed on the ground as a fire raged nearby.

Ehud Barak, Israel's defence minister, said it would expand the operation if necessary.

"There is a time for calm and there is a time for fighting and now is the time for fighting," he told a news conference. He did not say whether a ground offensive was planned.

Gordon Brown, the Vatican and Tony Blair, in his role as an immediate restoration of calm. A White House spokesman said: "Hamas's continued rocket attacks into Israel must cease if the violence is to stop. The United States urges Israel to avoid civilian casualties as it targets Hamas in Gaza." Some of the Israeli missiles struck in densely populated areas. Gaza is home to about 1.5m Palestinians, at least half of whom are dependent on some kind of food aid. The path WW Continued from page 1 to violence January 25, 2006 Hamas wins Palestinian general elections, defeating the secular Fatah party March 18 America, the European Union and Israel boycott the new government and say they will suspend aid June Corporal Gilad Shalit, an Israeli soldier, is captured and held hostage by Hamas. Israel launches operation to recover him and bombs bridges, roads and the only power station in Gaza March 15, 2007 Palestinians reach agreement on unity government June 15 Hamas crushes Fatah in Gaza after three days of fighting.

Israel starts blockade June 19, 2008 Truce between Israel and <u>Hamas</u> brokered by Egypt November 4 Israeli army destroys a tunnel built by militants, sparking a new round of violence December 19 <u>Hamas</u>'s six-month ceasefire with Israel ends Among the bereaved was Said Masri, 57, who sat in the middle of a Gaza City 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," he wailed. The shopkeeper said he had sent his son, 9, to buy cigarettes minutes before the air strikes began and now could not find him. "May I burn like the cigarettes, may Israel burn," Masri moaned. At the Rafah hospital on the Gaza Strip, chaos followed the carnage.

Families desperate to find missing children screamed for help. The attendant guarding the entrance to the morgue was mobbed bywomen begging to be allowed to examine the bodies that had been brought in after the raids. "My

Israeli jets kill 'more than 200' in revenge strikes on Gaza nChildren among victims nFirst test for Obama The stink of death hangs over 'Black Saturday'

son, my son, he was at school and has been missing since this morning," howled a woman from the Abu Jazer family.

Relatives who were admitted to the chilly morgue pulled out stainless steel drawers containing the bodies of four teenagers among 27 newly arrived corpses. One of them was identified asAhmedAbed Jazer, a 14-yearold pupil whose body had been wrapped in a white sheet by doctors.

Shrapnel wounds in his head and stomach were still seeping blood as his distraught relatives confirmed his name. One Gaza City man brought the body of his seven-year-old son to hospital but, finding no place in the morgue, took him home in a cardboard box. He said the boy would be buried in the back yard. Shifa hospital, the main medical centre in Gaza, was overwhelmed.

Bodies lined the corridors, relatives screamed in the emergency room, cars and trucks pulled up into the courtyard with their doors open, the wounded piled inside because there were not enough ambulances. Huge pillars of black smoke rose over the city. "There are heads without bodies ... There's blood in the corridors. People are weeping, women are crying, doctors are shouting,"

said Ahmed Abdel Salaam, a nurse. The morgue had overflowed at Shifa hospital, and the stench was overwhelming because the electricity was cut throughout the city. "In every corner, there are bodies," said a doctor. "The stink of death is overwhelming. We are throwing bodies on the floor because the morgue is full.

" Palestinian news stations began calling the day of the Israeli air strikes "Black Saturday", a reference to Black Septemberwhen Jordan sent tanks into Palestinian camps inside its borders. That massacre led to the founding of the terrorist group Black September, which killed Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics in 1972.

Israeli military officials said more than 100 tons of missiles had been fired at Gaza by midafternoon. By early evening 205 Gazans were known to be dead and 700 wounded, Gaza health official Dr Moaiya Hassanain said. He did not provide figures on civilian deaths. Some of the dead, rolled in blankets, were laid out on the floor of Gaza's main hospital for identification.

Earlier in the day, when the death toll stood at 155, police spokesman Ehud Ghussein had said about 140 *Hamas* security forces were killed. *Hamas* leaders threatened revenge. *Hamas* "will continue the resistance until the last drop of blood," said Fawzi Barhoum, a spokesman. Israel told its civilians near Gaza to take cover as militants began retaliating with rockets, and in the West Bank, Mahmoud Abbas, the moderate Palestinian president, called for restraint. Egypt summoned the Israeli ambassador to express condemnation and opened its border with Gaza to allow ambulances to drive out some of the wounded. Protests against the campaign erupted in Arab Israeli villages and the Abbas-ruled West Bank.

The most violent West Bank response came in the city of Hebron, where dozens of youths, many of them masked, hurled rocks at Israeli forces, who lobbed tear gas and stun grenades in response. Officials in Bethlehem, Jesus's traditional birthplace, turned off Christmas lights and traders shuttered shops to protest at the Israeli attack. In Ein Hilweh, a Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon, dozens of youths hit the streets and set fire to tyres. I

Syria's al-Yarmouk camp, outside Damascus, dozens of Palestinian protesters vowed to continue fighting Israel. In the West Bank, *Hamas*'s rival, Abbas, said in a statement that he "condemns this aggression".

Abbas, who has ruled only the West Bank since the Islamic <u>Hamas</u> seized power in Gaza in June 2007, was in contact with Arab leaders, and his West Bank cabinet convened an emergency session.

Israel has targeted Gaza in the past, but the number of simultaneous attacks was unprecedented. It left Gaza in 2005 after a 38-year occupation, but the withdrawal did not lead to better relations with Palestinians in the territory as Israeli officials had hoped.

Page 4 of 4

Israeli jets kill 'more than 200' in revenge strikes on Gaza nChildren among victims nFirst test for Obama The stink of death hangs over 'Black Saturday'

Instead, the evacuation was followed by a sharp rise in militant attacks on Israeli border communities that on several occasions provoked harsh Israeli military reprisals. The last, in February and March, spurred both sides to agree to a truce that began unravelling in early November.

Since <u>Hamas</u> took power, it has created a militant "Hamastan", whose borders and coastline are sealed by Israel and whose only conduit to the outside world is through the Egyptians and <u>Hamas</u>'s radical leader, Khaled Mashaal, who is based in Damascus. Additional reporting: Hamed Keshta in Gaza

Graphic

A wounded child awaits medical attention at Shifa hospital in Gaza City yesterday after the Israeli air strikes

ABID KATIB

The Israeli missile attacks left hundreds of Palestinians killed or wounded in the Bureij refugee camp, left, and elsewhere in the Gaza Strip, top and above. The strikes, which involved 60 planes, came days after a six-month ceasefire with *Hamas* expired. The militant group vowed to carry out revenge attacks

YASSER SAYMEH/MOHAMMED ABED/SUHAIB SALEM

Load-Date: December 28, 2008

End of Document



<u>Letters</u>

The Jerusalem Post January 2, 2009 Friday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 14

Length: 449 words

Byline: Garet Aldridge, Paul Sandler, Thelma Susswein, John Profit, Sheri Gross

Highlight: Readers' Letters

Body

Bottoms up!

Sir, - How can I send a bottle or two of good Kentucky Bourbon to the skipper of the ship that stopped Cynthia McKinney's lame attempt at blockade running? ("Free Gaza boat denied entry, claims navy fired shots," December 31).

The whole crew deserves a tot on me.

GARET ALDRIDGE

Thomasville, Alabama

A cease-fire?...

Sir, - If we offer <u>Hamas</u> a cease-fire, they will reject it, as then they could not claim victory. But it would remind the world, and the Palestinian people, that this war is due to the intransigence of **Hamas**.

Such valuable diplomatic points should not be squandered ("Paris truce offer splits Olmert, Barak," December 31).

PAUL SANDLER

Tel Aviv

...absolutely not

Sir, - Talk of a cease-fire in Gaza was initiated by the EU and UN - but nothing has come from <u>Hamas</u> itself, which started this whole conflagration. And any cease-fire that is not called for by <u>Hamas</u> is worthless.

The thousands of mortars and rockets that have rained down upon Israel in so many places within 40 kilometers of Gaza bear testimony to the quantities of military aid from Iran and Iran's friends that <u>Hamas</u> has been receiving. A cease-fire would allow <u>Hamas</u> to proclaim victory throughout the Arab world, and its propaganda value would just increase.

Those who are calling for a temporary cease-fire are showing themselves to be conceptually bankrupt. All they want is another period of time that they think will give them a little quiet. They are refusing to deal with the whole problem

Letters

of terrorism and how it will affect them too, pretty soon ("Bush tells PM he wants truce <u>Hamas</u> will respect," Online Edition, December 31).

THELMA SUSSWEIN

Jerusalem

O, weak-kneed sleeping world

Sir, - Islamist fascists hide behind <u>women</u> and children, using them as human shields while they fire rockets into Israel. How brave. When they get what they deserve in response, they hold up injured children and call it a massacre. And, world, you fall for it every single time.

Wise up, world! ("Gaza portrayed," Editorial, December 29.)

JOHN PROFIT

Boston

Intelligence test

Sir, - What a striking juxtaposition of letters in your December 31 column!

One, by a hoity-toity academic, says that if we want to know why he and his fellow academics in the UK are boycotting Israel, we should just "look at Gaza today."

The letter following it begins: "I am of no consequence; a 70-year-old great grandfather who lives in a tiny American town..." He sees on TV the demonstrators outside the Israeli embassy in London and concludes that "they have no one but themselves to blame," having kept silent while <u>Hamas</u> fired thousands of rockets "at children playing in the streets of Israel."

Now, who's the smart one here?

SHERI GROSS

Jerusalem

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

End of Document



<u>Israel set to widen its assault on Gaza; Death toll surpasses 300 in third day</u> of airstrikes; fury rises in Arab world

The International Herald Tribune

December 30, 2008 Tuesday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1

Length: 1469 words

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

Dateline: GAZA

Body

Ethan Bronner contributed reporting from Jerusalem; Robert F. Worth and Hwaida Saad from Beirut; Nazila Fathi from Tehran; Rina Castelnuovo from the Israel-Gaza border; Khaled Abu Aker from Ramallah, West Bank; and an employee of The New York Times from Syria.

*

Israeli troops and tanks massed along the Gaza border and the government said it had called up reserves for a possible ground operation, as the death toll increased to more than 300 after Israeli aircraft pounded Gaza for a third day on Monday.

<u>Hamas</u> said Israel bombed a government ministry compound and the Islamic University in Gaza, a stronghold of <u>Hamas</u>, late Sunday night. The <u>Hamas</u>-owned television station Al Aqsa was also struck, as was a mosque that the Israeli military said was being used as a terrorist base. On Monday, Israeli warplanes bombed the <u>Hamas</u>-run Interior Ministry, Reuters reported, based on a <u>Hamas</u> statement.

In a statement on Monday, the Israeli Army said some areas around Gaza had been declared a "closed military zone," a move that some analysts depicted as a potential precursor to a ground offensive. The military said the declaration meant that civilians, including journalists, could be denied access to an area up to three kilometers, or two miles, from Gaza.

The military also reported that a rocket fired Monday from Gaza had killed a man and wounded seven people in the southern Israeli town of Ashkelon. Additionally, three Israelis were stabbed by a Palestinian in a Jewish settlement in the West Bank, the military said.

The continued airstrikes, which Israel said were in retaliation for sustained rocket fire from Gaza into its territory, unleashed a furious reaction across the Arab world, raising fears of greater instability in the region.

Much of the anger was also directed at Egypt, seen by <u>Hamas</u> and some nearby governments as having acceded to Israel's military action by sealing its border with Gaza and forcing back at gunpoint many Palestinians who were trying to escape the destruction.

Israel set to widen its assault on Gaza Death toll surpasses 300 in third day of airstrikes fury rises in Arab world

Witnesses at the Rafah border crossing described a chaotic scene as young men tried to force their way across into Egypt, amid sporadic exchanges of gunfire between <u>Hamas</u> and Egyptian forces. Egyptian state television reported that one Egyptian border guard had been killed by a <u>Hamas</u> gunman. A Palestinian man was killed by an Egyptian guard near Rafah, Reuters reported.

In Gaza, officials said medical services, stretched to the breaking point after 18 months of Israeli sanctions, were on the verge of collapse as they struggled to care for the more than 600 people wounded in two days.

At Shifa Hospital in Gaza City, <u>women</u> wailed as they searched for relatives among bodies that lay strewn on the hospital floor. One doctor said that, given the dearth of facilities, not much could be done for the seriously wounded and that it was "better to be brought in dead."

The International Committee of the Red Cross appealed Sunday for urgent humanitarian assistance, including medical supplies, to be allowed to enter Gaza. Israeli officials said that some aid had been allowed in through one of the crossings. Egypt temporarily opened the Rafah crossing on Saturday to allow some of the wounded to be taken to Egyptian hospitals.

Israel made a strong effort to justify the attacks, saying it was forced into military action to defend its citizens. At the same time, the supreme religious leader of Iran and the leader of the Lebanese militia group Hezbollah expressed strong support for *Hamas*.

Across Gaza, families huddled indoors as Israeli jets streaked overhead. Residents said that there were long blackouts and that they had no cooking gas. Some ventured out to receive bread rations at bakeries or to brave the streets to claim their dead at the hospitals. There were few mass funerals; rather, families buried the victims in small ceremonies.

At dusk on Sunday, Israeli fighter jets bombed more than 40 tunnels along Gaza's border with Egypt. The Israeli military said that the tunnels, on the Gaza side of the border, were used for smuggling weapons, explosives and fugitives. Gazans also use many of them to import consumer goods and fuel in order to get around the Israeli-imposed economic blockade.

In the first two days of the operation, Israeli jets had destroyed at least 30 targets in Gaza, including the main security compound and prison in Gaza City known as the Saraya, metal workshops throughout Gaza that were suspected of manufacturing rockets, and *Hamas* military posts.

Israel appeared to be settling in for a longer haul. On Sunday, the government approved the emergency call-up of thousands of army reservists in preparation for a possible ground operation as Israeli troops, tanks, armored personnel carriers and armored bulldozers massed at the border.

Speaking before the weekly cabinet meeting in Jerusalem, the Israeli defense minister, Ehud Barak, said the army "will deepen and broaden its actions as needed" and "will continue to act." Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said Israel's goal was not to reoccupy Gaza, which it left unilaterally in 2005, but to "restore normal life and quiet to residents of the south" of Israel.

Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni appeared on U.S. talk shows to press Israel's case. She said on "Fox News Sunday" that the operation "is needed in order to change the realities on the ground and to give peace and quiet to the citizens in southern Israel."

Militants in Gaza fired barrages of rockets and mortar shells the farthest yet into Israel on Sunday. One rocket fell in Gan Yavneh, a village near the major port city of Ashdod, about 30 kilometers north of Gaza. Two landed in the coastal city of Ashkelon. Several Israelis were wounded.

Fawzi Barhoum, a spokesman for <u>Hamas</u>, told reporters that Israel had started a "war" but that it would not be able to choose how it would end. He called for revenge in the form of strikes reaching "deep into the Zionist entity using all means," including suicide attacks.

Israel set to widen its assault on Gaza Death toll surpasses 300 in third day of airstrikes fury rises in Arab world

The hundreds of thousands of Israeli citizens now within rocket range have been instructed by the authorities to stay close to protected spaces.

In Lebanon, the leader of the Shiite militant group Hezbollah, Sheik Hassan Nasrallah, put his fighters on alert, expressing strong support for *Hamas* and saying that he believed Israel might try to wage a two-front war, as it did in 2006. He called for a mass demonstration in Beirut. And he also denounced Egyptian leaders. "If you don't open the borders, you are accomplices in the killing," he said in a televised speech.

The supreme religious leader of Iran, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, condemned the silence of some Arab countries, which he said had prepared the grounds for the "catastrophe," an Iranian news agency, ISNA, reported.

"The horrible crime of the Zionist regime in Gaza has once again revealed the bloodthirsty face of this regime from disguise," he said in a statement. "But worse than this catastrophe is the encouraging silence of some Arab countries who claim to be Muslim," he said, apparently in a reference to Egypt and Jordan.

Egypt has mediated talks between Israel and the Palestinians and between <u>Hamas</u> and its rival, Fatah, leaving it open to criticism that it is too willing to work with Israel. In turn, Egypt and other Western-allied Arab Sunni nations are deeply opposed to Hezbollah and <u>Hamas</u>, which they see as extensions of Iran, their Shiite nemesis.

Across the region, the Israeli strikes were being broadcast in grisly detail almost continually on Arab satellite networks.

In the Syrian capital, Damascus, a large group of protesters marched to Yusuf al-Azmeh Square, where they chanted slogans and burned Israeli and U.S. flags.

In Beirut, protesters were bused to a rally outside the United Nations building, holding up Palestinian flags and <u>Hamas</u> banners. Muhammad Mazen Ibrahim, a 25-year-old Palestinian who lives in one of the refugee camps here, choked up when asked about the assault on Gaza.

"There's an agreement between Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Israel against <u>Hamas</u>," he said. "They want to end them; all the countries are in league against <u>Hamas</u>, but, God willing, we will win."

That sentiment is widespread here. Many see Livni's visit to Cairo last week as evidence that Egypt, eager to be rid of *Hamas*, had consented to the airstrikes.

The anger echoes what happened in July 2006, when the leaders of Saudi Arabia and Egypt publicly blamed Hezbollah for starting the conflict with Israel. Popular rage against Israel soon forced the leaders to change their positions.

<u>Hamas</u>, sworn to the destruction of Israel, took control of Gaza when it ousted Fatah last year. An Egyptian-brokered six-month truce between Israel and <u>Hamas</u>, always shaky, began to unravel in early November. It expired 10 days ago.

Isabel Kershner reported from Jerusalem.

Load-Date: December 30, 2008



Israel's Gaza attack leaves nearly 300 dead

The New Zealand Herald December 29, 2008 Monday

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Section: NEWS; World Length: 1185 words

Body

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip - Israel widened its deadliest-ever air offensive against Gaza's <u>Hamas</u> rulers Sunday, pounding weapons smuggling tunnels and a central prison, sending more tanks and artillery toward the Gaza border and approving a reserves callup for a possible ground invasion.

Israeli leaders said they would press ahead with the Gaza campaign, despite rage and mass 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 aim is to halt Gaza rocket fire on Israel for good, but not to reoccupy the territory.

With the two-day death toll climbing above 290 Sunday, crowds of Gazans breached the border wall with Egypt to escape the chaos. Egyptian forces, some firing in the air, tried to push them back into Gaza.

<u>Hamas</u> was battered, but not neutralized. It fired missiles deeper into Israel on Sunday than it ever had before, close to the Israeli port city of Ashdod, and continues to command some 20,000 fighters.

Yet <u>Hamas</u> leaders were forced into hiding, most of the dead were from the <u>Hamas</u> security forces, and Israel's military intelligence chief said <u>Hamas</u>' ability to fire rockets had been reduced by 50 per cent. Indeed, <u>Hamas</u> rockets fire dropped off sharply, from more than 130 on Saturday to just over 20 on Sunday.

Israel's intense bombings - some 300 air strikes since midday Saturday - wreaked unprecedented destruction in Gaza, reducing entire buildings to rubble.

Shlomo Brom, a former senior Israeli military official, said it's the deadliest force ever used in decades of Israeli-Palestinian fighting. "Since <u>Hamas</u> took over Gaza (in June 2007), it has become a war between two states, and in war between states, more force is used," he said.

In the most dramatic attacks Sunday, warplanes struck dozens of smuggling tunnels under the Gaza-Egypt border, cutting off a key lifeline that had supplied <u>Hamas</u> with weapons and Gaza with commercial goods. The influx of goods had helped <u>Hamas</u> defy an 18-month blockade of Gaza by Israel and Egypt, and was key to propping up its rule.

Sunday's blasts made the ground shake several miles away and sent black smoke high into the sky.

Earlier, warplanes dropped three bombs on one of <u>Hamas'</u> main security compounds in Gaza City, including a prison building. Moments after the blasts, frantic prisoners were seen scrabbling down piles of huge rubble. One man, still half buried, raised a hand to alert rescuers.

Gaza's nine hospitals were overwhelmed with casualties. Dr. Moawiya Hassanain, who keeps a record for the Gaza Health Ministry, said more than 290 people were killed over two days and more than 800 wounded.

The Palestinian Center for Human Rights, which keeps researchers at all hospitals, said it had counted 251 dead by midday Sunday, and that among them were 20 children under the age of 16 and nine **women**.

Israeli leaders gave interviews to foreign TV stations to drum up international support.

Public Security Minister Avi Dichter, speaking Arabic, spoke on Arab satellite TV stations, denouncing <u>Hamas</u> rule in Gaza. Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni told the US network NBC that the assault came because <u>Hamas</u> is smuggling weapons and building a "small army."

In Jerusalem, Israel's Cabinet approved a callup of 6,500 reserve soldiers, in apparent preparation for a ground offensive. Israel has doubled the number of troops on the Gaza border since Saturday and also deployed an artillery battery. It was not clear, though, whether the deployment is part of an attempt to pressure <u>Hamas</u> or whether Israel is determined to send ground troops in a later stage of the offensive.

Since Israel's withdrawal from Gaza in 2005, after 38 years of full military occupation, Israeli forces have repeatedly returned to the territory to hunt militants. However, Israel has shied away from retaking the entire strip, for fear of getting bogged down on urban warfare without an exit strategy.

Military experts said Israel would need at least 10,000 soldiers for a full-scale invasion.

The diplomatic fallout, meanwhile, was swift.

Syria decided to suspend indirect peace talks with Israel, begun earlier this year. "Israel's aggression closes all the doors" to any move toward a settlement in the region, said a Syrian announcement.

The UN Security Council called on both sides to halt the fighting and asked Israel to allow humanitarian supplies into Gaza; 30 trucks were let in Sunday. The prime minister of Turkey, one of the few Muslim countries to have relations with Israel, called the air assault a "crime against humanity."

The carnage inflamed Arab and Muslim public opinion, setting off street protests across the West Bank, in an Arab community in Israel, in several Middle Eastern cities and in Paris.

Some of the protests turned violent. Israeli troops quelling a West Bank march killed one Palestinian and seriously wounded another. A crowd of anti-Israel protesters in the northern Iraqi city of Mosul became a target for a suicide bomber on a bicycle. In Lebanon, police fired tear gas to stop demonstrators from reaching the Egyptian Embassy.

Egypt, which has served as a mediator between Israel and the Palestinians as well as between <u>Hamas</u> and its rival Fatah, has been criticized for joining Israel in closing its borders with Gaza. The blockade was imposed immediately after the <u>Hamas</u> takeover in June 2007.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit called on <u>Hamas</u> to renew its truce with Israel. The cease-fire had begun unraveling last month, and formally ended more than a week ago. Since then, Gaza militants have stepped up rocket fire on Israel, prompting Israel's offensive.

A <u>Hamas</u> leader in exile, Osama Hamdan, said the movement would not relent. "We have one alternative which is to be steadfast and resist and then we will be victorious," Hamdan said in Beirut.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said it was unclear when the operation would end. The situation in southern Israel "is liable to last longer than we are able to foresee at this time," he told his Cabinet.

Hundreds of thousands of Israelis live in cities and towns in Gaza rocket range, and life slowed in some of the communities. Schools in communities in a 20-kilometer (12-mile) radius from Gaza were ordered to remain closed beyond the weeklong Jewish holiday of Hanukkah which ends Monday.

Israel 's Gaza attack leaves nearly 300 dead

In the southern city of Ashkelon, home to some 120,000 people, streets were relatively busy, with residents seemingly defying the military's recommendations against being out in the open.

Several times throughout the day, that routine was briefly interrupted by the sounds of wailing sirens warning of an imminent attack. Pedestrians scurried for cover in buildings. After a number of rocket were heard landing in the distance. A woman taking cover nearby briefly fainted. She refused water and food from bystanders, instead shivering in a corner, apparently in shock.

Gil Feiler, a regional economics experts, said it was too early to assess the economic impact on Israel, but that a monthlong operation could cost Israel \$200 million (143 euros) in lost wages, trade and other business.

- AP

Load-Date: December 29, 2008

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St. Louis Post-Dispatch (Missouri)

January 10, 2009 Saturday

THIRD EDITION

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Section: EDITORIAL; Pg. A38

Length: 2132 words

Body

Lambert's new image should start with easier signage

Regarding "A bright time for new airport signs?" (Jan. 1): If Lambert Airport officials are really concerned with "buffing up" the Lambert Field image, the realistic need is upgraded signage at all approaches, not a large expenditure for unneeded monuments.

Several months ago, I submitted a letter to the airport authority with a suggestion for a color-coded sign system to simplify directions to and from airport destinations. I received a reply that said my suggestion would be considered.

My suggestion was that all signs for arriving flights would have a red background and white letters, for example, and departing flights would be on signs with a blue background with white letters. There are many color combinations available that would require travelers to read and follow signs by color, depending on whether they are seeking the arrival area or departure area of the airport.

When approaching Lambert from eastbound Interstate 70, travelers have only several hundred yards before they must decide which road they should follow. When trying to decide which of the myriad of signs apply to their destination, they also must be very aware of all the other traffic around them and the decisions of other bewildered drivers facing the same problems, trying to read and determine in which direction to proceed.

If drivers were faced with reading and following only color-coded signs pertaining to their destination, it would vastly improve their ability to arrive at the destination more easily and without all the stress of speedreading signs and avoiding other traffic at the same time.

Edward E. Krite | Oakville

Left off the list

The story "Bond aide will hold six 'listening post' sessions" (Jan. 6) details "listening post" sessions that Lane Koch, an aide of U.S. Sen. Christopher "Kit" Bond, will hold at six city halls to hear from residents.

Mr. Bond said, "My office works only if people who need help come and ask for it."

These meetings are scheduled in Chesterfi eld, Ballwin, Creve Coeur, Maryland Heights, Manchester and Valley Park. These cities are all south of Interstate 70 and (mostly) west of Interstate 270. What about Hazelwood,

Florissant, Ferguson, Black Jack, etc.? Why aren't any meetings scheduled in any of these city halls? Will they be scheduled at a later date? Or is Mr. Bond only interested in hearing from citizens in the more affluent areas?

Dorothy Anderson | Spanish Lake

No moral equivalence

Tim Townsend, in his article "Area students continue Israel trip despite war" (Dec. 31), highlights local St. Louis gatherings that recently occurred in response to Israel's recent military operations against <u>Hamas</u>, a radical Islamic Palestinian terrorist group. Instead of providing the reason for Israel's operations in the Gaza Strip - to eliminate <u>Hamas</u> and its terrorist supporters who continually attack innocent Israeli civilians and have indiscriminately fired about 6,000 rockets into Israel since taking over the territory in June 2007 - he focuses on the reaction of local supporters of the *Hamas* terrorists.

The suffering of both innocent Palestinians and Israelis is deplorable. However, Israel has an obligation to protect its citizens, just as the United States would if our cities constantly were under attack by terrorists. <u>Hamas</u> continues to attack Israeli civilians, using <u>women</u>, children and elderly as human shields. The current operation is Israel's answer, after years of indelible restraint, to the constant terrorist attacks emanating from Gaza and an attempt to uproot <u>Hamas</u> and defend its citizens.

There is no moral equivalence between <u>Hamas</u> terrorists indiscriminately targeting innocent civilians in Israel and Israel's selfdefense operation that is attacking <u>Hamas</u>' infrastructure and terrorist installations and attempting to bring an end to the attacks on its own citizens. The responsibility for the loss of innocent Gazan lives lies squarely with **Hamas**.

Those protesters, if they truly desire peace, should aim their anger at the terrorists who orchestrated these events, not Israel.

Richard Woolf | St. Louis County

Roadblock to peace Sylvester Brown Jr.'s column "Protesters here implore Israel to halt offensive" (Jan. 4) is an anti-Israel propaganda piece, one-sided in perspective. He introduces "three little girls too adorable to resist," demonstrating against the Israeli retaliation, and says he felt "a wave of shame" over the bombing of Gaza. But Mr. Brown has not seen the adorable 2-year-old Israeli killed by <u>Hamas</u> rockets or the adorable 8-year-old who lost his leg after a rocket attack in southern Israel. He concedes that most of the people killed in Gaza are terrorists, members of <u>Hamas</u> and Islamic Jihad who deliberately aim their rockets directly at Israeli civilians. Before Israel began the military action, it contacted non-combatants near military installations and terrorists' hideouts and urged them to leave.

In statements from President George W. Bush and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, the United States laid the blame for this action squarely on *Hamas*. When President-elect Barack Obama visited Sderot, Israel, he stated that he would not allow his two daughters to sleep in a place where they would be targets for rockets. He understood the need for Israel to stop these vicious attacks and to live in peace. No one has defined what a proportionate counterattack would be. Should Israel randomly aim rockets at Palestinian population centers, as the terrorists do? Mr. Brown admits to being "uninformed" about the "nuances" of the conflict and says he "doesn't need a depth of understanding" to repeat the girls' wish to "stop the bombing now." But shouldn't he have made that plea long ago about more than 6,000 rockets fired by *Hamas* since Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005? Or more recently, the 3,200 fired in the past year? Hardly "nuances." *Hamas*, not Israel, is the roadblock to peace.

Laura Goldmeier | Creve Coeur

Cowardly foe

Regarding Sylvester Brown's column: I can assure him that there are many adorable olive-skinned, brown-eyed, dark-haired Jewish children living in Israel also; children who have awakened to bombings, fire and mortar shells

every night and day for the past four years. Israelis are fighting a cowardly foe - <u>Hamas</u> - that hides in civilian populations among <u>women</u> and children to fire on civilians in Israel.

Nine thousand people, some 1,700 Israeli families, moved out of Gaza in August 2005. Since then, there has been not a single Israeli living or working in Gaza.

However, during that time, <u>Hamas</u> has fi red more than 6,000 rockets and mortars into small towns along the Israel-Gaza border.

During the so-called "ceasefire" that began June 19 and ended Dec. 19, <u>Hamas</u> fired more than 650 mortars and rockets into Israel. Israel has stated repeatedly that if <u>Hamas</u> stops attacking Israel, Israel will call a cease fire. <u>Hamas</u> is the government in Gaza. The <u>Hamas</u> charter calls for sweeping "the Zionist entity" into the sea. <u>Hamas</u> prefers permanent terrorism to building a better life for its people. It is possible for a Jewish state and an Arab state to live peacefully, side by side. It's up to the Palestinian people of Gaza and the West Bank to decide their future: terrorism and permanent hostilities with <u>Hamas</u>, or the possibility of progress and peace without <u>Hamas</u>.

Niki Nymark | St. Louis County

Different views I was happy that Slyvester Brown wrote about people who want to see goodness win over evil. Killing is evil, no matter the reason. Israel's attacks on Gaza remind me of the bombing and invasion of many other countries, most recently the invasion Iraq by the United States.

It amazes me that many people cannot empathize with people whose countries are invaded. As Americans, we cite Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks as horrific, and as we would stand for no invasion of America.

Gaza is densely populated. By targeting *Hamas*, the Israeli government is guaranteeing civilian suffering and death and the destruction of their homes, schools and infrastructure.

People who are angry with Mr. Brown should be reminded that he is telling another story of the St. Louis community. He makes no judgments except that those he interviewed have different viewpoints and are sincere.

Catie Shinn | St. Louis

Lift them out

Sylvester Brown's interviewees in "Protesters here implore Israel to halt offensive" (Jan. 4), especially the three little Palestinian-American girls and the holocaust survivor Hedy Epstein, tug at your heartstrings.

However, only once in the article, in connection with the U.N. Security Council, are the Arabs mentioned.

Where are the Arab leaders, the brothers and sisters of the Palestinian people, to lift them out of their refugee camps and misery by integrating them in their midst and offering them hope for a new life instead of hatred, terror and war? If the Germans could do it, so can the Arabs.

Fifteen million Germans lost their possessions, homeland, culture and history after World War II as they were expelled from the eastern provinces. They were accepted, grudgingly, and eventually integrated into the two-thirds of what remained of pre-war Germany. Together, they built a thriving proud, new future and, instead of directing guns toward those who had terrorized and disowned them, they, little by little, developed understanding and cooperation and eventually merged into the European Union with them.

Gudula Behm | Ballwin

What would you do? I read in Sylvester Brown Jr.'s column about the continuing universal concern for the civilian suffering because of the Israeli incursion into Gaza. I certainly do not consider this concern anti-Semitic or even a stand against Israel. As a matter of fact, I am concerned, disturbed and even depressed by the pain of the civilian

population, as are most people. With very little imagination you can even understand and feel what the Palestinian people in Gaza are going through.

However, I would like to ask: What would you have the Israeli government and its people do in this situation in which they are continually faced with rockets aimed at the civilian populations by an enemy that has stated that it never will recognize Israel's right to exist. How would you, if you were responsible for your country, handle this?

Seymour Krout | Frontenac

Out of options

Will somebody please explain to <u>Hamas</u> and the Israeli government that violence never solves anything unless you're willing to destroy the other side, and then only if the other side is willing to submit rather than be destroyed.

World War II is the classic example. Germany and Japan continued to fight when it was obvious to everyone that they could not win and couldn't even force a stalemate because the Allies had shown a complete willingness to crush them out of existence. It was only when they realized that their options were unconditional surrender or absolute destruction that they surrendered.

Today, the world will not allow the absolute destruction of Gaza, and <u>Hamas</u> doesn't have the wherewithal to destroy Israel, so their only options are to keep killing each other. Unfortunately, every time one side attacks the other, it reduces the already-slim chance of a negotiated settlement.

Unless both sides come up with more intelligent leadership, a highly unlikely occurrence, the latest round of "I kill you because you kill me so I ..." will continue until another short-term truce is brokered by somebody else and there will be another uneasy peace until one side or the other breaks it.

Sometimes I think that the most sensible way to handle the Middle East is to build an impenetrable fence around it and make peace with the last one standing. But then there's that darned oil.

John A. Joseph | St. Louis

Is the fix in?

Wherever I look on the news, I find coverage of people protesting Israel's action against <u>Hamas</u> in the Gaza Strip. Were there no protests against <u>Hamas</u> rocket attacks against Israel? If so, they have been suppressed by the media. If not, that tells me a lot about how the "fix is in" for <u>Hamas</u> and against Israel.

This is a sad state of affairs that does not bode well for the United States.

Dan K. Gilbert Sr. | Florissant

Two to quarrel

A recent letter seemed to describe Israel's purity and the Palestinians' evil ways. But, as my dad told his quarreling sons, it takes two to make a quarrel. While President George W. Bush and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice dithered, Egypt brokered a six-month cease fire. It called for Gaza to suppress rocket fire and for Israel to ease the blockade of Gaza. In December, the Palestinians announced the resumption of rocket fire, charging that Israel had not lived up to the cease-fi re agreement because the blockade had not been eased.

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Body

A simple question: Can Israel defeat its enemies? One need not go back decades, to the clinical successes of the Six Day War and Entebbe, to answer emphatically in the affirmative.

Operation Defensive Shield, carried out in the spring of 2002, was a carefully planned and effectively executed attack on the Palestinians' suicide-bomb infrastructure in the West Bank that remade our reality in the years ever since - precisely the kind of goal enunciated for this week's Operation Cast Lead against *Hamas* in Gaza.

Defensive Shield was launched after the heaviest losses to terrorism in a single month in Israeli history - some 130 fatalities in more than a dozen attacks, including the Seder night bombing of the Park Hotel in Netanya. Its stated aim, as set out by then-prime minister Ariel Sharon, was to capture the terrorists and their dispatchers, and destroy their weapons, their explosives and their arms factories - their capacity to kill us.

The operation was bitter and bloody. It was internationally controversial: Duplicitous Palestinian claims that Israel was massacring civilians were given widespread credence. There was heavy loss of life and massive destruction on the Palestinian side. Twenty-nine Israeli soldiers were killed - most of them in the suicide- bomber "capital," Jenin refugee camp, where the terror gangs had booby-trapped buildings for the incoming IDF troops.

But it was decisive, marking the beginning of the drastic decline in suicide-bombings that enabled ordinary life to flourish here anew. The physical destruction of the bombers' infrastructure; the knowledge that the IDF might return at any time; the deaths of key terror chiefs; the effective intelligence gathering that greatly reduced potential bombers' motivation; the construction of the West Bank security barrier - all of these factors combined if not to terminate, then to profoundly set back what had been an unprecedented strategic suicide-bomb onslaught against the men, <u>women</u> and children of Israel.

The deterrent effect of what had been a reluctant resort to such force, however, was gravely undermined by the subsequent abject handling of the Second Lebanon War - fought, like the current operation, across a border to which Israel had unilaterally withdrawn in the false hope of being rewarded with quiet.

The Winograd Committee's scathing dissection of that conflict portrayed an IDF unprepared to battle Hizbullah, and a political leadership - headed by Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and defense minister Amir Peretz - too arrogant and inexperienced to realize this.

The consequence was a bumbling and hesitant confrontation, in which Hizbullah's tenacity was underestimated, as was the capacity for its thousands of Katyusha rockets to wreak havoc throughout the north of Israel. The initial air assault failed to achieve the decimation of Hizbullah that the Israeli leadership had unfoundedly predicted. And the ground forces were short of training and supplies, and poorly marshalled. (IDF soldiers fought highly effectively against Hizbullah's forces; the problem was not with their courage and skill, but with the incoherence of the command hierarchy.)

The stop-start battle with Hizbullah was code-named, with unintended accuracy, Operation Change of Direction. It became the Second Lebanon War only after it went unwon.

In the two and a half years since then, however, the IDF has benefited from the command of a no-nonsense exinfantry man, Gabi Ashkenazi, who has quietly retrained and re-entrenched basic logistics and skills.

The unqualified Peretz has long since gone from the Defense Ministry, to be replaced by the rather politically unloved, but undeniably experienced Ehud Barak - a former chief of the General Staff and former head of the IDF's elite Sayeret Matkal commando unit.

Olmert remains in power - albeit only for a few more weeks - having insisted that he was uniquely placed to learn the lessons of 2006's failures, and thus to prevent a recurrence.

And yet, this week, six days into Operation Cast Lead, the question must be asked anew: Can Israel defeat its enemies?

ISRAEL EMBARKED on its confrontation with <u>Hamas</u> with a clear goal: To restore security to the South.

Some senior Israelis exaggerated the scope. The ambassador to the UN, Gabriela Shalev, for instance, said the aim of this conflict was to destroy <u>Hamas</u>. She was privately rapped for speaking out of line. Barak said in the Knesset on Monday that Israel was engaged in "a war to the bitter end" against <u>Hamas</u>, but those who used this assertion to claim that Operation Cast Lead was itself this "war to the bitter end" were removing the comment from the context in which he employed it in his speech. It was uttered as Barak sought to illustrate the fundamental clash between our sovereign state and an Islamist movement that avowedly seeks our elimination, not as part of the operation's goals.

Publicly and privately, however, Israeli officials from Olmert on down did elaborate on what would constitute "restored security." By this, they said, Israel meant the creation of a new reality in which <u>Hamas</u> would not fire rockets into Israel; would not seek to fire rockets into Israel; would not manufacture rockets; would not produce or smuggle in the materials for manufacturing rockets; and would not engage or prepare for other acts of terrorism. If <u>Hamas</u>'s ability to rule Gaza was destroyed in the process, so be it.

This, they said, would enable southern Israel to breathe easily again, enjoying long-term confidence that murderous metal shrapnel was not about to burst upon it from the Kassam crews of the Gaza Strip.

Quite apart from the presence at the helm of a chastened prime minister, a more experienced defense minister and a quietly effective chief of General Staff, many other central factors combined to give the operation a realistic chance of success.

The IDF had spent months preparing for the conflict, gathering intelligence on <u>Hamas</u> targets, training for specific missions.

Gaza was relatively familiar territory for the IDF, which had been deployed there until the disengagement of 2005.

Quiet diplomatic efforts had been under way to explain the nature of the challenge Israel was facing - the untenability of having a widening swathe of a tiny country held hostage to *Hamas*'s improving rocketeers.

Public diplomacy had been geared up, too, with a unified hierarchy organized by Yarden Vatikai in the Prime Minister's Office, and practiced diplomats trained for action on the foreign language media battlefields.

Southern Israel had proven demonstrably resilient, having endured eight years of Kassam attacks, and was thus relieved, though understandably anxious, as the IDF set about seeking a long-term respite. The coordination of the Home Front Command was far more efficient than in 2006, with local authorities well briefed for the challenges.

The enemy, though viciously motivated and supremely indifferent to loss of life - it ruthlessly killed its own people when wresting power in Gaza in June 2007 - was far less equipped for the fight than that other Iranian proxy army to the north, Hizbullah. Its rocket capacity was limited, and its ability to melt away much constrained, especially given Egypt's refusal to let its border with Gaza serve as <u>Hamas</u>'s supply import route and terrorist escape route.

In fact, Egypt's unprecedented criticism of <u>Hamas</u>, for bringing disaster to bear on Gaza by maintaining rocket attacks on Israel and cancelling the misnamed "truce," was another major asset for Israel, in turn helping to mollify some of the inevitable international criticism of the resort to force.

NEVERTHELESS, AS early as Tuesday evening, sources in the defense establishment were indicating that Barak was ready to agree to a 48-hour "humanitarian" time-out in the operation - as requested by French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner - which might turn into a permanent cease-fire if *Hamas* halted the rocket attacks.

Adherents of the notion claimed the air force had exhausted its "bank" of <u>Hamas</u> targets in Gaza and that there was little more that could be done from the air for now, while bad weather meant a ground assault was not practicable for the next couple of days anyway. They said Israel would gain greater international support for displaying a willingness to sanction a suspension of the operation, and that if <u>Hamas</u> nevertheless continued to fire rockets, Israel could renew the assault with greater legitimacy. And they noted that Israel had spurned the chance of a cease-fire early in the Second Lebanon War, and come to rue the missed opportunity.

None of these arguments withstands serious scrutiny. The "bank" of targets continually refreshes so long as <u>Hamas</u> attempts to govern Gaza. Bad weather might necessitate delayed actions, but not a formal commitment to inaction. Yes, Israel might score points if <u>Hamas</u> continued firing through a time-out, but what if it didn't? The operation would be over without its goal attained. And while the unready IDF might indeed have benefited from an early cease-fire in 2006, to take the time to properly prepare for the confrontation with Hizbullah, this time Ashkenazi had made clear that it was ready to execute its battle plan.

After discussion by Barak, Olmert and Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni that night, the time-out was rejected. On Wednesday, officials attempted to suggest it had never been seriously contemplated. But Ashkenazi, for one, plainly believed that it was a plausible possibility; he went so far as to approve the release of a statement on Tuesday afternoon dissociating the IDF from any role in hatching or advancing the idea.

On Wednesday, Olmert declared that "we didn't initiate the Gaza operation in order to end it while Israeli towns are still under fire." So why was Barak weighing the time- out, and thus seemingly signalling a desired Israeli countdown toward a cease-fire?

<u>Hamas</u> has been firing rockets more deeply than ever into Israel - as far as Beersheba since Tuesday, bringing an estimated 800,000 Israelis into range. Though it has sustained considerable losses, it is anything but broken, as the head of the Shin Bet (Israel Security Agency), Yuval Diskin, told the cabinet on Wednesday. Almost all of its leadership has gone safely to ground. Its armed forces are essentially intact. It may be temporarily unable to effectively govern Gaza at present, but it retains its capacity to regain its hold if the operation ceases.

Barak's readiness to contemplate the time-out at so early a juncture suggested that the defense minister was himself uncertain that Israel could indeed effectively quash the <u>Hamas</u> threat. By extension, it conveyed a similar sense of uncertainty to the IDF and to those international players who have explicitly or tacitly backed Israel in this endeavor. And what a boost it must have been to **Hamas** and its Islamist supporters.

THIS IS not to say that the stewards of this operation should be sending great convoys of tanks plunging through the mud into Gaza - to be gleefully confronted by a <u>Hamas</u> force that has been preparing - booby-trapping roads and buildings, setting ambushes - for precisely such an eventuality.

The IAF assaults have smashed the symbols of <u>Hamas</u> power, bombed many of the tunnels that are its lifeline, blown up many of its rocket silos, hit some of its weapons stores and laboratories, and killed several of its key commanders.

If much of what can be achieved from the air was indeed achieved early in this operation, other targets will nevertheless appear as <u>Hamas</u> leaders seek to emerge from the bunkers - as was the case on Thursday afternoon when Nizar Rayyan was killed. And if they do not show their faces, <u>Hamas</u> will gradually lose more credibility, and ultimately lose the capacity to govern.

Meanwhile, astute use of forces on the ground where and when necessitated - whether to tackle concentrations of terrorist power as in Operation Defensive Shield, or to target weapons stores and rocket silos callously placed by <u>Hamas</u> in dense residential areas unreachable from the air - would gradually reduce <u>Hamas</u>'s capacity to threaten Israel.

As the original goal made plain, this confrontation must be concluded with Israel in a position of strength, able to dictate conditions that will prevent a resurgence of the <u>Hamas</u> threat in the long-term. Israel must retain ongoing freedom for military action, enabling the IDF to prevent the homefront - the schools, the kindergartens - from again becoming the front line.

A cease-fire, by contrast, that leaves <u>Hamas</u> able - as it was during the months of the last lull - to move around freely and organize for battle, to import arms and to improve its weaponry, would mean Operation Cast Lead had achieved nothing.

It would suggest a further deterioration since 2006, when Israel's leadership was plainly inexperienced and underqualified. Here and now, *Hamas*, Hizbullah, Iran and Syria would proclaim, Israel - having once more chosen to seek a decisive outcome after its people came under unprovoked attack, facing a force less formidable than Hizbullah, and led by a veteran defense minister and a highly regarded IDF chief - was again ultimately deterred.

AFTER THE shock of the initial air strikes, Operation Cast Lead was predicated on the basis of weeks, not days - a strategic, systematic effort to change the reality in the South.

It worked for Operation Defensive Shield in the West Bank. If Israeli civilians are to live free from the terror threat, it needs to work in Gaza.

Graphic

Photo: IDF FORCES prepare at the Gaza border. A cease-fire that leaves <u>Hamas</u> able - as it was during the months of the last lull - to move around freely and organize for battle, to import arms and to improve its weaponry, would mean Operation Cast Lead had achieved nothing. (Credit: Ariel Jerozolimski/The Jerusalem Post)

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