

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

Job Number: 223445934

Documents (100)

1. [ISRAEL POUNDS GAZA BY AIR AGAIN ISRAEL POUNDS GAZA FOR 2ND DAY STRIKES CONTINUE FOR SECOND DAY; TROOPS AND TANKS MASS ALONG BORDER](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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2. [In the heart of conflict, Gaza civilians are hit hard Casualties are mounting and resources running out](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

3. [Amid a Buildup of Its Forces, Israel Ponders a Cease-Fire](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

4. [Sound and fury ... and it still signifies nothing](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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5. [Israel will not break us, say defiant Palestinians](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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6. [Israeli bombardment of Gaza](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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7. [Column: Collective punishment a far too diplomatic term for Israel 's strategy.](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

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8. [Israel 's offensive in Gaza](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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9. [Only Obama can end this bloody stalemate as Gaza cries for help As Israel prepares an all-out attack on Hamas, one expert on the region says that a new US President must now seize his chance to intervene](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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10. [Cabinet okays rocket-protection for communities within range. Livni, Barak trade barbs over Gaza policy](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by

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11. [*Talks as troops pour into Gaza*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Narrowed by

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12. [*PALESTINIANS GET 3-HOUR REPRIEVE FROM WAR HELL*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Narrowed by

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13. [*ISRAEL 'S ATTACK ON GAZA STRIP: CON: Israeli actions prolong the violence*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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14. [*Other views: Gaza*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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15. [*UN rights council set to censure Israel for 21st time*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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16. [Time for more balanced debate on gaza trouble](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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17. [Troops charge in as cabinet meets](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

18. [Obama's party divided on Gaza conflict; New leader faces tough decision](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

19. [A moral war](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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20. [Chaos in Gaza as Israel launches more airstrikes](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

21. [*Rudd shuns brutal truth*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

22. [*Where does Australia stand on carnage in Gaza?*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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23. [*LETTERS TO THE EDITOR*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

Narrowed by
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24. [*Israeli forces close in on Gaza City*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
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25. [*World leaders call for Mideast truce*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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26. [Picking up the pieces after the missiles stop falling Seen up close, conflict in Middle East is much more complex than outsiders realize](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

27. [MADNESS IN GAZA ISRAEL ON BRINK OF DEADLY INVASION KIDS AMONG 280 KILLED BY AIRSTRIKES WORLD PLEA FOR END TO BLOODSHED](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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28. [Israel condemns UN statement calling for end to Gaza blockade. Dismayed that 'casual' reference to Palestinian aggression was 'almost an afterthought'](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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29. [Time to speak up about Gaza tragedy and push for ceasefire](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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30. [Toll in Gaza: 275 children killed, 1,333 are injured](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

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31. [*Scores of children protest against Israel 's siege of Gaza Strip*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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32. [*Economic activity - both legal and illegal - comes to a standstill in Gaza. Lifeline supplied by tunnels no longer feeding the population*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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33. [*Gaza conflict will shake the Arab world*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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34. [*AS ISRAELI OFFENSIVE CONTINUES, GAZANS FEEL ABANDONED*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

35. [*Many Egyptians want to steer clear of Gaza trouble*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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36. [*Israel continues to bombard Palestinians*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
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37. [*Israelis are hit by new wave of rockets fired from Lebanon*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
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38. [*Chaos in Gaza Strip; Latest Israeli air attacks on military posts, prisons leave hundreds dead*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
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39. [*Which way will Obama jump on Israel ?*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

40. [*Killing fields of Gaza*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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41. [*FLAMES OF HELL VICTORIA WARD REPORTS FROM FRONT LINE IN GAZA WAR TERROR AS ISRAEL STORMS STRIP 100 CIVILIANS AMONG 500 DEAD*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
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42. [Letters - Israel has an obligation to defend its citizens against fanatics](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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43. [Truce proposed after deadly shelling](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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44. [Israeli Attack Splits Gaza; Truce Called Are Rebuffed: Hospital Fills Up, Mainly With Civilians, and Struggles to Cope](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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45. [Overwhelming force is the only way to fight terrorists](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
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46. [Nothing surprising about Jews disagreeing with Israeli actions](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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47. [*BLOODIEST YET 298 dead, 800 wounded as Israel rains 100 tons of bombs on Gaza and gets troops ready for invasion*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

48. [*As conflict expands, U.N. halts Gaza aid*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

49. [*British Jews come out to support Israel . Solidarity rallies taking place across America and in parts of Europe*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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50. [*Israel 's devastating bombardment of Gaza MIDEAST: Gaza Becomes a Chessboard for Israeli Leaders*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

51. [*Israel takes fight to the streets of Gaza * Up to nine Israeli soldiers killed in heavy fighting, according to sources in Jerusalem * Plan for peace via an international force along Gaza's borders faces huge obstacles*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

52. [Letters](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

53. [Israel must abide by international law](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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54. [Learning to balance a Canadian identity with a Gaza Strip address](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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55. [Gaza faces humanitarian disaster](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

56. [Israeli troops move on Gaza City](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

57. [*Possible ground invasion to follow Israeli air onslaught*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

58. [*Israeli PM rejects ceasefire proposal GAZA CRISIS - Reports of Government split as international pressure mounts*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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59. [*Talks as troops pour into Gaza*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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60. [*Israel attackers will not succeed*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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61. [*Israeli offensive in Gaza*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

62. [Gaza pounding must stop now Letters to the editor](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

63. [BLOODIEST YET 296 dead, 700 wounded as Israel rains 100 tons of bombs on Gaza militants behind 300 rocket attacks](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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64. [ARMY CLOSES IN ON GAZA AS THE DEATH TOLL CLIMBS](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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65. [BARELY SURVIVING VICTORIA WARD REPORTS FROM THE FRONT LINE IN THE GAZA WAR TERROR AS ISRAEL STORMS STRIP 100 CIVILIANS AMONG 500 DEAD](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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66. [STREETWISE War of terror in Gaza](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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67. [BARELY SURVIVING VICTORIA WARD REPORTS FROM THE FRONT LINE IN THE GAZA WAR
TERROR AS ISRAEL STORMS STRIP 100 CIVILIANS AMONG 500 DEAD](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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68. [Egypt bolsters Gaza border force as Palestinians demonstrate](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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69. [Front: Gaza's day of carnage - 40 dead as Israelis bomb two UN schools: * Bloodiest attack of campaign so far * Obama breaks silence on conflict: 40 dead in Gaza's day of carnage](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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70. [LETTERS FROM READERS YOUR VIEWS](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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71. [Israeli troops flood Gaza](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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72. [LETTERS](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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73. [ISRAEL : NO LET-UP They defy international calls for ceasefire in Gaza](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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74. [Death of innocents](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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75. [ISRAEL : NO LET-UP They defy international calls for cease fire in Gaza](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

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76. [885 dead as Gaza fighting rages](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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77. [*Mideast Turmoil Hits Close To Home &Nbsp; Opinions Here And There Vary As War Rages*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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78. [*New Gaza truce plan offered*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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79. [*UN halts Gaza aid shipments, cites Israeli attacks*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

80. [*Hundreds killed and hospitals overrun as Israeli warplanes launch attack on Gaza Strip*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

81. [*BLOODIEST YET 296 dead, 700 wounded as Israel rains 100 tons of bombs on Gaza militants behind 300 rocket attacks*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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82. [*'We're wading in death, blood and amputees. Pass it on - shout it out' A doctor's desperate text message to friends reveals the plight of Palestinian civilians caught in the crossfire, write Azmi Keshawi and James Hider*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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83. [*300 die in Israeli attacks on Gaza; Deadly days*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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84. [*War-torn refugees rush to Syria; Sympathy for displaced Palestinians does not translate into a welcome with open arms*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

85. [*'We're wading in death, blood and amputees. Pass it on - shout it out' A doctor's desperate text message to friends reveals the plight of Palestinian civilians caught in the crossfire, write Azmi Keshawi and James Hider*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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86. [*Arab foreign ministers meeting falls short*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

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87. [Clinton on a diplomatic tightrope to prove she can deal with the Arabs](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

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88. [Network of tunnels and traps -- Israeli troops dodge ambushes and suicide bombers](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

89. [Network of tunnels and traps](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

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90. [OPINION: Wouldn't it be great to have a simple solution?](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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91. [FRANCE, EGYPT WORK ON GAZA TRUCE AS 30 PALESTINIANS DIE](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

Narrowed by
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92. [Joy and despair: baby given life because of the shells that rained death on Gaza](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

93. [*A diplomatic silence*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

94. [*Canada contributing \\$4M for humanitarian efforts, Cannon says*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

95. [*Israel's man has head and heart on two fronts GAZA FALLOUT*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

96. [*Muslims gather to protest Gaza Strip violence Conflict condemned*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

97. [*Gaza incursion to end soon says Israel*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

98. [*Israeli Shells Kill 40 At Gaza U.N. School*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

99. [*Israel warning civilians to flee*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

100. [*Where's the Outrage Now?*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

ISRAEL POUNDS GAZA BY AIR AGAIN; ISRAEL POUNDS GAZA FOR 2ND DAY STRIKES CONTINUE FOR SECOND DAY; TROOPS AND TANKS MASS ALONG BORDER

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (Pennsylvania)

December 29, 2008 Monday

SOONER EDITION

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Section: WORLD; Pg. A-1

Length: 1109 words

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

Body

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip -- Israeli aircraft pounded Gaza for a second day yesterday, increasing the death toll to nearly 300, as Israeli troops and tanks massed along the border and the government said it had called up reserves for a possible ground operation.

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 Hamas 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.

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 Hamas and Egyptian forces. Egyptian state television reported that one Egyptian border guard was fatally shot by a Hamas gunman. A Palestinian man was killed by an Egyptian guard near Rafah, Reuters reported.

In Gaza yesterday, 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 wounded in the past two days.

At Shifa Hospital in Gaza City, women 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 for the Red Cross appealed yesterday for urgent humanitarian assistance, including medical supplies, to be allowed to enter Gaza. Israeli officials said some aid had been allowed in through one of the crossings; on Saturday, Egypt temporarily opened the Rafah crossing to allow the wounded to be taken to Egyptian hospitals.

ISRAEL POUNDS GAZA BY AIR AGAIN ISRAEL POUNDS GAZA FOR 2ND DAY STRIKES CONTINUE FOR SECOND DAY; TROOPS AND TANKS MASS ALONG BORDER

Israel made a strong push to justify the attacks, saying it was forced into military action to defend its citizens. At the same time, heated statements from the supreme 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 there were long electricity blackouts and that they had no cooking gas. Some ventured out to receive rationed bread at bakeries, or to brave the streets to claim their dead at hospitals. There were few mass funerals; rather, families buried the victims in small ceremonies.

At dusk yesterday, Israeli fighter jets bombed more than 40 tunnels along Gaza's border with Egypt. The Israeli military said the tunnels that were attacked, 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.

Over the past two days, 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 are suspected of manufacturing rockets, and Hamas military posts.

Hamas said Israel bombed a government ministry compound and Gaza's Islamic University, an important symbol and training ground, late last night. The Hamas-owned television station Al Aqsa was also struck, as was a mosque that the Israeli military said was being used as a terrorist base.

Israel appeared to be settling in for a longer haul. The government yesterday 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 along the border.

Speaking before the weekly Cabinet meeting in Jerusalem, 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."

Israel's Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni appeared on the Sunday 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 again fired barrages of rockets and mortar shells further into Israel yesterday. One rocket fell in Gan Yavneh, a village near the major port city of Ashdod, almost 20 miles north of Gaza. Two others 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.

Mahmoud Abbas, the president of the Palestinian Authority and the leader of Fatah, blamed Hamas yesterday for the bloodshed in Gaza and said it could have been prevented. 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 he believed Israel might try to wage a two-front war, as it did in 2006. He called for a mass demonstration in Beirut today. 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, ISNA news agency reported.

ISRAEL POUNDS GAZA BY AIR AGAIN ISRAEL POUNDS GAZA FOR 2ND DAY STRIKES CONTINUE FOR SECOND DAY; TROOPS AND TANKS MASS ALONG BORDER

"The horrible crime of the Zionist regime in Gaza has once again revealed the blood-thirsty 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, in an apparent reference to Egypt and Jordan.

Egypt has mediated talks between Israel and the Palestinians and between **Hamas** and 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 **Hamas**, which they see as extensions of Iran, their Shiite nemesis.

Across the region, the Israeli strikes were being broadcast almost continually on Arab satellite networks, in grisly detail.

Graphic

PHOTO: Eyad Baba/Associated Press: A Palestinian family reacts as they rush past a burning building after an Israeli missile strike in the Rafah refugee camp, southern Gaza Strip, yesterday.

INFORMATIONAL GRAPHIC; AP: (Violence mounts)

Load-Date: December 29, 2008

In the heart of conflict, Gaza civilians are hit hard; Casualties are mounting and resources running out

The International Herald Tribune

January 5, 2009 Monday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 7

Length: 1080 words

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

Dateline: GAZA

Body

The body of Ahmad Abu Daf had been lying in the morgue of Shifa Hospital in Gaza City for about two hours Sunday when his relatives came to collect it.

Abu Daf, 37, was hit along with one of his children by Israeli shrapnel outside their house in the Zeitoun district of Gaza City, the relatives said. The boy arrived at the hospital wounded, but Abu Daf's condition was much worse and deteriorated further.

As the relatives carried him out of the morgue on a stretcher to take him for burial, they suddenly started to shriek. Blood was trickling out of his mouth and his hand seemed to be shaking. Abu Daf was alive.

Four doctors raced out of the emergency room to tend to him, but the hopes were short-lived. Mortally wounded, he soon died.

This was one of many harrowing scenes here on the ninth day of Israel's assault on the **Hamas** rulers of Gaza, as the military continued to pound the crowded Palestinian enclave from the air, from the sea, and now with tank shells and artillery as troops advanced on the ground.

Ziad Abd al Jawwad, 41, a nurse who had been working for 24 hours without a break, noted that even the devastating 1967 war was over in six days.

Doctors here have been battling for more than a week to keep the hospital running under the most adverse circumstances. Sanitation workers constantly go round mopping up blood while **Hamas** security officers maintain order. But the scant resources are being stretched to the breaking point, and a terrible stench permeates the air.

Dr. Mads Gilbert, a Norwegian physician who was allowed into Gaza last week to give emergency medical aid, and who has worked in many conflict zones, said the situation was the worst he had seen.

The hospital lacked everything, he said - monitors, anesthesia, surgical equipment, heaters and spare parts. The windows were blown out in an Israeli bombing nearby, and like the rest of Gaza, the severely limited fuel supplies were running out.

In the heart of conflict, Gaza civilians are hit hard Casualties are mounting and resources running out

Still, Oved Yehezkel, the Israeli cabinet secretary, said Sunday that from the information at Israel's disposal, "there is no humanitarian crisis in Gaza."

Many here would dispute that. With power lines down, much of Gaza is without electricity and there is a dire shortage of cooking fuel.

The Israeli government says that it has allowed 10,000 tons of essential humanitarian aid to be delivered to Gaza throughout the week, mainly food and medicine, even as Hamas fired its longer-range rockets into major cities of the Israeli south.

Among the donations were 2,000 units of blood from Jordan, as well as 5 ambulances from Turkey and 5 transferred on behalf of the Palestinian Red Crescent Society from the West Bank.

But the 18-month-old economic embargo that Israel imposed since Hamas overran Gaza, and tightened in response to rocket fire, has left many things in short supply.

Shifa's worst day in memory was Dec. 27, the first day of the Israeli campaign, when warplanes streaked across Gaza bombing Hamas security compounds, resulting in heavy casualties. Hundreds of dead and wounded arrived within minutes at the hospital, most of them Hamas security personnel who had been taken by surprise.

But in recent days, most of those arriving at Shifa appeared to be civilians. On Sunday, there was no trace here of the dozens of Hamas fighters that the Israeli military said its ground forces had hit over the past few hours in exchanges of fire.

Instead, most of the men who were wounded or killed seemed to have been hit along with members of their family near their homes or on the road. Then there were two young cousins and a 5-year-old boy from another family who were killed by shrapnel as they played on the flat roofs of their apartment buildings, after having been cooped up inside for long hours.

A woman who came to the hospital with her 15-year-old daughter, who was wounded by shrapnel, said that soldiers had taken over their house in Beit Lahiya, in the north; had detained the men, who she said were farmers; and told the rest of the family to leave. The daughter was wounded when the Israeli forces fired on the upper floors of the house before breaking the front door down, she said.

Fida Basal, 20, was looking for her sister, Hanin, 17. Hanin had been at her uncle's house when they were caught in Israeli fire. The uncle had to have both legs amputated. In Hanin's case, the doctors were able to save one.

Another woman found only half the corpse of her 17-year-old daughter in the morgue. "May God exterminate Hamas," she screamed, a curse rarely heard here these days.

By Sunday afternoon, Palestinian hospital officials were reporting 30 civilians killed since the start of the ground invasion the night before.

At the hospital entrance, women were wailing; men were praying, staring, waiting for news.

The combat was not taking place in Gaza City on Saturday night and Sunday, but in areas to the north and east closer to the Israeli border. At least five civilians were killed Sunday morning, however, when Israeli shells or rockets landed in the market of Gaza City while people were stocking up on supplies. (An Israeli military spokesman said the circumstances were being checked.)

The Israeli Army has repeatedly emphasized that the residents of Gaza are not the target of its operation. But the military said in a statement on Sunday that "the Hamas terror organization operates amongst civilians, using them as 'human shields.'"

Parts of Gaza, a narrow coastal strip with a population of 1.5 million, are among the most densely crowded areas in the world. Artillery and tank fire can easily cause collateral damage. Israel all but stopped firing tank and artillery

In the heart of conflict, Gaza civilians are hit hard Casualties are mounting and resources running out

shells into Gaza in November 2006 after 18 Palestinian civilians, most from one family, were killed by Israeli shells that missed their target and hit a row of houses in Beit Hanoun.

Speaking by telephone Sunday morning from her home in Shajaiya, near the border with Israel, Itidal Mushtaha, 58, said there was shelling all around. She, her four sons, their wives and 23 grandchildren had all huddled, terrified, on the ground floor with no electricity or water. The Israelis had destroyed many houses nearby that were identified as belonging to **Hamas** operatives, she said, adding, "We do not know where to hide."

Yet Mushtaha, who said she was not usually a political person, had nothing but praise for **Hamas**.

"God bless these fighters," she said. "They are throwing themselves to death to protect us."

Isabel Kershner contributed reporting from Jerusalem.

Load-Date: January 13, 2009

Amid a Buildup of Its Forces, Israel Ponders a Cease-Fire

The New York Times

December 31, 2008 Wednesday

Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section A; Column 0; Foreign Desk; Pg. 1

Length: 1112 words

Byline: By ETHAN BRONNER and TAGHREED EL-KHODARY; Ethan Bronner reported from Jerusalem, and Taghreed El-Khodary from Gaza. Mark Landler contributed reporting from Washington.

Ethan Bronner reported from Jerusalem, and Taghreed El-Khodary from Gaza. Mark Landler contributed reporting from Washington.

Dateline: JERUSALEM

Body

With its punishing air attacks on Gaza about to enter a fifth day, its gunboats gathering near the Gaza port and its ground forces poised for imminent action, Israel said Tuesday that it was considering a 48-hour cease-fire that would also require Hamas to stop its rocket fire.

The idea was in an early stage, a result of a conversation between Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner of France and Defense Minister Ehud Barak of Israel seeking at least a temporary pause in the fighting that would allow humanitarian relief to be delivered to the besieged coastal strip. Aides to Mr. Barak said he was interested in exploring it and would do so with Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and the rest of the cabinet on 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," said a close aide to Mr. Barak, speaking on the condition of anonymity because he is not Mr. Barak's authorized spokesman. "But, of course, Hamas has to agree, and there has to be a mechanism to make it work."

In Paris, where Mr. Kouchner was meeting with his European Union colleagues over the Gaza crisis, he 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.

President 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 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.

Amid a Buildup of Its Forces, Israel Ponders a Cease-Fire

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 Hamas 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.

Mr. 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, Hamas 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, at least 62 women and children and an unknown number of civilian men. Two sisters, ages 4 and 11, were killed in a strike in the north as concern was growing around the world that the assault was taking a terrible toll on civilians.

"It would be easier to dry the sea of Gaza than to defeat the resistance and uproot Hamas, which is in every house of Gaza," said the statement from the military wing of Hamas. It was played on Hamas's television station, which had been shut down by an Israeli missile but 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."

Hamas 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 Israel's south, where one landed in an empty kindergarten classroom. There was a report of light injuries as well as 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 on Saturday, which also hit nearly all of Hamas's security complexes, its university and other symbols of its sovereignty and power.

The Nakhala family, which lives next to the compound, was inspecting the damage on Tuesday morning and recounting the utter fear and panic they 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 Hamas. 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 he 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.

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 costlier 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 women 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 women 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, Ms. 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."

Amid a Buildup of Its Forces, Israel Ponders a Cease-Fire

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.

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

PHOTOS: Relatives Tuesday at the funeral of two sisters killed in an airstrike. More than 370 Palestinians have died, Palestinians say. (PHOTOGRAPH BY KHALIL HAMRA/ASSOCIATED PRESS)

A man on Tuesday inspected the damage done to his home after the nearby government complex in Gaza City was pummeled by missiles. An attack also left all of Gaza City without electricity. (PHOTOGRAPH BY ABID KATIB/GETTY IMAGES) (pg.A10) MAP: Gaza Strip, Israel (pg.A10)

Load-Date: December 31, 2008

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Sound and fury ... and it still signifies nothing

The Australian

December 31, 2008 Wednesday

1 - All-round Country Edition

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Section: WORLD; Pg. 7

Length: 1000 words

Byline: David Aaronovitch

Body

The trouble with current deliberations on Gaza is that we have no idea what the arguments inside Hamas are or how they are affected by Israeli actions, writes David Aaronovitch

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 on 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 Taliban cleric threatening last week to kill female 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.

Sound and fury ... and it still signifies nothing

So this is not about moral superiority. Perhaps we could 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 Hamas may have been in recent months.

When Hamas refused to renew the Egyptian-brokered ceasefire almost two weeks 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 Hamas 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 Hamas 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 Hamas as an al-Qa'ida equivalent, however much its anti-Jewish propaganda and dedication to martyrdom disgusts us. In any long-term solution, much 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 on Monday, 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 Hamas Government elected in January 2006, the siding with Fatah in the subsequent internal dispute and the imposition of an effective blockade on Gaza that amounted to collective punishment.

The capacity of Hamas to govern, or fail to govern, in the eyes of the Palestinians was thus never tested.

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.

Israeli President Shimon Peres 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, we have to construct one.

If we are to do this, then the friends of the Palestinians would be best advised to put pressure on Hamas 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.

The Times

Sound and fury ... and it still signifies nothing

Load-Date: December 30, 2008

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Israel will not break us, say defiant Palestinians

Daily News Egypt

January 9, 2009 Friday

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Length: 1544 words

Body

CAIRO: Death, injuries and trauma have not managed to diffuse Palestinian desire to stand firm in the face of the Israeli operations against Gaza, now into its second week and a death tally of 760 with over 3,000 wounded.

Thirty-six wounded Palestinians currently receiving treatment at Cairo's Nasser Medical Institute appear unequivocal in their stance: Israel can do its worst but the people of Gaza will continue to hold on in face of the onslaught.

The peaceful setting of the hospital with its green walkways and Nile view is a far cry from the decimation of Gaza, yet the Palestinians who have been transported here are chomping at the bit to return to their homes, even with the continued bombings.

"I want to go back to Gaza; I want to help in resisting the Israeli attacks. I want to go home," said passport officer Hassan Ali El-Sheikh, 26, who is suffering from serious injuries to both his legs.

The majority of Palestinian patients at the hospital were wounded on the first and second days of Israel's air operations, which began Saturday Dec. 27. They were transported from hospitals in Gaza through the Rafah border crossing to hospitals in Al-Arish.

Anwar Eid El-Sahabany was injured in the street when three Israeli rockets hit his neighborhood of Sabra in Gaza city. He suffered major breaks to his right arm and left leg and was taken to Al-Hilal hospital.

"We weren't expecting anything, no one was aware, especially as it was a Saturday [the Jewish Sabbath]," he said, "if anything we thought it might be on a Sunday. School children died beside me."

El-Sheikh said, "I saw a rocket hit and a young man was thrown into the air. I checked on him and his chest was open, his stomach was open and his head was like minced meat."

Many people were milling about the hospital from various local charities donating aid to the Palestinians. A group of women were giving out envelopes with money, one was crying as she handed El-Sheikh an envelope.

"Don't cry sister; please do not cry," he said, "we will overcome this."

Israel will not break us, say defiant Palestinians

Mohamed Atallah, 19, was sitting right outside his home when Israeli F-16s started shelling on the first day of the attacks. He blacked out but regained consciousness in the hospital only to realize that his niece had been killed in the same attack. He was suffering from multiple internal hemorrhages and was operated on at the Nasser Medical Institute.

"What is there to say? There is nothing to say, there are no words," was all Atallah could utter.

Hedayat Hassan Shaker, the only female Palestinian being treated at the Institute, was cooking breakfast for her children when she heard the shelling on the second day of the aerial offensive, her home was struck and she was injured in both legs, suffering both fractures and nerve injuries. Her children were also slightly injured.

"My children were taken to Dar Al-Shifa' hospital as their situation was not as severe as mine and I was taken to Egypt. My children are fine now and they are with my sister in Gaza," she said.

Fallah Hassouna, a 41-year-old Palestinian, was injured by Israeli shelling at Al-Tofah neighborhood that also witnessed a serious onslaught late Thursday, Dec. 28, the second day of attacks.

His cousin Maher said, "We were sitting down and we heard aircraft, we didn't suspect that this would happen. Then we saw shots coming from the Israeli planes in the air and in three minutes there were around 50 dead people."

Fallah was taken to Dar El Shifa' hospital in Gaza and the Red Crescent transported him to the Rafah crossing.

"The bombings targeted schools and places where the government institutions are located as well as mosques," Maher Hassouna said. All those places also included Palestinian citizens and not just government authorities, he added.

Asked whether there were buildings affiliated to Hamas he responded, "There is no such thing as Hamas or Fatah; these were national government buildings for the people of Gaza. And don't say a mosque belongs to Hamas; it is a house of God. They are public property."

Hamas, resistance and living under siege

Israel believes that if things are bad enough in Gaza, whether through blockade or strikes, that would motivate the people of Gaza to overthrow their Hamas rulers. In leaflets the Israeli air force spreads before bombing locations in Gaza, it is explicitly stated that Hamas is the reason for where the Gazans find themselves, namely under Israeli fire.

Talking to the wounded Palestinians at the Institute, however, proves that the opposite is true, that Israeli blockades and strikes are making Hamas more popular in the Strip.

"This has nothing to do with Hamas in Gaza. When you kill a little girl, what does that have to do with Hamas? In Gaza we don't say are you from Hamas or Fatah, these are issues in the media, not amongst us," El-Sahabany said.

"Israel hit the Palestinian Authority under Yasser Arafat. Israel occupies us, not the other way round and its policy is to exterminate all in Gaza but by the grace of God not a single one of them will even be able to urinate in Gaza. We will not surrender and we will resist to our last breaths," he added.

El-Sheikh said that such transgressions have always occurred against the Palestinians, even before Hamas came into being and wondered what the world expected them to do, when they are constantly under attack and not allowed to resist.

"The Palestinian cause can be solved if [Palestinian Authority President] Mahmoud Abbas steps down along with his group, [Prime Minister Salam] Fayyad and [Fatah leader in Gaza Mohamed] Dahlan. They must leave power

Israel will not break us, say defiant Palestinians

because they are Zionist agents," he said. Though he added that he did not think the entire Fatah movement was the problem but "this gang only."

El-Sheikh's family members who were sitting beside his bed agreed with him and Mohamed Beshir, a relative of his, said that **Hamas** throughout the past two years was able to provide them with security and services that nobody else gave them in the 12 years before that.

El-Sheikh and his family voted for **Hamas** and stated they will vote for them again, putting to bed the Israeli belief that they can turn Gazans against **Hamas** with the blockade.

Hussain said, "No matter how much they bomb us we will hold on and stay patient and will be victorious through the grace of God."

Despite the bravado, it was still apparent that life under siege had taken its toll on the inhabitants of Gaza.

"This is our land," said Shaker, "and I must return to it and to my children. I have kids, they need food. We need gas and electricity and water. They have no one but me; I'm just trying to raise my children."

The idea of bringing her children to Egypt does not appeal to her. "I want to go back to them in Gaza," she said. Shaker also said she knew "nothing" about the internal struggle in Palestine and has never voted in any elections or participated in anything related to politics.

"All I want to do is to afford a good living for myself and my orphaned children," she said. She added that she has suffered tremendously from the Israeli economic blockade on Gaza. "We have no electricity, and no food. We do not even have wood to make a fire. We only eat bread with zaatar [oregano], or any type of seeds available," she said.

However, not all Gazans at the Institute were of similar minds. Mostafa, the father of 13-year-old-Alaa', one of the injured Palestinians in the hospital, said he supported the Fatah strategy and believed that "**Hamas** has brought disasters to its citizens ... what type of government brings destruction to its citizens?" he asked.

Mostafa, a pharmacist, said that he had voted for Fatah in the past elections and believed in the strategy of both the current Palestinian and Egyptian presidents in dealing with Israel, "through negotiations."

He added that his son was injured on the second day of strikes yet he was not able to take him to the Egyptian borders on Sunday because "the borders were closed on that day when our late dear brother Yasser, [referring to the Egyptian police officer Yasser Farag who was shot by the Palestinians near the Salah Eldin gate], died. But we were able to cross the borders on Monday."

"My son was on his way to school on Monday [the third day of aerial attacks] where he discovered that there are protests and there will be no school. On his way back he was bombed in front of a police station," Mostafa said.

Injuries

Only 36 Palestinian casualties have been admitted to the Nasser Medical Institute since the Israeli attacks, according to Dr Bahaa Abou Zeid, president of Nasser Medical Institute.

Of the 36 patients, one died and three have already been released. The patient who died "came in on a ventilator from Gaza and his heart stopped several times on the way, he had injuries in several places," he said.

According to Abou Zeid, the majority of the cases received were bone injuries, and related muscle and nerve injuries. "We call them war injuries, because they are the results of shelling and many bomb fragments are found in the torso. Many have multiple injuries, so you will find someone who is partially dismembered or suffering from spinal injury," he added.

Israel will not break us, say defiant Palestinians

The Institute is equipped to take up to 900 patients and has the capacity to host up to 100 Palestinian patients according to Abou Zeid

Load-Date: January 11, 2009

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Israeli bombardment of Gaza

The Irish Times

December 31, 2008 Wednesday

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Section: LETTERS; Pg. 17

Length: 1436 words

Body

Madam, - The media priority now given to the Israeli targeting of **Hamas** facilities in Gaza contrasts oddly with that not afforded to the eight-year rain of over 8,000 rockets and mortar shells launched against Israeli towns by **Hamas**, Islamic Jihad and other armed elements within Gaza. This campaign of terror has continued unabated in spite of the complete Israeli troop and civilian withdrawal from Gaza in August-September, 2005. Indeed, more than 5,600 projectiles have been launched against Israeli communities since then.

Israel has targeted many training camps, rocket factories, storage sites, supply dumps, recruiting centres, headquarters, communications facilities and firing points in sites deliberately located within or near residential areas; yet average fatalities per site are low. It is therefore beyond doubt that Israel did not aim to injure any civilians. The great majority of those killed at such sites were not civilians but were involved in Islamic Jihad, **Hamas**, etc the latest UN estimate suggests that about five of every six killed were armed **Hamas** members.

In contrast, the slaughter of two young Arab children, Hanin Abu Khoussa, aged 5, and her cousin, Sabah Abu Khoussa, aged 12, by rockets fired from northern Gaza, was, in **Hamas** terms, a mistake only in that those Jihadi rockets were aimed to slaughter Jewish children instead. Christmas Eve alone saw 60 rockets and mortars fired at Israeli communities from **Hamas**-ruled Gaza, with another 94 on December 27th.

The 250,000 civilians within Israel, in a state composed of people of Muslim, Bahai, Druze, Jewish and Christian faith, under daily risk of such terror attacks from Gaza, equals the combined population of Donegal, Leitrim, Cavan and Monaghan being under daily rocket and mortar attack launched from Northern Ireland. No Irish Government ever would, or should, stand idly by in face of such a sustained campaign of atrocities against civilians - so why should the speakers of Hebrew be the only people on earth not allowed to protect themselves from such a campaign of terror? The civilian casualties are not only those physically maimed or murdered, but the huge number, in tens of thousands, terrorised and reduced to nervous wrecks by such ongoing bombardment - and that is the precise long-term strategy of this cowardly **Hamas** war on civilians.

It behoves Irish and other EU politicians and commentators to focus on this unending and indefensible rocket and mortar barrage, which is the sole cause of the drastic Israeli emergency surgery, designed precisely to remove the future capability for such terror, instead of just reacting to the emotive images of stretchers. The range and number of Israeli operations is proportionate to the need to remove the real threat to her own people from the **Hamas** war machine.

And we also need to confront the unchanged and genocidal **Hamas** ideology. "The only answer to the Palestinian question is Jihad," according to article 13 of its August 1988 charter; and: "Initiatives, and so-called peaceful

Israeli bombardment of Gaza

solutions and international conferences, are in contradiction to the principles of the Islamic Resistance Movement."
- Yours, etc,

TOM CAREW, Chair, Ireland-Israel Friendship League, Ranelagh, Dublin 6.

Madam, - In 2002, in advance of Ariel Sharon's so-called "Defensive Shield" campaign, an Israeli army officer famously advised "internalis[ing] the lessons of earlier battles even, however shocking it may sound, even how the German army fought in the Warsaw ghetto".

Yet even this ignoble precedent has been surpassed by the present onslaught on Gaza, whereby an essentially defenceless population of 1.5 million people, a protected population under the terms of the fourth Geneva Convention, has been hermetically isolated for more than three years, starved of food, fuel and medication, then subjected to a massive bombardment by the air-force of the world's fourth most powerful army. This with the blessing of the venal head of a quisling Palestinian regime (Mahmoud Abbas), a venal neighbouring dictatorship (Egypt), the entire European Union with its preposterous claim to honour human rights, the outgoing failed president of the US, and (judging by his conspicuous silence) the incoming president of that country, the saintly Mr Obama and his entire AIPAC-backed cabinet-in-waiting of Clintonite has-beens. - Yours, etc,

RAYMOND DEANE, Dun Laoghaire, Co Dublin.

Madam, - Is it too cynical to suggest that this latest Israeli attack in Gaza is designed to eliminate all traces of Hamas, so that the future President Obama has only to negotiate with the remnants of the Palestinian people? Surely the president-elect was consulted before the all-out war against Hamas. - Yours, etc,

BRENDAN BUTLER, NGO Peace Alliance, Phibsboro Road, Dublin 7.

Madam, - It's amazing how the Israeli blockade of Gaza prevents food and medical aid from being brought in and yet the Palestinians seem to have no trouble getting all the components needed to make rockets for attacking Israeli civilians. Not to mention all the guns and commando gear the "security" force of Hamas seems to have.

If Palestinians want the world to feel sorry for their plight then, given that there are no refugee camps in any land controlled by Israel, they might start by asking their fellow-Arab "brother" governments in Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon, where these refugee camps are actually based, to give the people living there - some of whom have been there since those same governments annexed the land meant for a Palestinian state in 1948 and told Palestinians to fight or flee - proper rights and documentation so that they can get jobs and move into proper homes and educate their children.

I personally feel little sympathy for the Palestinian cause, in the same way that I have no sympathy for the IRA cause - even though, as an Irish person, I understand perfectly well the history of my country.

If there are ordinary, non-violent, moderate Palestinians who want to create a democratic, non-corrupt, non-repressive, forward-looking modern state - the first Arab/Muslim state to protect the human rights of all its citizens equally - then those people need to stand up and be counted. They need to let the world know that while they have issues with Israel, on a political level, they utterly reject all of the violence carried out by Hamas, and others - just as time and time again ordinary, decent Irish people, politicians and church leaders of all sides - took to the streets to make it known to the world that we utterly rejected what the IRA - and others on both sides - were doing and that they were not acting on our behalf. - Yours, etc,

DESMOND FITZGERALD, Canary Wharf, London.

Madam, - I strongly object to The Irish Times allowing Zion Evrony, Israeli Ambassador to Ireland, a half-page of newsprint to present Israeli propaganda (Opinion, December 29th). Is it your policy to support Israeli propaganda? The Irish Times also allowed space for it when Israel invaded Lebanon in 2006, an invasion condemned the world over.

Israeli bombardment of Gaza

Israel is an apartheid state that continues to take by force land that belongs to the Palestinians. An apartheid state that continues to prevent movement of Palestinians in and out of Gaza and the West Bank. An apartheid state that prevents humanitarian aid from reaching ordinary men, women and children. It justifies this apartheid and oppression of human rights on the grounds of "security". Israel is one of the worst violators of human rights in the world and the country with the worst record of ignoring UN resolutions and international law.

It treats the Palestinian people worse than animals and justifies the current military operation like it justified the invasion of Lebanon - as "the only option". Absolute rubbish. Israel does not want peace, because if there were peace it couldn't continue with its ruthless oppression of the Palestinian people. Israel wants to continue the hostilities so that it can eventually eliminate any hope of a Palestinian state. - Yours, etc,

DAVID FINEGAN, Woodview, Castletown, Co Kildare.

Madam, - The Palestinians of this generation now have a Deir Yassin to match the Sabra and Shatila of their parents and grandparents. The Israeli ambassador says, in effect, that Israel "had no option" other than to butcher over 300 people in Gaza. International law is not optional. Neither are the Geneva conventions. Israel has always had options regarding its treatment of the Palestinians and has always chosen violence and brutality over respect, humanity and sanity. - Yours, etc,

CATHAL RABBITTE, Caheroyan Park, Athenry, Co Galway.

Load-Date: December 31, 2008

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Column: Collective punishment a far too diplomatic term for Israel's strategy.

University Wire

January 6, 2009 Tuesday

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Length: 921 words

Byline: By Nadia Gaber, Harvard Crimson; **SOURCE:** Harvard

Dateline: CAMBRIDGE, Mass.

Body

The military onslaught on Gaza last week has been cripplingly devastating for the 1.5 million Palestinians who live-or lived-there. Already, over 400 Palestinians have died, with over 200 killed on the first day of the offensive-the single bloodiest since 1967. Over 1,400 are wounded-the majority of whom are women and children-and receiving inadequate medical attention due, in large part, to the long-term Israeli blockade of the Strip.

Yet last Thursday, Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni unabashedly asserted, "There is no humanitarian crisis in the Strip, and therefore there is no need for a humanitarian truce." That Livni arrived at this conclusion-despite reports from the United Nations, the Red Cross, Amnesty International, Oxfam International and Human Rights Watch-reflects the irreverence with which the Israeli government regards Palestinian lives. Indeed, there is no other explanation. How else could a week of aerial bombing of such a densely populated city and intentionally starving its citizens be justified?

Israel's defenders say the attacks are a legitimate response to Hamas' rocket-fire, and a clear case of self-defense. Anyone with a political memory longer than three weeks, however, knows how utterly hollow this statement is in light of the months-long blockade of Gaza. Israeli blockades of fuel, electricity, and food supplies from Gaza, which have been in place for well over a year, have drastically affected homes, businesses and hospitals in a region where 90 percent of the population lives below the poverty line, the most devastating effects of which are seen in the chronic malnutrition of Gazan children. Before the attacks, 60 percent of Gazans received running water once every 5 to 7 days and less than 30 percent had a reliable source of food, leaving families scavenging for grass to survive. That is not self-defense. It is systematic violence of the highest order, compounded exponentially by the recent military assault on Gaza.

Though the U.S. and Israeli administrations paint Hamas' rocket fire as unprovoked acts of terrorism, they fail to acknowledge the tortuous blockade as an underlying-though by no means invisible-cause of Hamas' attacks. Moreover, American foreign policy has eliminated any possibilities for diplomacy, leaving Hamas with little option, given a starving population locked within the prison-like Strip. The accepted double standards that enable Israel supporters to support such a catastrophic response to one death under the pretense of "self-defense," yet censure Hamas for using violence to call international attention the slow killing of its 1.5 million citizens, is profoundly troubling. To condemn Hamas without acknowledging that they were elected democratically, that they are the only organization offering tangible social services to the suffering citizens of Gaza, and that they are acting out against a sustained, violent occupation, does nothing to advance the peace process. It is worth remembering that Hamas' rockets were wildly inefficient, homemade devices incapable of posing a real threat to the world's fourth-largest

Column: Collective punishment a far too diplomatic term for Israel 's strategy.

military power. While this is not a defense of many of their poor political choices, it further highlights the disproportion of Israel's so-called "targeted" response.

If the strikes themselves are targeted, as Israeli officials insist, then their targets must have been the houses, schools, mosques, universities, refugee centers, and hospitals that have been decimated in the past week. If not, then Israel had already decided that the entire infrastructure of this already impoverished city was dispensable collateral damage in its hunt for a few **Hamas** militants. Major newspapers carried the story of five daughters of the Balousha family, who were killed while hiding in a mosque that Israel bombed alongside one of its other targets: the Jabalya refugee center. Ha'aretz writer Amira Hass reported that, despite military intelligence, Israel chose to bomb in the vicinity of elementary schools precisely after children were dismissed, when they would be out in the streets. Whether the murder of children was calculated malice or callous indifference, it exemplifies the abhorrent behavior of Israeli senior officials in this campaign.

In any case, the widespread destruction certainly was calculated, despite contrary official reports. Not only does Israel commit such crimes against humanity, they announce them brazenly. Last October, Israel's Northern Command General Gadi Eisenkot said to Ha'aretz reporters: "What happened in the Dahiya quarter in Beirut in 2006 will happen in every village from which Israel is fired upon. We will apply disproportionate force upon it and cause great damage and destruction there... From our standpoint, these are not civilian villages, they are military bases. This is not a recommendation. This is a plan. And it has been approved." Such an open admission of the intent to inflict maximum damage, no matter the severity of the initial threat, wholly invalidates the popular claim that Israel is targeting only **Hamas**. According to Eisenkot, anyone within these "civilian villages" becomes a justifiable military target, including young children. Collective punishment is a far too diplomatic term for such a ruthless strategy. Ali Abunimah, a prolific Arab-American author and blogger, perhaps put it best when he asked, is this a taste of the "bigger shoah" (Hebrew for Holocaust) that Israel's deputy defense minister threatened?

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Load-Date: January 7, 2009

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Israel's offensive in Gaza

The Irish Times

January 10, 2009 Saturday

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Section: LETTERS; Pg. 15

Length: 1483 words

Body

Madam, - Allan Solomon (January 7th) tells us that, according to the EU's definition of anti-Semitism, "a key indicator is 'drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis'". In other words, no matter what the Israeli regime does, anyone who compares its actions to those of the Nazis is by definition motivated by hatred of Jews. This is utterly preposterous.

If the Israeli regime engages in activities reminiscent of Nazi atrocities, there is no reason why anyone should feel unable to point out the similarities. Mr Solomon is entitled to argue that such comparisons are invalid, but his cry of anti-Semitism - the equivalent of "playing the race card" - does his cause no favours.

Furthermore, Mr Solomon's attempt to contrast the plight of the Warsaw Jews with that of the Gaza Palestinians is heavily flawed. For example, by asking if the Warsaw Jews had "a charter which called explicitly for the elimination of Germans?", Mr Solomon implies that the Palestinian people have a charter that calls explicitly for the elimination of Israelis. I assume he is referring to the Hamas charter, in which case he fails to acknowledge the distinction between Hamas and the Palestinian people as a whole.

More importantly, the Hamas charter does not call for the elimination of Israelis, it calls for the elimination of the current Israeli regime, just as the current Israeli regime has made clear its intention to eliminate Hamas. By also expressing a desire for Islam, Judaism and Christianity "to co-exist in peace", the Hamas charter makes it quite clear that it is not calling for the elimination of the Israeli/Jewish people.

If Mr Solomon wanted to draw a fair comparison, he should have asked: "Did some Warsaw Jews belong to an organisation that explicitly called for the elimination of the Nazi regime?". The answer to that question is undoubtedly yes, and many - rightly - took up arms against their oppressor to help that become a reality. - Yours, etc,

PAT DIGNAM, Marcus Beach, Queensland, Australia.

Madam, - I find myself in that category which Prof Henry Patterson (January 8th) identifies as "moralising grandstanders". Fintan O'Toole's analysis (Opinion, January 6th) is correct. Nothing, I repeat nothing, justifies forcing little children to pass days clinging to the corpses of their mothers when those who killed those innocent mothers prevent the Red Cross from rescuing them from what any parent, with compassionate imagination, would categorise as the ultimate nightmare for a child.

No well-oiled propaganda machine, no self-righteous defence of "our soldiers' absolute right to defend themselves" can justify the scale of what is being done to innocent children, women and men in ghettoised Gaza. When Israel again transforms itself into Goliath, it forfeits the respect of those who would identify with David. - Yours, etc,

Israel 's offensive in Gaza

CIARÁN BENSON, Professor of Psychology, UCD, Dublin 4.

Madam, - Hikmat Ajjuri, delegate-general of Palestine in Ireland (Opinion, January 8th), provides a useful historical summary of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, starting from the original UN Resolution 181 of the 1940s.

In all of his 900-word piece, however, **Hamas**'s role in precipitating the current stage of the conflict doesn't get a mention. Is this a new record for ignoring elephants in rooms? - Yours, etc,

CON O'ROURKE, Park Lane, Sandymount, Dublin 4.

Madam, - The shameful and horrific attacks on Gaza, which are so utterly disproportionate, deserve a more meaningful response than mere condemnation. Europeans do not want to supply arms or any military equipment but the European Union has economic power at its disposal which it could usefully employ.

An embargo on, or boycott of, Israeli goods and services could help to concentrate Israeli government minds and remind them of their obligations to their fellow human-beings. That policy was used with some success against the former South Africa. - Yours, etc,

DESMOND O'MALLEY, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4.

Madam, - Many of letter-writers have stressed the "disproportionate" use of force by Israel in Gaza. No one ever seems to discuss the disproportionate amount of pure hatred which emanates from many of Israel's neighbours.

Hamas is not alone in wanting Israel wiped off the planet; it just happens to be a little more upfront than others about its aims. In its 1988 charter we can read of its central aim to vanquish the Jews in order to realize Allah's victory. Or, to give a direct quotation, "Israel will exist and will continue to exist until Islam will obliterate it, just as it obliterated others before it". Despite international pressure, **Hamas** has refused to alter any of the wording.

By contrast, Articles 2 and 3 of Bunreacht na hÉireann looked to the reintegration of the national territory, but this was aspirational and contained no reference to threats of obliteration. What has to happen for the world to wake up and realise the significance of this charter? Al-Andalus, be warned! - Yours, etc,

SUSAN PHILIPS, Ballinacoola, Glenealy, Co Wicklow.

Madam, - Neal Newman's homely analogy (January 9th) is apt, but incomplete. I suggest that Mr Newman starts at the beginning: You build your house on your neighbour's land. You will not let your neighbour come and go without your permission. You will not permit your neighbour build an extension to his house. He gets mad at you and starts throwing rocks. . .

And that, to me, is the nub of the problem. All Israeli sympathisers see are the **Hamas** rockets. None of them ever ask why these are people firing rockets in the first place. - Yours, etc,

JACK DOWNEY, Old Cratloe Road, Limerick.

Madam - Barrie Rockman's letter of January 8th encapsulates, albeit inadvertently, why so many people are outraged at the actions of his country's armed forces in the Gaza strip. Mr Rockman is deeply concerned at the way "peace-loving, humanistic, liberal people" display what he sees as hatred for Israel, given that, over many years, they failed to condemn **Hamas**'s rocket attacks on southern Israel. Yet these liberals are vociferous "about the poor civilians that we [the Israelis] accidentally hurt trying to defend ourselves".

To describe the mechanised killing of many hundreds of Palestinian men, **women** and children, in a densely populated urban environment, as accidentally hurting people while acting in self-defence takes the discourse of victimhood to a new level of self-serving hypocrisy. Perhaps this is one reason why "peace-loving, humanistic, liberal people" around the world are so angry at Israel's military and its apologists. - Yours, etc,

KEVIN HOWARD, Blackrock, Co Louth.

Israel 's offensive in Gaza

Madam, - The Israeli Government knows that Hamas will stop attacking Israelis only if it is made to no longer want to attack. But violence, and the threat of further violence will never have this effect on people like Hamas, people who are prepared to perform suicide attacks in pursuit of their objectives.

Israel's current action will serve only to radicalise the people of Gaza, making it all but impossible for a moderate leadership to emerge there. Were moderate leaders to emerge, it is likely that they would find a sympathetic US president in Barack Obama and ultimately a fair, long-term settlement.

It would seem that Israel's attack on Gaza has been orchestrated to avoid this eventuality. It gives me no pleasure to aim an accusation of such cynicism (some might even say evil) at the government of a people whom I have always considered to be hard-working, fair-minded and even heroic, but I can conceive of no other rationale for this war. - Yours, etc,

JIM McGOWAN, Arnott Street, Dublin 8.

Madam, - Many correspondents have criticised the disproportionate response of Israel to the rockets fired by Hamas. Would 900 rockets fired at residential areas of Gaza be an appropriate response? This would have caused many more civilian casualties than the present offensive, which is designed to limit them.

If the United Nations and the international community had acted months ago to stop Hamas firing rockets, we might not have the present conflict.

I hope the UN can act without further delay to prevent more conflict, in particular the spread of violence to neighbouring areas in the Middle East and further afield. - Yours, etc,

MICHAEL O'TOOLE, Rochestown Avenue, Dun Laoghaire, Co Dublin.

Madam, -- For many of us who believe strongly that Israelis and Palestinians have an equal right to live in peace within agreed and secure borders what is happening in Gaza is a source of anger bordering on despair.

I have two questions for those who believe the Israelis have the right, and even the duty, to apply its current military measures against the men, women and children of Gaza:

1. After the present operation comes to an end, will Israel have fewer or more enemies in the world?
2. Are they happy with their answer to question 1? - Yours, etc,

TIM JACKSON, Killiney, Co Dublin.

Load-Date: January 10, 2009

Only Obama can end this bloody stalemate as Gaza cries for help; As Israel prepares an all-out attack on Hamas, one expert on the region says that a new US President must now seize his chance to intervene

The Evening Standard (London)

December 29, 2008 Monday

A Edition

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London
**Evening
Standard**

Section: Pg. 15

Length: 1022 words

Byline: BERNARD WASSERSTEIN

Body

The mothers of dead children in Gaza cry to heaven for mercy and for vengeance.

Meanwhile, Israeli public relations spokespeople go through their paces, pointing to **Hamas**'s refusal to renew a truce and the rain of rockets from Gaza onto Israel. The UN Security Council, the White House, and the Foreign Office issue predictably futile statements. Another wretched phase in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict seems to be opening.

How can the bloody stalemate be broken? Three things are necessary: first, a clear picture of the ultimate objective; secondly, short-term steps to prepare the ground; thirdly, ongoing commitment by all parties for the longer term. The ultimate objective must be two national states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side, at peace, without territorial or other claims on each other.

Two states, not one, as the Israeli far Right wants, with its colonialist vision of domination. Two states, not one, as **Hamas** and its fanatical Islamist supporters want, with their vision of a Taliban-style Muslim republic in which Christians and Jews would live, if at all, on sufferance.

Two states that answer the legitimate national aspirations of Palestinians and Israelis, not one bi-national state in which civil strife would be predictably massive and ongoing.

The two states must have agreed borders within which the issues of refugees, settlements, and Jerusalem will no longer bedevil relations. The frontier must be the 1949-67 armistice line, with minor agreed adjustments.

Only Obama can end this bloody stalemate as Gaza cries for help As Israel prepares an all-out attack on Hamas, one expert on the region says that a new US Presi....

Why that line? Because anything significantly less will not provide even the minimum territorial basis for a viable Palestinian state.

Why any adjustments at all? Because equitable, mutually agreed exchange of land affords the best basis for the defensibility of both states. After all, there is nothing sacrosanct in international law about armistice lines.

Israel must withdraw from most of its settlements in the West Bank, retaining only some near the "green line", in return for which it will have to yield an equivalent area to Palestine.

Greater Jerusalem, with its roughly equal populations of Jews and Arabs, living in segregated ethnic neighbourhoods, will have to be redivided not by a wall but as an open city with two recognised sovereignties and shared infrastructure and urban planning.

Why? Because nothing else has the remotest chance of working.

The refugee camps in Lebanon and elsewhere, in which Palestinians driven out of their homes upon the creation of Israel in 1948 and their descendants still fester, must be emptied. Those who wish to return must be allowed to do so to Palestine, not Israel. Others, with international assistance, must be enabled to settle in their countries of residence, elsewhere in the Middle East, or in western countries.

Why should they not all return to Israel? For the same reason that the 13 million Germans expelled from eastern Europe after 1945 and the one million Jews driven out of Arab lands after 1948 cannot return.

There is little or nothing for any of these people to return to. Their homes, lands, and livelihoods are all gone. The clock of history has moved on and its hand cannot be turned back.

They all can no longer hope for absolute justice but, like the surviving remnant of Jews in post-war Europe, they deserve a historic reckoning that should include due compensation and a humane resolution of their current predicament.

These objectives are not pie-in-the-sky.

Broadly speaking, they command the assent of the Israeli government and the Palestinian Authority as well as of the international community, including the "Quartet" (the UN, United States, EU, and Russia) and the Arab League. Most importantly, they are what the broad middle ground of Israelis and Palestinians (as shown in public opinion polls) want or are prepared to accept.

How, then, do we get there? First, the short-term. Israel and Palestine are both in the throes of bitter leadership struggles. These must be resolved quickly. The international community should help ensure that peacemakers on each side triumph over warmongers.

In Israel, elections are due in February.

The best hope for more moderate forces is the Foreign Minister, Tzipi Livni, leader of the Kadimah Party.

But she is hamstrung by the continued presence of the utterly discredited Prime Minister, Ehud Olmert. In the face of a corruption scandal, he has announced his resignation but remains in office pending the election.

He should be pressed to leave the scene completely and make way for Livni as effective head of government (as happened before the election of 1977 when Shimon Peres replaced Yitzhak Rabin).

Barack Obama could invite Livni to visit him in the White House shortly after he takes office on 20 January.

Interference in Israeli elections? Definitely!

It has happened before and is urgently needed now.

Only Obama can end this bloody stalemate as Gaza cries for help As Israel prepares an all-out attack on Hamas, one expert on the region says that a new US Presi....

The Palestinians, too, are due for elections in early 2009. The opponents of Hamas need help. The first action of a newly elected Israeli government should be to release the imprisoned Fatah militant Marwan Barghouti.

He is the only secular Palestinian leader with a serious prospect of trouncing Hamas in elections. He has shown pragmatism in the past.

His moment has arrived. The United States and the EU should press for his release. And Israel must take real steps, not mere token gestures, to ease conditions of life for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza to show that peace is a real option rather than merely a propaganda slogan.

With Livni and Barghouti installed, the way would be open for the incoming US administration to broker a comprehensive settlement. Washington cannot simply press a button and produce peace. But it can improve on the miserable record of the Bush administration.

No new magic formula is required but serious commitment and continued resolve could achieve results.

We should listen to the shrieks and cries of the bereaved women of Gaza.

There is a political and strategic price to be paid if we do not. Beyond that, our common humanity demands it.

Bernard Wasserstein is professor of history at Chicago University and author of Israel and Palestine: Why They Fight and Can They Stop? ...

Graphic

Land of tears: a Palestinian woman breaks down after identifying the body of a relative killed in Israel's attack on Gaza

Load-Date: December 29, 2008

Cabinet okays rocket-protection for communities within range. Livni, Barak trade barbs over Gaza policy

The Jerusalem Post

December 8, 2008 Monday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1

Length: 851 words

Byline: HERB KEINON and YAAKOV KATZ

Body

With Kassam rockets continuing to strike the western Negev, and as political rivals Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni and Defense Minister Ehud Barak clashed over policy toward Gaza, the cabinet gave the green light Sunday to build reinforced security rooms in all communities within 4.5 km. of the Strip.

The reinforced rooms for 8,500 housing units in 15 Gaza-area communities will be built in three stages at a cost of some NIS 930,000.

According to the cabinet resolution, the project is to be completed by 2011.

Meanwhile, The Jerusalem Post has learned that the IDF Home Front Command is preparing for the possibility that Hamas will be able to fire Katyusha rockets into Kiryat Malachi and Ofakim.

The Home Front Command recently held a workshop for educational directors in these cities instructing them what to do in the event of a rocket attack during school hours.

"We do not have concrete intelligence that they have rockets that can reach the cities, but we are preparing for the possibility," a Home Front Command source said.

The attacks continued on Sunday, as eight rockets and mortar shells slammed into the western Negev. Since Friday, close to 20 rockets have been fired into Israel.

One of them landed at the entrance to Sderot. In response, IAF aircraft struck a rocket crew heading out to a mission in northern Gaza. No casualties were reported but the IDF said that the squad was hit.

The Defense Ministry announced on Sunday night that cargo crossings into Gaza would remain closed on Monday because of the rocket fire.

The continued attacks in the South have led to heightened tensions between Livni, who is calling for tough military action against the Gaza Strip, and Barak, who intimated that Livni's position was "politically motivated," and that the IDF must act with coolness and reason.

Just before Sunday's cabinet meeting, Livni said Barak knew that she has been opposed to the "security calm" in the South since he brought it before the cabinet in the summer.

Cabinet okays rocket-protection for communities within range. Livni, Barak trade barbs over Gaza policy

"There is no calm, they are shooting at Israeli citizens," she said. "Those who call it calm are not aware of what is going on here. Hamas is in control of Gaza, they are shooting at Israel, Hamas is responsible. I am not interested in the address on every missile. We need to act: militarily, diplomatically and financially."

Livni's comments were echoed by her party colleague Transportation Minister Shaul Mofaz, who told Israel Radio that Israel must change its policy regarding Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

Mofaz stressed that it was up to Israel to send a clear message to Hamas and other terrorist organizations that they were not immune to blows to their leadership, infrastructure and funding.

Another Kadima minister, Vice Premier Haim Ramon, also called for an immediate end to the cease-fire, and a strike on Hamas's infrastructure in the Gaza Strip.

"A strategic decision is needed, and regretfully it has not yet been made," he told Army Radio. "Only the defense minister thinks there is a cease-fire," he said. "There's calm in Gaza; there's no calm around Gaza."

Barak countered the criticism by saying reality demanded "good judgment, responsibility and seriousness." Some people were making "hasty comments" because Israel was in the midst of a "political season," he said.

Barak said he was ultimately responsible, and that the decision to embark on a military action against Gaza must be taken "at the right time" and in the "correct manner."

IDF sources said there were "many ways" to gradually escalate operations against Hamas before launching a major operation in the Strip. One option being considered in the IDF is to strike from the air at Hamas military targets, such as weapons warehouses, rocket manufacturing plants and military outposts.

"There is a lot that can be done before invading Gaza," a top IDF officer said. "At the moment we are not even using 10 percent of our capabilities."

Meanwhile Sunday, Barak met with Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Salaam Fayad and said Israel would not reopen the crossings into Gaza until the Kassam rocket attacks ended.

"The Kassam fire does not allow Israel to open the crossings, and the responsibility for this difficult situation lies on Hamas," Barak said, adding that Israel would, despite the attacks, continue to permit the flow of minimal supplies needed in Gaza to prevent a humanitarian crisis.

Barak updated Fayad on Israel's decision to ease restrictions in the West Bank ahead of the Id al-Adha holiday.

Based on the decision, Israel will allow Palestinian men over the age of 40, and all married women, to enter Israel to visit family. Israeli Arabs will also be allowed to enter parts of Area A, usually off limits to Israeli citizens. Palestinian men over 45 will also be allowed to travel to Jerusalem for prayer services on the Temple Mount.

Barak told Fayad that Israel viewed the current PA security forces operations in Hebron and Jenin positively and was considering allowing a similar deployment of PA security forces in Bethlehem ahead of Christmas.

Barak stressed the importance of setting up courts and jail systems in the PA territories.

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

Talks as troops pour into Gaza

The Advertiser (Australia)

January 13, 2009 Tuesday

2 - Metro Edition

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Section: FOREIGN; Pg. 23

Length: 552 words

Byline: MAI YAGHI GAZA CITY

Body

ISRAEL has poured reservists into Gaza as the death toll in its 17-day-old war on **Hamas** passed 900.

Officials say an end to the fighting might be in sight as more ceasefire talks are scheduled in Egypt.

Israeli troops pushed deeper into Gaza City yesterday, as warplanes carried out air strikes against the homes of **Hamas** leaders and to combat Palestinian rocket fire, which has continued despite the offensive.

An Israeli television channel said the army had begun sending in some of the thousands of reservists called up when the war began, and an army spokesman said they would be increasingly ``integrated" into combat units.

Civilians again fell victim in the Palestinian enclave, one of the world's most crowded territories where half of the 1.5 million residents are less than 18 years old.

Two **women** and four children were killed in a strike on a house in Beit Lahiya. Israeli officials suggested the offensive might be approaching its end despite the rejection of a UN Security Council resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire.

``The decision of the (UN) Security Council doesn't give us much leeway," Deputy Defence Minister Matan Vilnai said. ``Thus it would seem that we are close to ending the ground operation and ending the operation altogether." Earlier, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said Israel was nearing the goals it had set for its operation, but that fighting would continue for now.

``Israel is approaching these goals, but more patience and determination are required," Mr Olmert said.

Israeli forces have demolished some 200 smuggling tunnels beneath the Gaza-Egypt border - **Hamas**'s main resupply route - representing two-thirds of the total, military spokeswoman Avital Leibovich said.

Hamas, which also ignored the Security Council resolution, has vowed to keep on fighting.

Yesterday, 19 rockets were fired into Israel from Gaza, including four military-grade Grad rockets, without wounding anyone.

As well, troops entered the narrow streets of Gaza City's southern Tal al-Hawa neighbourhood, encountering roadside bombs, mortar and gunfire from Palestinian fighters.

Talks as troops pour into Gaza

They withdrew at daybreak, but hundreds of panicked residents fled the area, clutching small children and hastily packed bags.

“We couldn't take anything with us, not even milk for the children,” said Ibtisam Shamallah, 22, as she fled with her two children.

Twelve bodies were later pulled from the rubble in Tal al-Hawa, including 10 fighters, medics said. At least 26 Palestinians were killed in clashes, they said.

Egypt has spearheaded Western-backed efforts to end the fighting, calling for an immediate truce, opening Gaza's border crossings, preventing arms smuggling and relaunching Palestinian reconciliation efforts.

Yesterday, it ramped up pressure on Israel by summoning its ambassador to demand that the Jewish state comply with the Security Council resolution and open humanitarian corridors to relieve the besieged territory.

It also held what it said were positive talks with a **Hamas** team, saying the Islamists agreed “on the importance of . . . stopping the shedding of Palestinian blood as soon as possible”.

Osama Hamdan, **Hamas**'s representative in Lebanon, told Al-Jazeera television that “there was some progress on some points” of the Egyptian proposal.

“The (UN) decision doesn't give us much leeway

Load-Date: January 12, 2009

PALESTINIANS GET 3-HOUR REPRIEVE FROM WAR HELL

Daily News (New York)
January 8, 2009 Thursday
CITY FINAL EDITION

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 8

Length: 495 words

Byline: BY MATTHEW KALMAN in Jerusalem and HELEN KENNEDY in New York DAILY NEWS WRITERS

Body

THE GUNS OF GAZA fell quiet yesterday when Israel gave besieged Palestinians a three-hour "humanitarian" bombing lull to look for food and water before resuming the air strikes.

Hopes for a more permanent truce flickered to life with the announcement that Israel, **Hamas** and the Palestinian Authority will meet for talks today in Cairo.

Hamas was considering a U.S.-backed plan okayed by Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

In southern Gaza, Israeli Defense Forces jets dropped leaflets urging thousands of civilians to flee their homes immediately ahead of an imminent new bombardment of tunnels along the Egyptian border.

"Because **Hamas** uses your houses to hide and smuggle military weapons, the IDF will attack the area," the flyer warned.

The Palestinians have nowhere to run.

"There is no safe space in the Gaza Strip - no safe haven, no bomb shelters and the borders are closed - making this one of the rare conflicts where civilians have no place to flee," said Maxwell Gaylard, the United Nations humanitarian chief for the Palestinian territories.

About 5,000 people huddled in two UN schools transformed into shelters as the Rafah strikes began. By 9 p.m., 30 homes had been destroyed and the bombardment continued into the night.

On Tuesday, Israeli tanks fired on a UN school in Jabaliya, killing 43 refugees sheltering there.

Israel claimed **Hamas** militants had fired on them from the school. A UN spokesman said, "Following an initial investigation, we are 99.9% sure that there were no militants or militant activities in the school."

Palestinian health officials said the death toll from Operation Cast Lead had risen to more than 700, with 219 of the dead children and 89 **women**.

PALESTINIANS GET 3-HOUR REPRIEVE FROM WAR HELL

Eight Israeli soldiers have died in the 12-day campaign. The IDF said yesterday four of them were killed by "friendly fire" from IDF tanks.

Meanwhile, **Hamas** fired 20 rockets yesterday, wounding two Israelis.

As the 1 p.m. start time for the ceasefire approached, about 80 trucks rumbled out from UN warehouses to distribute food, medical supplies and fuel.

The Red Cross restocked the central Shifa Hospital in Gaza City with anesthetics, bandages and basic medications.

Briefly, the battered streets came alive.

Ashraf Al-Issawi, a father of eight standing in a long breadline in Gaza City, said it was the first time he had ventured more than a few yards from his apartment for days.

"We have run out of rice and cooking gas. I have to buy bread or we will have nothing to eat," he said.

International leaders working to end the fighting hoped the lull - which Israel promised would happen for three hours every other day - was the first step toward a permanent ceasefire.

French President Nicolas Sarkozy, who has been shuttling between Jerusalem, Damascus and Cairo, announced an agreement proposed by Egypt had been accepted by Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

Hamas leader Osama Hamdan said the group wasn't backing the peace plan - but not rejecting it either. hkennedy@nydailynews.com

Graphic

Palestinian relatives of Mohammed Qasem, who died in Israeli attack, weep yesterday during his funeral in Gaza City . Photo by AP

Load-Date: January 8, 2009

ISRAEL'S ATTACK ON GAZA STRIP: CON: Israeli actions prolong the violence

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

January 1, 2009 Thursday

Main Edition

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**The Atlanta
Journal-Constitution**

Section: @ISSUE; Pg. 16A

Length: 555 words

Byline: NIDAL IBRAHIM

For the Journal-Constitution

Body

It is heartbreaking to hear the reports of suffering and death coming out of the Gaza Strip. Israel's massive bombardment of the 139-square-mile strip, which is home to 1.5 million Palestinians and is one of the most densely populated areas in the world, continues a long and brutal policy that has militarily and economically sought to bring that population to its knees.

Over the past five days, close to 400 Palestinians have lost their lives to Israel's aerial attacks, compared with four Israelis who have died as a result of Hamas rocket fire over the past four days. (Since 2004, 15 Israelis have died as a result of Hamas rocket fire.)

The bombing must stop.

For 41 years now, since Israel occupied the Gaza Strip as part of the 1967 Middle East War, the Palestinians there have been living under the most extreme hardship. Recently --- thanks to Israel's systematic blockade of Gaza that has choked off almost all economic and humanitarian aid, including food, electricity and water treatment supplies --- the men, women and children living there have been reduced to poverty levels that the United Nations and World Bank have characterized as dangerously inadequate. Medicines and the most basic health care system are lacking.

Regrettably, the Palestinians in Gaza suffer from an acute lack of responsible and accountable leadership, and Hamas certainly bears responsibility for the current state of affairs. But Israel's wholly disproportional actions have cost a great many innocent Palestinians their lives, and as history has repeatedly proved, these actions will further exacerbate the frustration and anger of the Palestinian people.

ISRAEL 'S ATTACK ON GAZA STRIP: CON: Israeli actions prolong the violence

In the end, the irresponsible **Hamas** leadership will be strengthened --- if for no other reason than the Palestinians will be driven to support anyone, no matter how irresponsible they may be, that stands opposed to Israel, whom they view as a cruel and indiscriminate oppressor.

Let's be clear: Israel is one of the strongest military powers in the world and the only country in the Middle East currently in possession of nuclear weapons. **Hamas** does not pose an existential threat to Israel.

In order to meaningfully address the long-simmering crisis and begin moving toward a real solution, there should be an immediate and long-lasting (not simply 48-hour) halt to hostilities. This means the suspension of all Israeli military activity as well as **Hamas** rocket fire. The cease-fire should allow for desperately needed medical and humanitarian aid to flow freely into Gaza, with the borders being reopened under the supervision of the United Nations.

Once these steps are implemented, negotiations should be undertaken through an intermediary for the establishment of a long-term cross-border cease-fire that also includes a relaxation of the economic strangulation of Gaza.

Unless these steps are taken, and regardless of whether Israel's military onslaught goes on for days or weeks, the ultimate result will be what it always has been: The Palestinians will continue to suffer from inadequate leadership, the Israelis will be less --- not more --- secure as a result of their military assault, and the Palestinian people will continue to disproportionately pay the price.

* Nidal Ibrahim, a resident of Duluth, is a former executive director of the Arab American Institute in Washington.

Graphic

Photo: * Nidal Ibrahim, a resident of Duluth, is a former executive director of the Arab American Institute in Washington./ImageData*

Load-Date: January 1, 2009

Other views: Gaza

therecord.com

January 6, 2009 Tuesday

Final Edition

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Section: OPINION; Pg. A6

Length: 543 words

Byline: THE RECORD

Body

The following are edited excerpts of recent editorials from Middle East newspapers on the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians in Gaza.

Arab News (Saudi Arabia) -- As it resumes its slaughter, Israel and its friends, neocons in the United States and others, continue to defend the indefensible. It was all because of Hamas' intransigence. Did not they refuse to renew cease-fire? Did not they fire rockets at southern Israel?

Nobody bothers to think about the terms of the cease-fire violated by Israel. One condition was that Israel would lift the penalizing blockade it imposed on the Gaza Strip. Nobody bothers to ask how it is that Israel can impose such a blockade.

Israel can collectively punish Gaza by imposing a blockade, for electing a government not to its liking, only because Gaza Strip happens to be under the occupation of the Jewish state despite the "disengagement" of Israeli troops. So the core issue is occupation though U.S. President George W. Bush and German Chancellor Angela Merkel would not admit it.

So the ground invasion of Gaza will not solve the underlying problem. Neither would calls from Western capitals for restraint on the part of killers and their victims. The ground invasion may silence Hamas' weapons to some extent and for some time but never the Palestinian voice. More and more Palestinians in West Bank now realize that Israel's fight against Hamas is part of a broader war against the Palestinians in both West Bank and Gaza.

If the West does not realize this and take some corrective action immediately, the West Bank may very soon go the Gaza way with much more tragic consequences.

Jerusalem Post -- Confronted by a movement that amalgamates fascism with religious extremism and a genocidal platform, our moral imperative demands Jewish self-defence.

Over the weekend, glitterati including Annie Lennox and Bianca Jagger joined tens of thousands of mostly Muslim protesters in rallies held worldwide against the Israeli "genocide."

In fact, we'd be surprised if any other army currently on the battlefield is more conscientious about avoiding civilian casualties. Before it attacks and whenever possible, the IDF (Israel Defence Forces) leaflets, telephones or sends

Other views: Gaza

text messages to residents of buildings used to launch rockets at our territory, warning them of the impending air-strike.

Conversely, what sort of "resistance" movement deliberately uses mosques, schools and homes as weapons depots and rocket launching pads? Answer: one that also uses its children and women as human shields.

Wouldn't it be more intellectually honest to admit that Palestinian suffering is mostly self-inflicted? And that Hamas' anti-Israel agenda is wildly popular among Gaza's masses? The folks at J Street (a U.S. group devoted to redefining what it means to be pro-Israel) believe "there is no military solution to what is fundamentally a political conflict...." Hamas would beg to differ. Indeed, Hamas has been trying to prove the contrary, forcing Israel's hand.

What Israel's critics need to understand is that there can be no political solution while we are under Palestinian bombardment. Those who are sincere about fostering coexistence should stop bashing the IDF and start telling the Palestinians: Stop the violence.

Load-Date: January 6, 2009

End of Document

UN rights council set to censure Israel for 21st time

The Jerusalem Post

January 11, 2009 Sunday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 4

Length: 665 words

Byline: TOVAH LAZAROFF

Body

The UN's Human Rights Council in Geneva is expected to censure Israel on Monday for its military operations in Gaza, according to Israel's ambassador to the UN in Geneva.

The draft text, which was proposed by Arab countries, "is totally unbalanced," Aharon Leshno Yaar told The Jerusalem Post by telephone from Geneva on Saturday night.

"I would have expected the council to condemn Hamas for using civilians as human shields" and "for storing weapons in mosques and schools," Leshno Yaar said.

At present there is no mention in the one-sided resolution of the thousands of rockets that Hamas has fired against Israeli civilians, he said.

The draft text gives the mistaken impression that Israel woke up one morning and decided to attack civilians in Gaza for no reason, he said.

This resolution "will plant the illusion in the minds of Hamas that the international community is supporting them, and that would be tragic," he said.

According to the UN Watch NGO, should the resolution pass, it would mark the 21st time that the council has censured Israel since it replaced the UN's Human Rights Commission in June 2006. It has issued 25 resolutions against countries, of which 20 resolution were leveled against Israel, four against Myanmar and one against North Korea, according to UN Watch.

Leshno Yaar said that he and the Foreign Ministry have lobbied European officials not to support such anti-Israel texts.

"The atmosphere is very heavy here in Geneva, because the focus is on human rights and humanitarian issues. I feel that I am fighting here alone with few friends," he said.

On Friday, when he spoke before the council at the start of its special session on "the grave violations of human rights in the occupied territories, including the recent aggression in the occupied Gaza Strip," he gave council members information on the rocket attacks and on Israel's efforts to provide humanitarian relief to the civilians in Gaza.

UN rights council set to censure Israel for 21st time

In the last two weeks, Israel has facilitated the entry of 540 trucks carrying 10,000 tons of humanitarian supplies into Gaza, Leshno Yaar said.

"**Hamas** has chosen a military buildup over the welfare of the Palestinian people, while masquerading as a legitimate government. It has imposed terror on the Palestinian population and Israeli civilians alike. Its endeavors are aided by partners Iran, Syria and Hizbullah, who supply **Hamas** with a vast arsenal of weaponry instead of donating money and materials that could be used to build infrastructure or aid development," he said.

Hamas is a threat to moderate societies in the region, he said. "This is not only Israel's war."

Reports by the United Nations, however, paint a bleak picture of IDF activities in Gaza. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, as of Friday, 758 Gazans have been killed as a result of the fighting. Out of that number, 60 were **women** and 257 were children.

In addition, the UN said, 16,000 people have been displaced and are staying in shelters, and as of Thursday, some 800,000 Gazans were without running water.

"The situation is intolerable," the UN commissioner for human rights, Navanethem Pillay, said when she addressed the council's special session on Friday.

"The conflict has already caused the loss of hundreds of lives, a rapidly mounting score of injured civilians, the systematic destruction of basic means of subsistence, as well as the dangerous pollution of water resources and the degradation of indispensable services," Pillay said.

"Let me also underscore that while indiscriminate rocket attacks against civilian targets in Israel are unlawful, Israel's responsibility to fulfill its international obligations is completely independent from the compliance of **Hamas** with its own obligations under international law," she said.

The obligation of a state to protect civilian life "is not subject to reciprocity," she said.

Article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention prohibits collective penalties or punishment of a civilian population, Pillar said.

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

Time for more balanced debate on gaza trouble

Lincolnshire Echo

January 6, 2009 Tuesday

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Section: Pg. 10

Length: 689 words

Body

I Feel compelled to respond to Carlos Alvarado's letter (Echo, January 2) in which he indulges in falsehoods, distortions and pernicious misinterpretations as he castigates Israel for the current violence in the Middle East.

First and foremost, he manages to avoid any mention of the long-term and continued aggression against Israel perpetrated by **Hamas**, the violent organisation at the root of so many horrific atrocities, not only against innocent Israelis, but also against Palestinians who are living in the Gaza Strip.

Israel withdrew completely from Gaza in 2005 in the hope that the Palestinians could develop a prosperous, stable mini-state and build momentum for further negotiations towards a two-state solution.

Tragically, **Hamas** turned Gaza into a frontline military base in a long-term Islamist confrontation with Israel.

Through violence, intimidation, politically-motivated murder and wanton aggression towards anyone opposing their ideology, it has forced the more moderate Fatah elements out of any influence in the Gaza area.

Hamas, coaxed by Iran, has led Gaza into self-imposed international isolation. It has brazenly flouted international law in its treatment of Gilad Shalit, the abducted Israeli soldier.

It has tried ceaselessly to sabotage two-state solution diplomacy, while intimidating and torturing Palestinian opponents and raining missiles and rockets indiscriminately into Israel.

Israel, like the UK, has a right and a duty to protect its civilians. For the past seven years many thousands of rockets and mortars have been fired indiscriminately at civilian population centres from Gaza.

Where, Mr Alvarado, is your condemnation of Arab aggression against Israeli **women** and children who have died as a result?

Israel has tried its utmost to avoid civilian casualties in the current upsurge of attacks, but has often been frustrated by **Hamas** deliberately locating key terrorist weapons, launch pads, ammunition stores and command centres in the heart of densely populated areas.

What Mr Alvarado fails to mention is that most of the 300-odd fatalities in Gaza have been terrorist activists. Yes, innocent civilians have died and this is very regrettable. The easiest way to stop this continuing is for **Hamas** to stop firing missiles into Israel. Nothing could be simpler.

Mr Alvarado likens Gaza to a concentration camp since 1948, but fails to acknowledge that Gaza was under Egyptian rule until the 1967 war.

Time for more balanced debate on gaza trouble

He also fails to mention the millions and millions of dollars given to the PLO following the 1993 Oslo Accords that were meant to provide aid and development to Gaza and which were siphoned away to buy arms and to feather the nests of corrupt Arab officials, leaving the ordinary citizens no better off than they were under the Egyptians.

The economic sanctions applied by the whole international community, not just the UK and USA, are not against the Palestinian people, but against the **Hamas** government, which has continued to defy UN resolutions and continues in its charter to call for the total destruction of Israel.

Perhaps Mr Alvarado's most offensive and puerile statement was to assert that Israel 'imports Zionists... to create an artificial entity'. I suspect his use of the word entity is not by accident since it is the phrase used by the more vitriolic Arab commentaries, including the **Hamas** Charter, when referring to Israel as the Zionist Entity.

Israel came into existence in 1947 under UN mandate, and for the past 60 years it has been a legitimate, democratic sovereign state, not an artificial entity. It passed a Law of Return that allowed anyone professing the Jewish faith the right to emigrate to and settle in Israel. Jews have emigrated there in their droves over the past six decades from all over the world, many of whom were escaping oppression and anti-Semitic violence.

I am the first to agree that Israel is not wholly without fault. But let us please enter into a balanced, factual and calm debate.

The unbalanced, emotive and factually laughable thoughts offered by Mr Alvarado serve to do more harm than good to the Palestinian cause.

STEPHEN GRIFFITHS, Lincoln.

Load-Date: June 11, 2009

Troops charge in as cabinet meets

The Australian

January 12, 2009 Monday

1 - All-round Country Edition

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Section: LOCAL; Pg. 1

Length: 679 words

Byline: JOHN LYONS, MIDDLE EAST CORRESPONDENT

Body

ISRAELI troops charged deeper into the Gaza Strip last night as its cabinet met to decide whether to implement the third and final phase of Israel's 16-day offensive against **Hamas**.

Infantry and tanks, exchanging fire with Palestinian militants, advanced further into Gaza City after helicopters dropped thousands of letters over the Palestinian enclave warning that Israel was preparing to escalate its military offensive.

Clutching babies and toddlers and carrying hurriedly packed bags, residents of Gaza City's Tal Al-Hawa district left their houses shortly after dawn.

They fled after Israeli armoured and infantry units moved into the adjacent neighbourhood of Sheikh Al-Ajlin and exchanged fire with Palestinian fighters in the streets of the densely populated capital.

Twelve bodies, 10 them **Hamas** fighters, were found in the rubble of bombarded houses in Tal al-Hawa and Sheikh Ajlin, medics said last night.

As the Palestinian death toll reached 850, the Israeli cabinet met to consider implementing the offensive's final stage, which would involve deploying thousands of Israeli reservists and an assault on Gaza City, which is likely to lead to even heavier civilian casualties.

The cabinet was meeting for the third time on the issue after the first two meetings failed to reach a decision.

It is understood Defence Minister Ehud Barak is opposed to an escalation of the offensive, while Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni are in favour.

Speaking at the start of last night's meeting, Mr Olmert said Israel was nearing achievement of the goals it had set, but would continue the offensive against **Hamas** for the time being.

``This is a time to translate our achievements into the goals we have set," he said. ``Israel is approaching these goals, but more patience and determination are required in order to reach these goals in a manner that will change the security reality in the south in a way that will allow our citizens to live in security and stability over a long period of time.

``We must not let what has been achieved through unprecedented national effort slip through our fingers."

Troops charge in as cabinet meets

Hamas fired about 13 rockets into Israel yesterday, injuring several people in Ashkelon and Israel made about 60 air strikes.

One strike hit a house in the northern city of Beit Lahiya,

Continued -- Page 2

From Page 1

killing two **women** and four children.

After Israel and **Hamas** both rejected on Friday a UN Security Council resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire, Israeli spokesman Ygal Palmer said yesterday an intensification of the campaign was ``definitely an option". Khaled Meshaal, **Hamas**' leader in exile, said on Saturday the Islamic group would not negotiate any ceasefire while ``under fire".

``I can say with full confidence that on the military level the enemy has totally failed -- it has not achieved anything. Has it stopped the rockets?" Meshaal said in a video broadcast from Damascus.

Demonstrations were held around the world at the weekend including in Washington, London, Paris and Canberra.

And for the first time a demonstration was held in Israel as anti-war protesters marched in Tel Aviv holding up pictures of dead children that they said had not been shown in the Jewish state.

A doctor at Gaza's Nasser hospital claimed he had seen people whose bodies had been burnt by white phosphorous shells fired by Israel -- such shells are banned by international law but allowed to be used as smokescreens.

Yusef Abu Rish said he had seen at least 55 people whose injuries were caused by such shells -- a claim denied by the Israeli military.

Medical sources said that of the 854 Palestinians killed, 270 were children, 93 **women** and 12 paramedics. On the Israeli side, 13 have been killed since hostilities began on December 27 -- 10 soldiers and three civilians.

On the diplomatic front, talks continued in Cairo as Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas met Egyptian leader Hosni Mubarak. **Hamas** officials and Israeli officials also separately met Egyptian officials to discuss a ceasefire.

More reports -- Page 9

Opinion -- Page 12

Load-Date: January 11, 2009

Obama's party divided on Gaza conflict; New leader faces tough decision

The Vancouver Sun (British Columbia)

January 14, 2009 Wednesday

Final Edition

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Section: CANADA & WORLD; Pg. B7

Length: 675 words

Byline: Irwin Stelzer, The Daily Telegraph

Body

Most American presidents take office intending to focus on domestic issues. Franklin Roosevelt planned to keep America out of foreign wars, and instead became one of the leaders of the war against Adolf Hitler. George W. Bush won election promising to make tax cuts his primary goal: 9/11 changed his priorities.

So with Barack Obama. The president-elect has been trying to keep Congress and the American public solidly behind his domestic economic stimulus package. With difficulty, as Congressional opposition to some features of that program mounts. "I don't work for Barack Obama," says Harry Reid, leader of the Democrats in the Senate.

Inevitably, foreign affairs are diverting attention from Obama's domestic plans. Looming in the background is Afghanistan, to which he has promised to commit more troops. And Iran, with nuclear ambitions that candidate Obama said he finds unacceptable and a threat to the world. Leaping to the foreground is the Israeli effort to end Hamas's rocket attacks on its civilians.

In five days, Obama will no longer be able to avoid the issue by claiming, quite rightly, that America has only one president at a time.

Polls suggest most rank-and-file Democrats want the Israelis to declare a ceasefire, thus leaving in place Hamas's ability to rearm and with no credible way of preventing the terrorist group from launching hundreds of missiles at increasingly distant targets within Israel.

Never mind that civilian casualties caused by the Israeli military are collateral damage, while the casualties caused by Hamas are the purpose of its rocket attacks. Or that Hamas is violating the Geneva Convention by hiding behind its women, endangering children by storing arms in schools, and risking the lives of the sick by placing its headquarters under Gaza City's Shifa hospital.

Most Democrats, understandably appalled by the horrible pictures that Hamas makes available to the western press, want Israel to stop its attacks. Now.

Whether the Israelis will bow to mounting international pressure remains to be seen.

One faction in its government knows that the world has stood silent while thousands of rockets have rained on its people during the years of the so-called truce with Hamas, and that history suggests that "the international community" cares little about the survival of the world's only Jewish state.

Obama's party divided on Gaza conflict; New leader faces tough decision

Another sees the goodwill of other nations as key to Israel's long-run survival.

The key, of course, remains the United States, Israel's so-far staunch ally. Which puts Obama front and centre on Jan. 20. The Bush administration, itself divided between Condoleezza Rice doves and Dick Cheney hawks, won't be around to hide behind.

Obama shares his party's belief in diplomacy, in the importance of working with allies in international organizations, and will be reluctant to exercise the veto at the UN Security Council that has stood between Israel and the wrath of Arab nations and others.

He will feel the tug of his party's left-wing base -- the people who gave him the nomination over the more moderate Hillary Clinton. The new president will also be hearing from those among his advisers who see Israel not as a strategic asset in the global war on terror, but as a liability that dilutes American influence in the Muslim world.

Israel is counting on the realists in the Obama foreign-policy team to make its case. These advisers know that diplomacy cannot bridge the difference between parties when one contestant is so committed to the destruction of the other that it uses its resources to construct tunnels through which to smuggle arms rather than to build a viable economy. International monitors who can't shoot straight, or not at all, will not prevent the rearming of Hamas or the continuation of rocket attacks, as experience in Lebanon proves. Incoming secretary of state Hillary Clinton knows that.

Obama will have to choose between the lady at his State Department and the left-wing talk-at-any price wing of his party. No one can guess which this most opaque of all new presidents will choose.

Load-Date: January 14, 2009

End of Document

A moral war

The Jerusalem Post

January 5, 2009 Monday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 13

Length: 701 words

Highlight: Editorial

Body

For pacifists who believe that all wars are immoral, Israel's self-defense operation against Hamas in Gaza is necessarily wrong. To such people we invoke the 18th-century philosopher Edmund Burke: "All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing." Confronted by a movement that amalgamates fascism with religious extremism and a genocidal platform, our moral imperative demands Jewish self-defense.

Few of the voices slamming Israel for conducting an "immoral" war in Gaza are those of pacifists.

Take Riyad Mansour, Mahmoud Abbas's man at the UN. He claimed on CNN that "3,000 Palestinians had been killed or injured" in Gaza, then denounced Israel's "targeting 1.5 million Palestinians" as "immoral" and a "crime against humanity."

Even as Mansour was pontificating, Hamas gunmen in Gaza were shooting Fatah activists in the knees as a preventive security measure lest they take advantage of the unstable situation.

In the West Bank, meanwhile, Mansour's Fatah has been ruthlessly hunting down Hamas members to keep the Islamists from seizing power there when Abbas's presidential term expires next week.

Far from there being "3,000 killed and wounded," more like 500 have been killed - 400 of them Hamas "militants," according to Palestinian Arab and UN sources inside Gaza cited by the Associated Press. Israeli sources put the Palestinian civilian death toll at some 50.

Pointing this out does not diminish the dreadful loss of dozens of innocent Palestinian lives in a week's worth of fighting. It does show, however, that the IDF continues to do everything possible to avoid "collateral damage." But its prime mandate is to protect the lives of Israeli civilians and minimize risks to our citizen-soldiers.

Over the weekend, glitterati including Annie Lennox and Bianca Jagger joined tens of thousands of mostly Muslim protesters in rallies held worldwide against the Israeli "genocide."

In fact, we'd be surprised if any another army currently on the battlefield is more conscientious about avoiding civilian casualties. Before it attacks and whenever possible, the IDF leaflets, telephones or sends text messages to residents of buildings used to launch rockets at our territory, warning them of the impending air-strike.

Conversely, what sort of "resistance" movement deliberately uses mosques, schools and homes as weapons depots and rocket launching pads? Answer: one that also uses its children and women as human shields.

A moral war

AMONG those troubled by Israel's actions are Jews whose connections to things Jewish are limited to the occasional bagel or lox sandwich. They too march to make clear they're nothing like those pitiless Israelis. "As a Jew, it is very moving to see so many people... outraged at Israel's actions," said comedian Alexei Sayle, who was raised in a strictly orthodox Communist Liverpool household.

Not all uncomfortable Jews are cut off from the community. Take Isaac Luria - not the ancient kabbalist, but the young Internet director of J Street, which is devoted to redefining what it means to be pro-Israel. Luria thinks that the IDF is "pushing the long-running Israeli- Palestinian conflict further down a path of never-ending violence." He's strictly against "raining rockets on Israeli families" (this is bad, he knows, because he spent a year in Israel), but "there is nothing 'right' in punishing a million and a half already-suffering Gazans for the actions of the extremists among them."

Wouldn't it be more intellectually honest to admit that Palestinian suffering is mostly self-inflicted? And that Hamas's anti-Israel agenda is wildly popular among Gaza's masses? And doesn't Luria owe it to himself to look a little closer at the nature of the Israeli military response.

The folks at J Street believe "there is no military solution to what is fundamentally a political conflict...." Hamas would beg to differ. Indeed, Hamas has been trying to prove the contrary, forcing Israel's hand.

What Israel's critics need to understand is that there can be no political solution while we are under Palestinian bombardment. Those who are sincere about fostering coexistence should stop bashing the IDF and start telling the Palestinians: Stop the violence.

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

End of Document

Chaos in Gaza as Israel launches more airstrikes

Deseret Morning News (Salt Lake City)

December 29, 2008 Monday

Copyright 2008 The Deseret News Publishing Co.

Length: 651 words

Byline: Ibrahim Barzak Associated Press

Body

GAZA CITY -- Terrified prisoners fled a Gaza City jail bombed by Israeli warplanes on Sunday, their faces white with dust and red with blood as they stumbled over huge piles of rubble.

Across the territory, grieving families pitched traditional mourning tents of green tarps outside the homes. Yet the rows of chairs inside these tents remained largely empty, as residents covered indoors for fear of new Israeli strikes. Plumes of gray smoke rising into the sky marked the site of the latest Israeli attacks.

Even for war-weary Gazans, who've lived through countless Israeli incursions, air attacks and months of bitter Palestinian infighting, the latest surprise Israeli air offensive was unusually traumatic. In all, more than 290 people -- most of them Hamas policemen, but also 20 children -- were killed in some 300 Israeli air attacks over two days.

On Saturday, shortly after Israel unleashed the deadliest-ever offensive against Hamas and its rocket squads, hospital morgues quickly overflowed. In the initial chaos, the dead were wrapped in blankets and lined up on the ground, as frantic relatives searched for their loved ones.

On Sunday, 25 unclaimed bodies still lay in the morgue of Gaza's largest hospital, Shifa, their faces disfigured beyond identification. In the southern town of Rafah, residents held a mass funeral for 14 people, including two brothers, and a father and son, all of them members of the Hamas security forces.

The shelling began at 11:30 a.m. Saturday, a work day in Gaza, just as children returned home from school, women shopped in local markets and police directed traffic.

At that moment, Israeli warplanes unleashed scores of bombs and missiles simultaneously at Hamas security installations. Residents described a veil of dust, smoke and rubble covering one world, and lifting to reveal another filled with horror. Women were running, carrying their children, uniformed students screamed and cars crashed into each other as panicked drivers tried to get away.

The dead and wounded were rushed to hospitals in cars. Some carried blankets filled with body parts. "I have a head here," one man yelled as he rushed into the crowded reception area of Shifa Hospital.

Police directed them to go to the hospital morgue, opposite the maternity ward, but it was already full by Saturday afternoon. One dead woman lay on the floor, her face covered in blood and body in an embroidered peasant's robe. Men searching for relatives smacked their heads against the floor in grief and helplessness.

Inside Shifa, some of the floors were slick with blood. Wounded people sat in corridors, shooing away doctors, telling them to treat more urgent cases first. -->

Chaos in Gaza as Israel launches more airstrikes

Israeli strikes hit a new series of targets on Sunday: a fuel tanker, a **Hamas** television station, smuggling tunnels and a central prison in a main **Hamas** security compound.

The bombing of the prison set free dozens of prisoners, who rushed out from their cells, carrying bags of clothes and blankets with them as they scrambled over rubble, fleeing **Hamas** police.

One man remained pinned under the rubble, his face smeared partly in white dust, partly in blood, shouting: "Wait for me! Pull me out!"

Miles away, on Gaza's southern border with Egypt, the ground shook. In a matter of four minutes, Israeli aircraft destroyed 40 smuggling tunnels running under the border. The tunnels are used to smuggle goods and weapons into Gaza.

Area resident Fida Kishta rushed to the border once the smoke cleared -- and she wasn't alone.

Hundreds gathered at the border wall, trying to get across. Egyptian border guards opened fire above the crowds, trying to scatter them. Instead, residents manned a bulldozer and tried to knock down the wall.

When that didn't work, they set an explosive device beside it, knocking what Kishta said appeared to be a small hole. Dozens of defiant Gazans clambered over it, but were eventually returned to Gaza.

Load-Date: December 29, 2008

Rudd shuns brutal truth

Hobart Mercury (Australia)

January 12, 2009 Monday

1 - Edition

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Section: TALKING POINT; Pg. 25

Length: 772 words

Byline: GREG BARNES

Body

LAST week over 150 Australian-Jewish voices put the Rudd Government and the Turnbull-led Opposition to shame. In contrast to the pathetic refusal by the Australian Government and the opposition parties, these brave individuals condemned Israel's invasion of the Gaza area.

This group of Australian-Jewish people includes the celebrated author and journalist Anthony Lowenstein, children's author Mem Fox and academic writer Eva Cox.

They called for "an immediate end to attacks on civilians by Palestinians and Israelis". And they condemned Israel's attacks on Palestinians in the Gaza area as a "brutal assault".

This group of people no doubt had in mind the shameful attack by the Israelis last Wednesday on a United Nations-run school in Jabalya which killed 42 men, women and children. An action which the Israelis said was necessary because militants were firing rockets from the school -- a lie according to the UN.

This group is also conscious of the fact that the pretext for Israel's war against Hamas is nothing more than domestic politics. More than 7000 amateurish Hamas rockets fired from the Gaza area have killed 23 people over the past seven years, and the Israelis have sought to use this fact to justify a full-scale military invasion, which has killed more than 600 people, and which comes after an 18-month period in which the Israeli Government has cut power, water and medical supplies to the Gaza area after Hamas took control in June, 2007.

But what is really driving Israel here are the political ambitions of the Defence Minister Ehud Barak and Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, who is taking over leadership of Kadima, the party of incumbent Prime Minister Ehud Olmert.

Mr Barak and Ms Livni face an election on February 10 against the formidable Opposition leader and notorious hardliner when it comes to the Palestinian question, Benjamin Netanyahu.

Whichever way you look at it, Israel's conduct is despicable and inhumane. It is putting political motives ahead of human lives; it does not get much more cynical than that in politics.

One might have thought that Mr Rudd and Mr Turnbull would be appalled at Israel's behaviour. That they would agree with so many eminent Jewish Australians in unequivocally condemning the grossly disproportionate response by Israel to Hamas attacks, and the killing of innocent and long-suffering Palestinians. A no brainer, really.

Rudd shuns brutal truth

But no. It's OK to condemn Robert Mugabe, Vladimir Putin, China when it crushes dissent in Tibet, and other regimes around the world who behave in a similar gross fashion, but lets allow Israel off the hook.

Mr Rudd, and his deputy Julia Gillard, who apparently once used to have sympathy for the Palestinian cause, have been content to blame **Hamas** for Israel's actions and refused to condemn Israel despite the graphic and blatant evidence that it should be criticised often and loudly.

Mr Turnbull has been even more of an abject failure in terms of statesmanship on the matter. He has shown himself to be a barracker for Israel and keeps putting the blame on **Hamas** for the current mess.

So why the hypocrisy on the part of these people? Why is it that if Mr Putin's military were to bomb a school which was flying the UN flag and sheltering refugees, Mr Rudd, Ms Gillard and Mr Turnbull would be churning out media releases giving Mr Putin and Russia a right ticking off, but when Israel does it, they rub their hands and mouth weasel words about the need for both sides to respect human rights?

Let's contrast the conduct of our political leaders with those across the Tasman. Former New Zealand prime minister Helen Clark was one of the few Western leaders who refused to kow tow to Israel and see it as some form of special case, exempt from the internationally accepted norms of civilised conduct.

Ms Clark, now the New Zealand Labour Party's foreign affairs spokesman, has condemned Israel's response to **Hamas** as over the top and says that Israel is putting its own people at risk by such behaviour. The leader of her party and former foreign minister, Phil Goff, said last week that the ``size and scale of the Israeli response is hugely disproportionate and the timing appears to have been motivated more by the impending election in Israel than **Hamas** attacks".

Is it any wonder that Palestinians and Arab people the world over feel as though the leaders of countries like Australia and the US will side with Israel in the running sore of ensuring that Palestinians rights are respected. Unlike those brave Australian Jewish voices who have so publicly condemned Israel, Mr Rudd, Ms Gillard and Mr Turnbull have merely confirmed that feeling.

Load-Date: January 11, 2009

Where does Australia stand on carnage in Gaza?

Canberra Times (Australia)

January 3, 2009 Saturday

Final Edition

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Section: A; Pg. B04

Length: 595 words

Byline: The Canberra Times

Body

Greg Rose's opinion piece "Israel's attacks are not extreme" (January 1, p9) which excuses Israel's protection of its citizens in attacking Palestine, contrasts dramatically with the report by Adel Zaanoun ("Traumatised children in front line of Gaza assault", January 1, p11) which highlights the terror of Palestinian children underneath Israel's shock and awe attacks.

Our less-than-pure ally, the United States nods its understanding of this disproportionate onslaught while the impoverished children of Gaza die.

Where does Australia stand among this carnage?

I know who I feel for, and it's not our side, I'm afraid.

Chris Yates, Scullin I agree with Kathryn Kelly (Letters, January 2) that "one state with democratic rights for all its citizens, Palestinians and Israelis" is the answer.

Indeed the Palestine Liberation Organisation at one stage had as its aim the establishment of just such a state.

But its commitment was at best half-hearted, and none of its actions indicated any real strategy for achieving this goal.

The obstacle to a one state solution is Zionism, the founding and still dominant ideology of Israel. It established the Israeli state on terror and genocide against the Palestinian people.

The Israeli military is the fourth most powerful in the world. The Israeli state only survives through the monetary, military and political support it receives from the US. The US does this because Israel is the attack dog for American imperialist interests. The Palestinians (let alone Hamas) cannot, on their own, defeat Israel and the US.

So is there no hope? No.

"The road to Jerusalem runs through Cairo." If the Arab masses were to rise up and overthrow their mainly US-backed dictatorships the whole face of Middle East politics would change. No longer would the US/Israeli alliance be able to control oil, undermining Israel's strategic importance to American imperialism.

Where does Australia stand on carnage in Gaza?

More importantly the empowerment of ordinary working and farming people of itself presents a challenge to the Israeli state and its racist and terrorist existence. It is a historical step forward beyond the backwardness of Zionism and thus becomes attractive to many in the region, including in Israel where the majority are in reality also disempowered.

This is not going to happen overnight, and certainly **Hamas** with its islamic ideology and Fatah with its quisling approach won't adopt a strategy of encouraging revolution in other Arab and nearby Muslim countries.

But there have been massive strikes in Egypt recently which the US-backed Mubarak regime repressed violently.

They will recur. The Egyptian dictatorship is unstable and while the immediate beneficiaries of any overthrow might be the **Hamas** co- Islamists, the Muslim Brotherhood, in the long run the solution appears to me to be the Arab masses actually running society themselves. History may take its time but it will happen.

John Passant, Kambah **Hamas** uses Palestinian civilians as human shields.

These Arab terrorists locate launching pads and weapon storage in homes, schools, hospitals, mosques and community centers, while the Arab terrorists hide underground.

Hamas knows that Palestinian Arab civilians injured in the fire will be damaging to Israel, while the Arab terrorists murder innocent Israeli **women** and children.

Moreover, **Hamas**, Hezbollah and the Palestine Liberation Organisation Arab terrorists teach Arab children to hate all Israelis and teach that murder of Israelis is a grand goal, thus developing terrorists for future generations and continuing to block any chance for peace.

Alan J. Winters, Texas

Load-Date: January 2, 2009

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Hobart Mercury (Australia)

January 12, 2009 Monday

1 - Edition

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Section: Pg. 14

Length: 887 words

Body

Nurses need extra help, not cutbacks

SHEILA Allison (Letters, January 8) is right in some respects. Nurses in Tasmania have been asking for assistance (especially during non-business hours) for many years.

Nurses want allocated to the ward team members who can answer phones, clean areas and equipment, run messages, transport items and help nursing staff.

But nurses do not want those individuals to be replacing nurses for there is a considerable body of international and national research which indicates that worse patient outcomes occur when there is a low ratio of qualified nursing staff to patients.

The type of patient admitted to our hospital system is very different in 2009 than in 1960.

Many surgical procedures in the 1960s saw individuals convalesce for weeks in the hospital system (requiring little assistance after the first days) but these are now undertaken as short-stay procedures with the patient quickly discharged. During the time they are in hospital they often require intensive support.

Nurses do need and do want help to do the non-nursing work they have to do while also seeking to attend to their nursing duties but nurses do not believe that 30 per cent of all nurses should be replaced with non-nurses as appears to be the proposal of Health Minister Lara Giddings.

Tasmania still has Enrolled Nurses who could be better employed in the health system. So give the nurses the help they need but don't risk patient care by reducing nurse numbers and introducing, unnecessarily, another level of worker to do nursing care.

Neroli Ellis

Branch secretary, Australian

Nursing Federation

Housing left empty

MY partner and I have been in category one on the Housing Tasmania waiting list for some time.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We are trying to get everything organised for our baby as I am 20 weeks pregnant but we are finding it hard as we are living in our car.

We know of and see many empty homes in the Bridgewater, Gagebrook community and instead of people in need like ourselves being offered a house they are being left empty, which leads to them being either severely damaged or destroyed by vandalism. I'd like to know why this keeps happening.

Y. Cleaver

Bridgewater

War on free societies

ISRAEL'S campaign to secure its borders and to ensure that its people can live in peace from daily rocket barrages from Hamas has resulted in the deaths of civilians.

The tragic fact is that civilians do die in war but it is also a fact that the Israeli Defence Forces have never targeted civilians. The war is, after all, about stopping the deliberate targeting of Israeli civilians by Hamas.

Israel unilaterally left Gaza and was repaid with thousands of rockets being fired into civilian areas by Hamas. Casualties have been limited, not because of any failure of the rockets, but because of a conscious decision by Israel to build shelters to protect its people.

Gaza has no such civil defence in place. It is not as though Hamas is unable to build shelters. We see the tunnels, so well constructed by Hamas, in order to smuggle weapons into Gaza, but it seems that the civil population is expendable if it can provide propaganda against Israel. Hamas is clear in its ambitions. Its Charter has the stated aim of the destruction of Israel and elimination of the Jewish people.

Israel is fighting, as it has for decades, for survival. Iran supports, funds, arms and trains the terrorists of Hamas, Hezbollah and the other factions who fight a proxy war on Iran's behalf. Israel remains a free and democratic society and, as such, is despised by those who fear free societies. Israel remains on the front line of this war on free societies everywhere.

William Briggs

Kingston Beach

Boycott Israel

HAVE we forgotten that Hamas was democratically elected as the legitimate government of the whole of Palestine? Do we not care that the population survives under intolerable conditions including starvation and denial of medicine due to Israeli blockades? Hamas is the only organisation that offers the population any kind of dignity or capacity for resistance at this time.

Given the balance of forces and dense population on the Gaza strip, the latest assault is little more than a massacre of women and children.

The conditions for peace in Palestine are well known, comprising the dismantling of Israeli settlements, a return to the 1967 borders, and the creation of a viable Palestinian state. Israel's entire policy is to prevent this occurring. Israel is therefore empirically anti-peace.

Since the ALP doesn't care, anything Australia does is up to the Australian people. Let's talk to our super funds and ensure we are not investing in Israel until Israel renounces violence and a two-state solution is achieved.

Adam Peacock

New Norfolk

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Please tell us more about Choir of Hard Knocks

IT was good to see that uplifting television repeat The Choir of Hard Knocks on ABC 1 last week but what of the singers now?

How have they progressed since or have they fallen back even further by having experienced the euphoria of success? The really interesting program that the ABC could produce is ``Where are they now?" tracing the ongoing success of the singers. Now that would be worth seeing.

I truly hope that what we saw was not just an emotionally charged reputation-building event for the program producers and a grab for audience.

Geoff Fader

Mt Nelson

Load-Date: January 11, 2009

End of Document

Israeli forces close in on Gaza City

Guardian.com

January 13, 2009

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theguardian

Length: 800 words

Highlight: Air and ground forces move into outskirts of city after one of the fiercest periods of sustained bombing during the conflict

Body

Israeli tanks fought their way into the suburbs of Gaza City for the first time today after a night of intense bombing.

Heavy fighting was reported in Tel al-Hawa, in the south of the city, where tanks and attack helicopters could be heard under waves of heavy air strikes and artillery bombardments. Several buildings were on fire, and clouds of thick black smoke hung over the city. Residents said they had endured one of the heaviest nights of bombing in Israel's 18-day offensive. The push into Tel al-Hawa brings Israel's ground forces within one mile of the crowded city centre.

Palestinian health officials said they had received dozens of calls for ambulances to the south of the city, but it was too dangerous to send them. A number of Israeli soldiers were reportedly injured overnight, three of them mistakenly hit by their own troops.

The death toll on the Palestinian side stands at 910, among them 292 children and 75 women, according to the Palestinian health ministry.

More than 4,250 have been injured, of whom around a half are women and children. On the Israeli side 13 people have died, including three civilians.

More and more Gazans were fleeing their homes to seek shelter wherever they could. At least 28,000 are now holed up in UN schools operating as emergency shelters. More than 2,000 of them fled on Sunday alone, from Gaza City and Khan Yunis, to the south. Thousands more are staying with relatives or friends.

The UN said there were shortages of several basic foods, including food for infants and malnourished children, and there were increasing risks of epidemic outbreaks, because of disrupted vaccinations, uncollected rubbish on the street and unsafe drinking water.

Ismail Haniyeh, a Hamas leader and the former Palestinian prime minister, gave a late-night speech on Hamas television, saying his movement was pursuing a diplomatic end to the fighting, and insisting on an Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, and the opening of crossings that have been closed for months.

Israeli forces close in on Gaza City

Haniyeh said **Hamas** would "deal positively with any initiative that can end the aggression and allow the withdrawal of the occupation troops, and end the siege so that we can stop the bloodshed". But he said the group would also continue "our resistance against this occupation until it leaves our lands".

However, diplomacy to end the conflict has faltered and some senior Israelis, among them the prime minister, Ehud Olmert, and some of his top generals, are keen to escalate the fight and to send troops into the heart of Gaza's major cities.

Speaking in parliament today, Israel's military chief, Lt Gen Gabi Ashkenazi, said his troops have inflicted heavy damage on **Hamas**, but would continue fighting to achieve more. "The soldiers are doing exceptional work, with many achievements in inflicting damage on **Hamas**, its infrastructure, its government and military wing," he said. "But we still have work to do."

Olmert, speaking in the town of Ashkelon which has come under Gaza rocket fire, said Israel would end the military operations only when **Hamas** stops rocketing Israel and halts weapons smuggling across the border. "Anything else will be met with the Israeli people's iron fist," Olmert said. "We will continue to strike with full strength, with full force until there is quiet and rearmament stops."

Later, he tempered his tough talk, saying that he hoped the Egyptians' attempts to negotiate a settlement between Israel and **Hamas** would end the fighting.

Ban Ki-moon, the UN secretary general, was due to leave today for the Middle East for talks in several countries. "My message is simple, direct, and to the point: the fighting must stop. To both sides, I say: Just stop now," Ban said. "Too many people have died. There has been too much civilian suffering. Too many people, Israelis and Palestinians, live in daily fear of their lives."

Palestinian militants continued to fire rockets into southern Israel. At least 18 hit on Monday, although there were no injuries. More rockets were fired early today.

Israel has banned all reporters from entering Gaza to report on the conflict, but yesterday it allowed a Reuters journalist to briefly embed with the Israeli military and release his report, after it had been passed by a military censor. "We are tightening the encirclement of the city," said Brigadier Eyal Eisenberg, a commander of the offensive. "We are not static. We are careful to be constantly on the move."

Another officer, named only as Lieutenant Colonel Yehuda, spoke in optimistic terms about the fight. "I think **Hamas** has already folded," he said. A tank commander, named only as Lieutenant Colonel Erez, said his forces had encountered anti-armour weaponry. "We have responded pre-emptively and forcefully," he said. "We also hit anyone seen trying to observe our movements."

Load-Date: January 13, 2009

World leaders call for Mideast truce

The New Zealand Herald
December 31, 2008 Wednesday

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Section: NEWS; World

Length: 448 words

Body

Key world powers trying to promote Mideast peace today called on Israel and **Hamas** to implement an immediate cease-fire in Gaza and southern Israel, the UN said.

The Quartet of Mideast peacemakers - the United States, the United Nations, the European Union and Russia - appealed "for an immediate cease-fire that would be fully respected" following a teleconference last night (NZT), UN deputy spokeswoman Marie Okabe said.

They called for the cease-fire four days after Israeli warplanes started raining tons of bombs on Gaza, targeting **Hamas**-related installations and homes, in an attempt to stop **Hamas** rocket attacks from Gaza that have traumatised southern Israel.

The bombardment has been one of the Middle East's bloodiest assaults in decades, killing 368 Palestinians and injuring about 1,400. The civilian death toll include 64 **women** and children, and a still unknown number of men, the UN said.

In addition to calling for an immediate cease-fire, the Quartet "called on all parties to address the serious humanitarian and economic needs in Gaza and to take necessary measures to ensure the continuous provision of humanitarian supplies," Okabe said.

"They agreed on the urgent need for Israelis and Palestinians to continue on the road to peace," she said.

Participating in the teleconference were UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, European Union foreign policy chief Javier Solana, EU Commissioner for External Relations Benita Ferrero-Waldner, French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner whose country holds the EU presidency, and Quartet representative Tony Blair, Okabe said.

Ban told reporters that regional and international partners had not done enough to help end the Israeli-**Hamas** conflict.

"They should do more," he said. "They should use all possible means to end the violence and encourage political dialogue, emphasizing peaceful ways of resolving differences."

US Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad called Ban's criticism "unfair," saying the United States has been very active diplomatically. Rice has been on the phone with the Israelis, the Palestinians, the Europeans, the Russians and others, he said.

World leaders call for Mideast truce

"Everyone is of the view that two things are important, an end to violence, a cease-fire, an enduring cease-fire, and two ... the humanitarian needs of the Palestinians in Gaza," he told The Associated Press.

Khalilzad stressed that a cease-fire must deal "not only with what we're seeing now, of course, but also what has caused it, which from our point of view is the sequencing - it is the rockets, it's the smuggling of arms by **Hamas** and the other groups."

-AP

Load-Date: December 31, 2008

End of Document

Picking up the pieces after the missiles stop falling; Seen up close, conflict in Middle East is much more complex than outsiders realize

The Toronto Star

January 7, 2009 Wednesday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. AA06

Length: 783 words

Byline: Dow Marmur, Special to The Star

Body

Jerusalem - When the ceasefire will finally come, Israel won't be able to claim complete victory, despite its obvious desire to destroy Hamas. But it's equally clear that, notwithstanding the fiery rhetoric, Hamas cannot possibly defeat Israel. Hamas is, therefore, bound to continue to engage in activities the world has learnt to describe as terrorist, often linking them to Hezbollah in Lebanon and Al Qaeda elsewhere.

According to its own stated objectives, Hamas wants to kidnap Israeli soldiers. In view of the mileage it gets out of Gilad Shalit, the conscript now held in captivity for more than two years, it would like to get more Israelis into similar situations. In fact, almost immediately after the start of the present round of hostilities, Hamas announced that its men had taken two soldiers prisoner, though there's no evidence for it. Wishful thinking seems to have been used to boost morale and perhaps to ensure continued support by its Iranian paymasters.

The safety and welfare of soldiers is of paramount importance in Israel. Unlike in other countries where civilian casualties attract more attention, here it's the soldiers who are uppermost in the mind of the nation. As they're being sent to the front and some inevitably killed or maimed, the public's empathy with the dead and the bereaved in the military is particularly pronounced. One of the reasons is that virtually all Israelis have a young conscript or older reservist in their immediate or extended family.

There are those around the world, including some in Canada, who argue that Hamas's ambitions reflect the stance of a desperate people repeatedly defeated and humiliated. Therefore, we should have sympathy for them, even when we find their actions reprehensible. The majority, however, are more likely to conclude that this kind of desperation serves only the handlers and the newsmakers while causing irreparable damage to ordinary folk. In the presence of so much cruelty in the face of despair, even well-intentioned humanitarian responses may unwittingly end up condoning evil by playing into the hands of those some call terrorist thugs, others militants and others again freedom fighters.

It seems that misguided and self-serving conduct by Hamas brought about the present situation and thus it should primarily be held responsible for the misery in Gaza. Had it upheld the truce, such as it was, Israel would have had no reason to attack. Many countries in the region know it and Egypt says so openly.

Those further afield seem to prefer to make lofty, and in themselves worthy, pronouncements expressing justifiable horror at the senseless deaths of men, women and children while choosing to ignore underlying issues and potential remedies.

Picking up the pieces after the missiles stop falling Seen up close, conflict in Middle East is much more complex than outsiders realize

It's easier to have sympathy for terrorists when you're far away from them. But being within an hour's drive from Sderot, Ashkelon and the other places in southern Israel that have now been under **Hamas** fire for many years and being aware of how people there suffer, I see things very differently.

In fact, I'm rather incensed by slogans on both sides: those who don't believe that to protect innocent citizens is the duty of every government, especially not the government of Israel, even in the face of intolerable provocation; and those who make belligerent pronouncements about the war on terror expressing readiness to fight it to the last Israeli and Palestinian while they themselves live in safety and comfort a long way away.

Things are more complex than they seem and one's perception often depends on the vantage point from which one is looking at them. Real understanding requires an ability to also see the other's point of view. There's much to suggest that such understanding does exist in Israel today among public figures, including writers with international reputations.

Due to international mediation, currently working at full speed and in response to pressure from within Israel and its allies, hostilities are likely to come to an end soon. Missiles will stop falling, at least from the Israeli side. Israel is due to hold elections next month. This war will have a serious effect on the outcome. The current coalition partners are obviously anxious that the result should be in their favour. A prolonged war would work against them.

Whether a ceasefire will also bring about a government in Gaza that cares for the welfare of its population rather than a continuation of the present rule of the ideologues remains to be seen.

By all accounts, the overwhelming majority of ordinary folk on both sides yearn for peace, even if fragile, and are ready to make sacrifices to bring it about.

Dow Marmur is rabbi emeritus at Toronto's Holy Blossom Temple.

Graphic

John Overmyer Newsart

Load-Date: January 7, 2009

**MADNESS IN GAZA; ISRAEL ON BRINK OF DEADLY INVASION KIDS
AMONG 280 KILLED BY AIRSTRIKES WORLD PLEA FOR END TO
BLOODSHED**

The Mirror

December 29, 2008 Monday

1 Star Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 4

Length: 810 words

Byline: BY PAUL BYRNE

Body

THE world looked on in horror last night as violence in the Middle East escalated to its bloodiest yet with Israel poised to invade Gaza and vowing to crush Hamas rebels.

Tanks and troops gathered menacingly along the border with Palestine while F-16 jets stepped up their devastating bombing blitz of militant targets.

As world leaders and religious figureheads pleaded for peace in the troubled region, Israel's Defence Minister Ehud Barak warned starkly: "The time has come to fight."

At least 280 people, including women and children, have been killed and more than 600 injured in raids on the densely populated Gaza strip - sparked by Hamas rocket attacks on towns over the border.

Military spokeswoman Major Avital Leibovich added: "Israel has had enough.

"We have to do whatever we can in order to protect ourselves."

But defiant Hamas leaders refused to crumble under the military might weighed against them and vowed revenge.

Spokesman Mushir al-Masri said: "These strikes fuel our popular support, our military power and the firmness of our positions. We will survive, we will not surrender, we will not be shaken."

Crumpled bodies filled Gaza's mortuaries yesterday, blood stained the streets from the dead and wounded and choking plumes of smoke billowed into the sky after the airstrikes - described by locals as the worst in living memory.

MADNESS IN GAZA ISRAEL ON BRINK OF DEADLY INVASION KIDS AMONG 280 KILLED BY AIRSTRIKES WORLD PLEA FOR END TO BLOODSHED

Doctors struggled to cope with the huge numbers of injured people flooding into already crowded hospitals and fears of a humanitarian crisis grew as drug stocks and medical supplies rapidly dried up.

The Israeli targets have been **Hamas** bases such as security compounds, police stations and government offices. Gaza prison was also devastated in the carnage.

But thousands of innocent civilians live in close proximity to the buildings and have been caught up in the bloodshed. A 15-year-old boy died in an attack on a greenhouse in southern Gaza yesterday.

Israel blames **Hamas** for the bloodshed, insisting the strikes are in retaliation for more than 300 rocket attacks on its towns in the past week. Rebels targeted Israel's largest southern city Ashdod yesterday, which is 23 miles from Gaza - the deepest they have reached inside the country.

At least four people were killed when Israeli missiles hit one of **Hamas**'s main security compounds in Gaza City.

Bombs also destroyed a nearby mosque Israel claimed was "a base for terrorism". The **Hamas** TV station was hit along with supply tunnels in southern Gaza.

Major Leibovich said: "Those tunnels, we believe, were used for smuggling weapons, explosives and people to train for terror missions in other countries in the region."

Middle East envoy Tony Blair is to fly to the area within days for urgent talks in a bid to broker a peace deal.

Along with the Pope, Gordon Brown and UN leaders, he appealed for the six-month ceasefire that ended last week to be reinstated.

Mr Blair added: "The terrible events and tragic loss of life in Gaza require the introduction of a genuine calm in which the rocket attacks aimed at killing Israeli civilians and the Israeli attacks on Gaza cease so that the suffering of the people, which is severe, can be lifted."

Foreign Secretary David Miliband said the violence was "of grave concern".

He added: "The rise in rocket attacks on Israel since December 19 and yesterday's massive loss of life, make this a dangerous moment which should worry the international community. The UK supports an urgent ceasefire and immediate halt to all violence."

Mr Brown said: "I am deeply concerned by continuing missile strikes from Gaza on Israel and by Israel's response."

Pope Benedict XVI told pilgrims in St Peter's Square, Rome: "The homeland of Jesus cannot continue to be witness to so much bloodshed, which repeats itself endlessly. I implore an end to violence."

Critics believe Israel's overwhelming response to **Hamas** rocket raids are a show of might by Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and his government as elections loom in the country.

The Israeli public has a low opinion of how it has handled Gaza and until this weekend's airstrikes, opposition leader Binyamin Netanyahu led in polls.

In London, 10 protesters were arrested yesterday as a demonstration outside the Israeli embassy against the airstrikes got out of control.

More than 500 Palestinians and supporters gathered in Kensington to voice their anger at the attacks. They chanted, "Five, six, seven, eight, Israel is a terror state" as they tore down barriers and grappled with riot police.

Demonstrator Gamal Hamed, 68, from Hammersmith, whose 23-year-old son still lives in Gaza, said: "Yesterday was the bloodiest day in my homeland's history."

MADNESS IN GAZA ISRAEL ON BRINK OF DEADLY INVASION KIDS AMONG 280 KILLED BY
AIRSTRIKES WORLD PLEA FOR END TO BLOODSHED

"We will do what we can to make the world take notice."

Among the protesters were Respect MP George Galloway and former MP Tony Benn. Mr Galloway said: "Israel has killed hundreds and maimed hundreds more, many of whom are women and children."

Graphic

HORROR The bloodied and terrified faces of innocent children caught up in yesterday's devastating airstrikes by Israeli warplanes on Gaza strip include two young girls and five boys. They were rushed to overcrowded hospitals where doctors struggled to deal with the huge amount of injuries to civilians and Hamas. More than 600 people have been wounded since jets launched the raids in response to rebel rocket attacks; ATTACK Missile hits south Gaza; DEVASTATING Israeli helicopter strikes; FORCE Israeli troops fire tear gas at Palestinian protestors on border; SWOOP Israeli fighter moves in; WARNING Prime Minister Ehud Olmert

Load-Date: December 29, 2008

End of Document

Israel condemns UN statement calling for end to Gaza blockade. Dismayed that 'casual' reference to Palestinian aggression was 'almost an afterthought'

The Jerusalem Post

November 19, 2008 Wednesday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 4

Length: 394 words

Byline: TOVAH LAZAROFF and AP

Body

Israel on Tuesday harshly condemned a call by the United Nation's top human rights official to immediately end its blockade of the Gaza Strip, which she said breached international and humanitarian law.

"These statements she made were shocking, biased and misinformed," said Israel's Ambassador to the UN in Geneva, Aharon Leshno-Yaar, in a press statement he released to respond to the one issued by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay.

In that statement, issued from her Geneva-based office, Pillay urged Israel to allow the flow of aid - including food, medicines and fuel - to resume, and to restore electricity and water service in the Hamas- controlled territory.

"Some 1.5 million Palestinian men, women and children have been forcibly deprived of their most basic human rights for months," Pillay said. She also called for Israel to end air strikes and incursions into Gaza, and for Palestinians to stop firing rockets.

She issued the statement close to two weeks after the breakdown of the cease-fire. Israel has closed the borders to Gaza for most of that time in response to the renewed rocket attacks against its civilians.

Leshno-Yaar said that Pillay's should have begun her statement with a condemnation of Hamas' continued violence against Israel.

"Overall responsibility for the situation in the Gaza Strip lies with Hamas, which invests all of its resources in arms and terrorism instead of providing for the civilians that it brutally controls," Leshno-Yaar said, adding that Palestinian groups had fired more 170 rockets and mortars at Israel during the past 10 days. Leshno-Yaar also rejected Pillay's claim that Israel has cut off essential supplies to Gaza.

"Electricity and water continue to flow from Israel to Gaza, and 33 trucks laden with supplies arrived in Gaza yesterday, with more waiting to enter as soon as Hamas ends its violent attacks," he said.

"It is disappointing to see the high commissioner fall victim to Hamas' cynical manipulation of the media," said Leshno-Yaar.

Israel condemns UN statement calling for end to Gaza blockade. Dismayed that 'casual' reference to Palestinian aggression was 'almost an afterthought'

"Most disturbing is the way she casually refers to Palestinian aggression in the last sentence of her statement, almost as an afterthought. Unfortunately, Israel does not have the option of being so casual in its response to rocket attacks on its civilians, attacks which violate the most fundamental right of all, the right to life," said Leshno-Yaar.

Graphic

Photo: PALESTINIANS WAIT in line to receive food at the UN Relief and Works Agency warehouse in Gaza City yesterday. Israel rejected claims that its closure of the Gaza crossings was causing a humanitarian crisis. (Credit: Hatem Moussa/AP)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

End of Document

Time to speak up about Gaza tragedy and push for ceasefire

Canberra Times (Australia)

January 10, 2009 Saturday

Final Edition

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Section: A; Pg. B04

Length: 723 words

Byline: The Canberra Times

Body

The failure of the Australian Government to speak clearly and truthfully to all parties involved in creating the latest episode in the ongoing tragedy that is Gaza is deeply distressing and displays a lack of moral courage and commitment to human rights.

Our Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister need to make it clear that massive bombings of the sort that have thus far killed more than 400 Palestinians and wounded 1000 other civilians are a classic example of a disproportionate response. They place Israel in the position, along with **Hamas**, of being guilty of a crime against humanity. The Government needs to work for an immediate cease- fire imposed by the United Nations. As a close ally of the United States, Australia should be seeking its backing.

Hamas needs to stop all firing of missiles, bombs, or any other violent action originating from the West Bank or Gaza, and cooperate in actively jailing anyone from any faction who attempts to break this ceasefire from territory controlled by **Hamas**.

Israel needs to stop all bombing, targeted assassinations, or any other violent actions aimed at activists, militants, or suspected terrorists in the West Bank or Gaza, and use its army to prevent any further attacks on Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza, under the effective control of Israel.

Israel should open the border with Gaza and allow free access to and from Israel by Gazans and Palestinians, subject to search and seizure of weapons. Israel should allow free travel of food, gas, electricity, water, and consumer goods, again subject to search and seizure of weapons.

Doug Hynd, Stirling Israel's propaganda machine is trying to show Israel as the victim under threat. Not to mention its occupation, oppression and denial of Palestinian rights, the following figures reveal some of the deceptions.

Since the beginning of the so-called ceasefire six months ago, the Israeli occupation forces have repeatedly violated the truce through different methods, such as incursion, assassination, detention, demolition of homes, closure of Palestinian societies, escalation of settlement activity and continued to impose a land, sea and air siege on Gaza, making 1.5 million Palestinians prisoners without the necessary means of living.

According to the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, the Israeli Army and security have killed 79 Palestinians, 58 of whom are from the Gaza Strip, and injured 400 others. According to the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs website, eight Israelis were killed, one as a result of a rocket attack from Gaza.

Time to speak up about Gaza tragedy and push for ceasefire

In the same period during 2008 alone, Israel killed 873 Palestinians plus 271 patients who died because Israel refused to allow them to leave to seek medical attention. That is in comparison with 21 Israelis killed, according to the Israeli Foreign Ministry.

Since the beginning of the intifada on December 29, 2000, 5963 Palestinians were killed, mostly civilians, including more than 1100 children, and according to the Israeli human rights group, B'tselem, 703 Israelis were killed, including 123 children.

Ali Kazak, former Palestine ambassador and head of delegation If Hamas hides behind women and children, and fires rockets from schools and housing, then it must accept responsibility for the civilian casualties.

Kenneth Higgs, Lindisfarne, Tas Initial reports have alleged that Israel attacked a United Nations-run school in Gaza, resulting in 30 deaths. If 30 people died, this is tragic. But look closer at the facts. First, Hamas operatives were firing mortars from this school a gross violation of international law, which renders those civilian sites valid military targets.

Hamas does this regularly.

Second, that the school became a valid target when Hamas fired from it doesn't mean Israel would have fired on the school anyway. But this is a war, with gunfire and smoke and confusion.

Israeli soldiers had mortars fired at them; they fired back.

Most of the damage to the school seems to have been caused by explosives at the school that blew up when hit by the Israeli counter-attack.

Last year, the principal of a UN-run school was found to be the head rocket- maker for Islamic Jihad, another terrorist organisation operating in Gaza. The UN said it didn't know about his rocket activities, yet it knew he was a member of Islamic Jihad.

Patrick Atherton, Lara

Load-Date: January 9, 2009

Toll in Gaza: 275 children killed, 1,333 are injured

Daily Mail (London)

January 13, 2009 Tuesday

IRE Edition

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Section: Pg. 10

Length: 718 words

Byline: David Williams

Body

AT LEAST 275 children are among the nearly 900 Palestinian dead in the Gaza conflict, the UN claimed last night.

The figures came as a rift appeared for the first time among Israel's leaders over how long the offensive should continue.

With UN Middle East envoy Tony Blair claiming the elements for an ceasefire are in place, foreign minister Tzipi Livni and defence minister Ehud Barak are said to want to halt the operation as soon as possible.

But sources said outgoing Prime Minister Ehud Olmert disagreed and planned to present the case for a continued offensive in a cabinet forum where he has support.

Visiting the southern city of Ashkelon after it was hit by a **Hamas** rocket strike, Mr Olmert said he'd only end the conflict if rocket fire on Israel stops and **Hamas** is unable to re-arm.

He said: 'Anything else will be met with the Israeli people's iron fist. We will continue as long as necessary to remove this threat from our heads.'

The mounting civilian suffering and the shocking number of dead children has placed increased pressure on diplomats to broker a truce acceptable to both sides.

Israel is expected to decide today whether to step up its ground operations by pushing more troops and tanks into Gaza City and other urban areas – a move seemingly supported by the decision to send extra reservists in to Gaza, freeing up regular fighting soldiers.

Israeli spokesman Mark Regev said **Hamas** was taking 'serious punishment' and Israel was 'advancing towards the end-game'.

A push into densely crowded urban areas would threaten the lives of many more civilians.

Aid groups have repeatedly said Israel must do more to protect civilians, who are believed to make up about half of the dead. The bodies of dozens of **women** and children are said to be piling up at hospitals.

UN figures show that on top of the 275 dead children, a further 1,333 have been wounded. The UN says that 93 **women** have been killed and 587 wounded in the conflict.

Toll in Gaza: 275 children killed, 1,333 are injured

Israel, which says it has killed 'hundreds' of fighters, has questioned civilian casualty figures from Gaza but has not offered its own estimate.

The UN announced yesterday that a fact-finding mission would be sent into Gaza after the conflict to investigate Israeli abuses against Palestinians.

Secretary General Ban Ki-moon will also submit a report to the General Assembly about the shelling of a UN school last week, which Gaza officials say killed 39 people.

An Israeli investigation concluded that a mortar missed its target and hit near the building, but claims casualty figures were inflated by **Hamas**.

In a related outcry, Human Rights Watch has accused Israel of firing artillery shells packed with the incendiary agent white phosphorus over populated areas of Gaza.

The chemical, used for creating smoke screens and for illuminating battlefields at night, ignites when it comes in contact with oxygen and can cause serious burns and start fires as it drifts to the ground.

In fighting yesterday, the army said it carried out more than 25 air strikes, hitting squads of gunmen, mortar launchers and two vehicles carrying **Hamas** militants.

Speaking yesterday after talks with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, Tony Blair said: 'The elements of an agreement of the immediate ceasefire are there and are now being worked on very hard in great detail.

'This is a sensitive and delicate time in the negotiation but i hope they will bear fruit and I hope so soon.'

Osama Hamdan, a **Hamas** official, said the group was working on a final position on the Egyptian proposals but its leader, Khaled Meshaal, has said the group would not consider a cease-fire until Israel ended its air, sea and ground assault and lifted its blockade of the Gaza Strip.

Israel's main demand is an end to **Hamas** rocket attacks on its territory.

reporter@dailymail. ie

SHANNON DENIAL ÷CLAIMS by anti-war activists that Shannon is being used to transport U.S. military equipment to Israel were denied by the Government last night.

The Department of Transport said aircraft carrying weapons must seek permission to land or fly over Irish air space and no permission has been sought.

However anti-war activists claim there has been increased activity. They also said a website logging details of warplanes at Shannon, shannonwatch.org, was attacked by a computer virus which has crippled it since the weekend.

Graphic

Emergency: A young girl is rushed into hospital in Gaza

Load-Date: January 13, 2009

Scores of children protest against Israel's siege of Gaza Strip

The Daily Star (Lebanon)

December 3, 2008 Wednesday

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THE DAILY STAR

LEBANON

Length: 335 words

Byline: Mohammed Zaatari

Body

Palestinian children in the Southern refugee camp of Ain al-Hilweh protested Tuesday in solidarity with their fellow children who are living under Israeli siege in the Gaza Strip. Dozens of children participated in the protest, which fell within the "Week of solidarity with the Palestinian people," organized by **Hamas**.

SIDON: Palestinian children in the Southern refugee camp of Ain al-Hilweh protested Tuesday in solidarity with their fellow children who are living under Israeli siege in the Gaza Strip.

Dozens of children participated in the protest, which fell within the "Week of solidarity with the Palestinian people," organized by **Hamas**.

"We the children of Ain al-Hilweh, the children of Palestine demand an end to the siege over Gaza and urge all Arabs and Muslims to rise and help their brothers," said a Palestinian boy.

One of the protesters portrayed the agony of Palestinian children in Gaza by playing the role of a sick child suffering amid a shortage in medicine.

Other children wore loaves of bread as masks to protest against hunger in Gaza.

Women affiliated with **Hamas** said in a statement which was distributed at the protest that the Israeli siege was aimed at pressuring the Palestinian people to abandon the resistance.

"We urge the international community to stand by the Palestinian people and work on facilitating the flow of food and medication to Gaza," they said.

Hamas' representative in Sidon, Abu Ahmad Fadl, said the Palestinian cause would continue to be the center of attention for all Palestinian refugees.

Meanwhile, hundreds of Lebanese students demonstrated in Beirut in support of Palestinians under siege in the Gaza Strip. Nearly 2,000 students marched toward the UN headquarters in Downtown Beirut on Tuesday morning.

Scores of children protest against Israel 's siege of Gaza Strip

They gathered for about 30 minutes outside the building where they sang resistance songs before dispersing peacefully.

Israel tightened its blockade on the Gaza Strip last month in a move that has been widely criticized throughout the Arab world. - With agencies

Load-Date: December 2, 2008

End of Document

**Economic activity - both legal and illegal - comes to a standstill in Gaza.
Lifeline supplied by tunnels no longer feeding the population**

The Jerusalem Post

January 13, 2009 Tuesday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 4

Length: 691 words

Byline: BRENDA GAZZAR

Body

Palestinian Omar Chaabaa has occasionally bought cigarettes smuggled through the Rafah tunnels, as well as fuel for the generator that keeps his household in the Gaza Strip running when the electricity is cut.

The tunnels had become a major source of economic activity and income for smugglers in recent months, as Israel's 18-month blockade on the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip tightened.

Whatever the terms of an agreement reached for a cease-fire between Hamas and Israel, Chaabaa, a freelance economist, hoped that there will be a solution, once and for all, to this problem.

In fact, he said that he and many other Palestinians there couldn't wait for the tunnels - and the need for them - to be eradicated completely.

"We don't want tunnels. We don't want a blockade. We want to trade with Jordan, with Egypt, with everybody," he told The Jerusalem Post in a telephone interview.

"We want our children to grow in a normal situation. We want to live normally like others, we want to be treated normally. But if you put Gaza under sanctions for 18 months, it is not normal. How can you be normal in an abnormal situation?"

During Operation Cast Lead, the IDF has attacked more than 200 of these tunnels, which it says have been used to smuggle in illegal weapons, such as rockets and explosives, into the Gaza Strip from Egypt.

"Without the tunnels, Hamas wouldn't be able to lay a hand on long-range rockets," said Foreign Ministry spokesman Yigal Palmor. "They are still making the small Kassam rockets in local workshops, which are a nuisance enough, but thanks to the tunnels, they can introduce into Gaza more sophisticated explosives and long-range rockets, such as Grad missiles."

Chaabaa, however, estimated that the vast majority of the smuggling today was used to transport food, clothes, household appliances and fuel.

Smuggling food, he said, had long become more profitable than smuggling weapons.

Today, during Israel's 17-day war with Hamas, both legal and illegal economic activity had come largely to a standstill in the Gaza Strip, he said.

Economic activity - both legal and illegal - comes to a standstill in Gaza. Lifeline supplied by tunnels no longer feeding the population

"Not only are the tunnels not working, but the banks are not working. People are not going out. Nobody can move in the street," he said. "We are at war. There is not a single economic activity going on."

As a result, Palestinians in the already impoverished Strip are becoming even more dependent on foreign aid organizations to sustain themselves, he said.

But the tunnel phenomenon in the Gaza Strip is not new, he said.

Chaabaan says they have been around for at least eight or maybe 10 years, long before Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip.

Israeli officials say specialized IDF units tried even then to hunt down and dismantle such tunnels, but they acknowledge that tunnels can be rebuilt.

An Israeli delegation is visiting Cairo on Monday to discuss a possible cease-fire with Hamas and what Egypt can do to better crack down on smuggling from its side.

Meanwhile, Luisa Morgantini, the vice president of the European Parliament, visited Rafah inside the Gaza Strip on Sunday with eight other parliamentarians.

During her brief visit, she said she saw homes destroyed by the Israeli operation and lots of women, children and the elderly taking shelter in cramped UNRWA schools.

"It's the first time that I have seen a population which has been bombed, and they cannot even leave," she said. "The people of Gaza cannot even escape. One woman told me, 'We are here to wake up to bombs that can kill us every morning.'"

Morgantini said the aim of the trip was to visit the civilian population, which is "paying the price of the wrong politics of Hamas and the wrong politics of Israel." She added: "I consider that the attitude of Israel is not different than that of Hamas, and in terms of proportion, they are killing many more civilians."

The European Parliament would discuss the Gaza conflict in a plenary session on Wednesday in Strasbourg, she said.

"What we are going to say is that as the European Union, we cannot upgrade the relationship with Israel unless Israel starts to comply with international legalities and stops the bombing of Gaza, but also stops the settlements in the West Bank."

Graphic

Photo: PALESTINIANS can no longer rely on tunnels like this one from Egypt to the Gaza Strip as a conduit of food or other supplies. (Credit: AP)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

Gaza conflict will shake the Arab world

Guardian.com

January 11, 2009

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theguardian

Length: 994 words

Highlight: Ismail Patel: Egypt's leadership could be the first hit by shockwaves sent through the neighbourhood by Israel's attacks

Body

The human cost of Israel's decision to attack Gaza is being paid by the Palestinians. However, the fallout from this wanton violence is going to have long-term political consequences throughout the Arab world. The Israeli attack on Gaza is likely to bring to the fore political trends that up to now have remained just below the parapet of influence. The situation has brought the Arab world to an historic crossroads, where leaders will either move towards Arab independence from western policies, which is likely to be driven by popular grassroots support, or continue to toe the line of Israel/US influence. Much of this will be determined by the duration of Israeli attacks and the survival or demise of Hamas.

The first and obvious fact in the current war is that since the declaration of the State of Israel in 1948, this is the first war that Israel has launched that Palestinians have defended themselves without any neighbouring Arab country militarily intervening. The Palestinians have taken up arms independently, whether home-made or imported, to defend their land and people against this full-scale Israeli military attack from the air, sea and ground. This could be argued to be the first Palestinian-Israeli war.

If Hamas emerges from this brutal Israeli onslaught still politically operational against the odds of the high number of civilian injuries and deaths and severe structural damage to infrastructure, it is bound to empower the Palestinians, and Hamas itself. Despite the lethal Israeli military firepower there are logical reasons to assume that this is a possibility. Hamas is a political party with a solid structure that has popular support and deep roots within the Palestinian society stretching some 20 years. It is thus implausible to envisage its total demise even if Israel manages to reach one of its desired ambitions of eliminating the present leadership.

With the Hamas-led Palestinian resistance still holding, it appears that despite the snail-paced international efforts to halt the carnage in Gaza, Israel is unlikely to have enough time to achieve one of its ever-changing targets, the destruction of Hamas. Other targets include stopping rocket fire; the assassination of Hamas leadership; and the destruction of tunnels which are purportedly used for smuggling weapons - although in reality they are used mainly for smuggling basic necessities denied by the siege. With the war already dragging into its third week and Israel's continued use of indiscriminate and disproportionate use of force resulting in ever gruesome images of bloodstrewn bodies of children, women and the old being beamed daily into homes, many in Arab countries are taking to the streets in protest despite government efforts to prevent this.

Gaza conflict will shake the Arab world

The greatest impact of the political shockwave from the Palestinian resistance is most heavily felt in Egypt. Here, the dictatorial "life" regime of President Hosni Mubarak continues to march in a diametrically opposite position to the sentiments of the public, whose sympathies are with the Palestinians, leading the government and people to a collision course. As Jack Shenker noted here on Cif, the people on the streets are getting bolder by the day. Despite the heavy hand of the police in Egypt, which could see protesters imprisoned, thousands have taken to the streets daily and the chorus is getting louder with chants that are both anti-Israeli and anti-Mubarak.

The Muslim Brotherhood, which is the only credible opposition to Mubarak, has joined hands with the secularists, leftist and others in denouncing Mubarak's ties with Israel and his choking of the Palestinians by keeping the Rafah crossing shut. Hassan Nasrallah, the Hezbollah leader in Lebanon who is viewed as a hero by many on the Egyptian streets for taking on the might of the Israeli army in 2006, and surviving, has weighed in strongly against Mubarak. Short of calling for an uprising, he has encouraged the Egyptian public to take action and force open the Rafah crossing.

In 2006, Mubarak first condemned Hezbollah's actions but later retracted this and ended up sending his minister to congratulate Nasrallah, as popular support for Hezbollah grew larger and more passionate in Egypt. Despite that, he has yet again opted to take the Israeli side in the current conflict. It appears he is fogged by the largesse of \$2.2bn donated annually by the US to Egypt, which many believe is tied to his commitment for the US-Israeli ambitions and project in the region. Although Hamas initially emerged as an offshoot of the Islamic Brotherhood in Egypt, it appears that in a turnabout of fate, the Brotherhood may reap the benefit from Hamas's stance against Israeli aggression. On Tuesday the head of the Brotherhood, Mohammed Akef, called for continued demonstration with demands on Mubarak to expel the Israeli ambassador and end the prevention of humanitarian relief to Gaza.

At present the call has been for non-violent protests but with the emotions proportionately rising with the continued attack on Gaza, things may change. There is an emerging consensus on the streets of Cairo that Mubarak is as great an obstacle to Palestinian freedom as Israel. If this consensus coalesces it could result in the emergence of political actors in Egypt capable of challenging Mubarak's regime. In addition, it seems likely that for any ceasefire acceptable to Israel and, by extension, the US, to be agreed, Egypt will come under severe pressure to acquiesce to, and perhaps even help police, a ban on the movement of armaments from the Egyptian side of Gaza border via tunnels. For Egypt in effect to aid any renewed blockade of Gaza would surely be a high political risk for the Mubarak regime.

The future of Israel's allies in Egypt and the other neighbouring states depends on whether Israel can reach a negotiated settlement with the Palestinians or independence and freedom is created by the Palestinians through successful resistance.

Load-Date: January 11, 2009

AS ISRAELI OFFENSIVE CONTINUES, GAZANS FEEL ABANDONED

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (Pennsylvania)

January 7, 2009 Wednesday

SOONER EDITION

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Section: WORLD; Pg. A-4

Length: 635 words

Byline: Ahmed Abu Hamda and Dion Nissenbaum, McClatchy Newspapers

Body

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip -- For 11 days, life has kept getting worse for Saladin Sultan and his family.

First came the surprise Israeli airstrikes on his northern Gaza Strip town. Then the power went out. Food became harder to find.

As Israeli ground troops advanced through the uneven dirt roads leading to his town Monday, Mr. Sultan gathered his wife and five children and fled.

Yesterday, living in a cold, dark United Nations school, Mr. Sultan wanted to know why it had come to this.

Among the 1.5 million Palestinians in the increasingly isolated Gaza Strip, there's a growing sense of abandonment. Gaza residents with no way to escape the expanding Israeli military campaign to destabilize Hamas are turning their anger on the outside world.

From hospital emergency rooms to rudimentary shelters, more and more Palestinians say everyone from their Arab allies to Western diplomats has turned a blind eye to their deepening plight.

"Where are the Europeans?" asked Mr. Sultan, a 40-year-old shop owner. "Where are the human rights they are talking about? A dog there is better than a human [here].

"They are not human," he said bitterly. "They are insects."

Israeli aircraft and artillery have been pounding the Gaza Strip relentlessly for 11 days. The attacks have killed more than 600 Palestinians and wounded nearly 3,000.

The Gaza Strip's government infrastructure -- from police stations and universities to government offices and mosques -- has been repeatedly targeted by Israeli strikes. Most residents haven't had power for days. Food is becoming more scarce. Hospitals are straining to handle the rising number of casualties, many of them women and children, wounded by the Israeli attacks.

Israeli ground troops are closing in on Gaza City. And there's still no real indication that evolving diplomatic cease-fire talks will end the attacks anytime soon.

AS ISRAELI OFFENSIVE CONTINUES, GAZANS FEEL ABANDONED

Predictably, plenty of anger is aimed at the Israelis who launched the attack. There's also pointed hostility, however, toward the Arab and Muslim world, which largely has been slow to act.

"God damn the Arabs," Jabel Abdel Dayam shouted, as he stood over his wounded son in Gaza City's Shifa Hospital.

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak draws special scorn in Gaza. He has opened Egypt's border crossing with Gaza to allow a small number of Palestinians out and a small amount of humanitarian aid in. But he has cracked down on pro-Palestinian demonstrations in Cairo.

It hasn't escaped people's notice that Mr. Mubarak, like Israel, relies on billions of dollars in U.S. aid, and that he, like Israel, sees militant Islamists as a major threat.

Although demonstrators in Egypt have pounded on the border gates with Gaza to demand that Mr. Mubarak allow Palestinians to flee, the potential escape hatch remains shut.

Gazans also are experiencing a sense of alienation from their estranged Palestinian cousins in the West Bank. Ever since Hamas seized control of Gaza in a pitiless, 2007 military showdown with fighters loyal to pragmatic Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, the divide between the West Bank and Gaza has been growing.

Even so, many Palestinians in both places were surprised when Mr. Abbas appeared initially to back Israel's military strike on Gaza by blaming Hamas for instigating the crisis.

While truce talks have been slow to gain traction, Palestinians find themselves trapped between advancing Israeli forces intent on crippling Hamas and Hamas ideologues intent on humiliating Israel.

Eyaj Sarraj, founder of the Gaza City Mental Health Program, said both sides were leading Gaza into ruin.

"This is a revenge mentality, with no strategy for security and peace except by brutal force," Mr. Sarraj said of the Israeli policy. "The strategy on the Hamas side is a fatalistic belief in resistance. And here we are in the middle."

Load-Date: January 7, 2009

Many Egyptians want to steer clear of Gaza trouble

Daily News Egypt

January 2, 2009 Friday

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Length: 595 words

Body

CAIRO: Ezzat Abdel-Rahman says Palestinians are suffering "great injustice" at the hands of Israel but they should have followed Egypt's lead and long ago made peace with the Jewish state.

He also says Egypt should not open its border with Gaza to let Palestinians flee the six-day Israeli assault, as demanded by Hamas and many Arabs.

"This could get Egypt into trouble with Israel," said the 42-year-old, who runs a shop selling shoes in central Cairo. "Israel could accuse Egypt of smuggling weapons into Gaza and dump the problems of Gaza on Egypt."

Despite the fiery rhetoric of Islamists and activists who demand strong action against Israel, many average Egyptians say they do not want the country dragged into another Middle East conflict, in rare agreement with a usually unpopular government.

Many say Hamas insurgents, who rule the Gaza Strip, could have avoided the attacks that killed more than 400 people if it had stopped firing its ineffective rockets at Israel.

"Hamas is acting against the Palestinians," said Mohamed Kamal, also a central Cairo shopkeeper, and one of a dozen Cairo residents interviewed by Reuters this week. "There is no reason for firing rockets. What are they hitting anyway?" he said.

Others, reflecting views promoted by state-run papers, said Hamas was acting with Iran and Syria, its main two supporters, to undermine Egypt and drag it into a conflict with Israel.

At a women's hairdresser, a worker was arguing with a customer that Egypt, has done enough for the Palestinians, a widely shared view among Egyptian citizens and government officials.

Egypt, the most populous Arab country and once seen as the bastion of Arab nationalism, fought four wars with Israel between 1948 and 1973. In 1979, it became the first Arab country to make peace with the Jewish state.

Hani El-Husseini, a veteran politician with the leftist Tagammu opposition party, said the Egyptian intelligentsia, many of whom favor tough measures such as breaking ties with Israel, are divorced from the reality of public priorities.

Many Egyptians want to steer clear of Gaza trouble

"The popular interest in regional issues has waned because people have surrendered to the notion that no Arab power can change the situation (with Israel)," he said.

The popular position is leaning toward peace, he said, despite the general hatred of Israel.

The Egyptian government says that if it left the border with Gaza wide open Israel would wash its hands of responsibility for ensuring Gazans receive enough supplies to keep them alive. Officials also say the probable influx of Gazans would pose a security risk because militants could sneak in among them.

But thousands of Arabs have rallied against Egypt in cities such as Beirut and Sanaa, the capital of Yemen, accusing Cairo of cooperating with Israel against **Hamas** and Palestinians.

Such sentiments reflect a widening gap among Arabs, with one group viewing **Hamas** and Hezbollah, the anti-Israeli Lebanese group, as part of a regional "defiance front" led by Iran and Syria against Israel and the United States.

The other camp says that only civilians pay the price for what they call useless military adventures.

The split was on display between two friends at a coffee shop in the center of Cairo this week.

"We have reached a stage when (Israel) is slapping us on the back of our neck," said 33-year-old Mohamed Abdallah. He praised Hezbollah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah for calling on Egyptians to rise and support Gaza. "He is a man of principle."

"No, he is not," said his friend Mohamed Latif, an Egyptian working in the United Arab Emirates. "Our government is right."

Load-Date: January 4, 2009

Israel continues to bombard Palestinians

The Irish Times

January 3, 2009 Saturday

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Section: WORLD; Attack on Gaza; Pg. 8

Length: 657 words

Byline: MARK WEISS in Jerusalem

Body

THERE WAS no let-up in the fighting yesterday as Israeli aircraft continued to hit targets across the Gaza Strip and militants fired more than 30 rockets into southern Israel.

Thousands of Israeli troops along the border were waiting for orders to begin a ground offensive.

Three factors pointed to an imminent incursion: weather forecasts indicating a dry spell; the anticipation of stepped-up diplomatic efforts next week to stop the fighting; and yesterday's decision by Israel to allow foreign nationals to leave Gaza.

Some 20 homes belonging to **Hamas** activists were hit yesterday, although the militants themselves were not present when the attacks took place. The Israeli military phoned neighbours a few minutes before the attacks, telling them to leave the area.

Palestinian sources reported that three children, all from the same family, were killed in Khan Younis, in the south of the Gaza Strip.

A mosque was also destroyed in Jebalya in the north of the strip - the fifth to be targeted so far.

An Israeli military official said the mosque was used to store rockets, claiming that the large number of secondary explosions which followed the initial impact proved the point.

Israeli jets also pounded the southern tip of the strip again, along the border with Egypt, targeting smuggling tunnels.

Despite the fear of more air strikes, thousands of Gaza residents turned out for the funeral of **Hamas** leader Nizar Rayan, who was killed with members of his family on Thursday when a one-tonne bomb hit his home.

Hamas member of parliament Mushir Masri told the crowd that the Palestinian resistance "will not forget and will not forgive".

Israel opened the Erez crossing, at the northern end of the strip, to allow 300 foreign nationals to leave the war zone.

Most were Russian or east European **women**, married to Palestinians, who left with their children.

Israel continues to bombard Palestinians

The Israeli authorities announced that the Erez crossing would be open tomorrow to allow some of the Palestinians wounded in the bombing campaign to receive treatment in Israeli hospitals.

Israeli group Physicians for Human Rights, which pushed for the transfer of the wounded, said the Palestinian Authority was unwilling to pay for their medical treatment, claiming **Hamas** was responsible.

The death toll from six days of fighting now stands at at least 420, and a United Nations official said more than one-quarter of these are civilians.

Of six Palestinians reported killed yesterday in more than 30 Israeli air strikes, five were civilians, local medics said.

One missile killed three Palestinian children aged between eight and 12 as they played on a street near the town of Khan Younis in the south of the strip. One was decapitated.

Sixty-four trucks carrying humanitarian supplies were allowed through the Israeli-controlled border crossing points yesterday.

Maxwell Gaylard, the UN humanitarian co-ordinator for the Palestinian territories, said that although Israel was allowing humanitarian convoys through, Gaza residents still faced a food and medical crisis.

An interim analysis conducted by the Israel defence forces concluded that the **Hamas** rocket threat to southern Israel was less serious than originally presumed, and residents were not showing signs of panic.

Militants have fired more than 350 rockets into Israel since Saturday, killing three civilians and a soldier.

At least 40 of these rockets were long-range Katyushas.

Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert, speaking during a tour of the south, said that **Hamas**'s capabilities "cannot be compared" with those of Hizbullah, which fired almost 4,000 rockets into Israel from southern Lebanon during the one-month war in the summer of 2006.

Police went on high alert throughout Israel yesterday, and a weekend curfew was clamped on the West Bank.

Hundreds of Arabs clashed with police in Jerusalem after yesterday's Friday Muslim prayers and all football matches scheduled for the weekend between Jewish and Arab teams were postponed.

Load-Date: January 3, 2009

Israelis are hit by new wave of rockets fired from Lebanon

The Evening Standard (London)

January 14, 2009 Wednesday

A Edition

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London
**Evening
Standard**

Section: Pg. 6

Length: 468 words

Byline: MARTIN BENTHAM

Body

ISRAEL was today hit by rocket attacks from Lebanon. At least three Katyusha rockets landed in northern Israel, prompting residents to flee to bomb shelters, although there were no reported injuries.

In return, Israel fired eight rockets into southern Lebanon in what it said was a "pinpointed" strike aimed at the source of the rocket fire.

The clashes, which follow a similar exchange of fire last week, will raise renewed fears that the 19-day-old conflict in Gaza could spread to Israel's border with Lebanon in what would be a serious escalation of the fighting.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for today's rocket fire, although Hezbollah, the militant organisation which fought a monthlong war with Israel in 2006, denied being behind last week's attacks. It is likely that the rockets were fired by Palestinian militants sheltering in Lebanon, which would reduce the likelihood of a serious conflagration.

In Gaza City, **Hamas** militants and Israeli troops fought hand to hand today. The clashes occurred in the suburbs as Israel's troops continued to push towards the city centre.

The ground offensive, which came as doctors warned of severe malnutrition across Gaza, was backed up by about 60 new air strikes by Israeli warplanes and renewed shelling from gunboats.

In return, at least three rockets were reported to have hit Israel today to add to the total of 25 which were launched by Palestinian militants yesterday.

At least five Israeli soldiers were injured in the clashes, while the overall Palestinian death toll is now approaching 1,000, including several hundred children and a substantial number of **women**. Israel says that 10 of its soldiers and three civilians have died.

Israelis are hit by new wave of rockets fired from Lebanon

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, who has repeatedly called for an immediate ceasefire, arrived in Egypt for talks with president Hosni Mubarak in a renewed bid to win support for a Franco-Egyptian peace plan upon which hopes of an end to the violence are pinned.

Mr Ban is also due to meet Israeli and Palestinian leaders and senior politicians in Syria, Lebanon, Turkey and Jordan, but is not scheduled to meet any representatives of **Hamas**.

Options thought to be under discussion are for Turkish troops to be deployed along Egypt's border with Gaza to prevent weapons smuggling by militants and the resolution of Israel's key demand that any peace plan must include measures that would prevent **Hamas** from rearming.

Mr Ban is also expected to press for new efforts to encourage the re-opening of border crossings into Gaza, one of **Hamas**'s central demands, and to bolster the flow of humanitarian aid.

Incoming US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton warned that the new American administration will not engage in negotiations with **Hamas** unless it first renounces violence and recognises the right of Israel to exist..

Load-Date: January 14, 2009

End of Document

Chaos in Gaza Strip; Latest Israeli air attacks on military posts, prisons leave hundreds dead

The Times & Transcript (New Brunswick)

December 29, 2008 Monday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. C1

Length: 705 words

Byline: THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Body

Terrified prisoners fled a Gaza City jail bombed by Israeli warplanes on Sunday, their faces white with dust and red with blood as they stumbled over huge piles of rubble.

Across the territory, grieving families pitched traditional mourning tents of green tarp outside the homes. Yet the rows of chairs inside these tents remained largely empty, as residents covered indoors for fear of new Israeli strikes. Plumes of grey smoke rising into the sky marked the site of the latest Israeli attacks.

Even for war-weary Gazans, who've lived through countless Israeli incursions, air attacks and months of bitter Palestinian infighting, the latest surprise Israeli air offensive was unusually traumatic. In all, more than 290 people -- most of them **Hamas** policemen, but also 20 children -- were killed in some 300 Israeli air attacks over two days.

On Saturday, shortly after Israel unleashed the deadliest-ever offensive against **Hamas** and its rocket squads, hospital morgues quickly overflowed. In the initial chaos, the dead were wrapped in blankets and lined up on the ground, as frantic relatives searched for their loved ones.

Yesterday, 25 unclaimed bodies still lay in the morgue of Gaza's largest hospital, Shifa, their faces disfigured beyond identification. In the southern town of Rafah, residents held a mass funeral for 14 people, including two brothers, and a father and son, all of them members of the **Hamas** security forces.

The shelling began at 11:30 a.m. Saturday, a work day in Gaza, just as children returned home from school, **women** shopped in local markets and police directed traffic.

At that moment, Israeli warplanes unleashed scores of bombs and missiles simultaneously at **Hamas** security installations. Residents described a veil of dust, smoke and rubble covering one world, and lifting to reveal another filled with horror. **Women** were running, carrying their children, uniformed students screamed and cars crashed into each other as panicked drivers tried to get away.

The dead and wounded were rushed to hospitals in cars. Some carried blankets filled with body parts.

Police directed them to go to the hospital morgue, opposite the maternity ward, but it was already full by Saturday afternoon. One dead woman lay on the floor, her face covered in blood and body in an embroidered peasant's robe. Men searching for relatives smacked their heads against the floor in grief and helplessness.

Chaos in Gaza Strip; Latest Israeli air attacks on military posts, prisons leave hundreds dead

Inside Shifa, some of the floors were slick with blood. Wounded people sat in corridors, shooing away doctors, telling them to treat more urgent cases first.

Israeli strikes hit a new series of targets yesterday: a fuel tanker, a **Hamas** television station, smuggling tunnels and a central prison in a main **Hamas** security compound.

The bombing of the prison set free dozens of prisoners, who rushed out from their cells, carrying bags of clothes and blankets with them as they scrambled over rubble, fleeing **Hamas** police.

One man remained pinned under the rubble, his face smeared partly in white dust, partly in blood, shouting: "Wait for me! Pull me out!"

Miles away, on Gaza's southern border with Egypt, the ground shook yesterday afternoon. In a matter of four minutes, Israeli aircraft destroyed 40 smuggling tunnels running under the border. The tunnels are used to smuggle goods and weapons into Gaza.

Area resident Fida Kishta rushed to the border once the smoke cleared -- and she wasn't alone.

Hundreds gathered at the border wall, trying to get across. Egyptian border guards opened fire above the crowds, trying to scatter them. Instead, residents manned a bulldozer and tried to knock down the wall.

When that didn't work, they set an explosive device beside it, knocking what Kishta said appeared to be a small hole. Dozens of defiant Gazans clambered over it, but were eventually returned to Gaza.

At times, shock turned into confusion and denial. A news photographer who found the body of a friend under the rubble drove him home, unwilling to believe he was dead.

"My children are wetting the bed, they cry when they hear planes," said Amal Hassan, 38, a mother of three children. "I don't know what's going to happen next. Maybe the next bomb will fall here, maybe the next person killed will be one of us," Hassan said.

Load-Date: December 29, 2008

Which way will Obama jump on Israel?

The Daily Telegraph (London)

January 14, 2009 Wednesday

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The Daily Telegraph

Section: FEATURES; Leading article; Pg. 21

Length: 863 words

Byline: Irwin Stelzer

Body

Most American presidents take office intending to focus on domestic issues. Franklin Roosevelt planned to go down in history as the destroyer of the Great Depression and the man who kept America out of foreign wars, and instead became one of the leaders of the war against Hitler's genocidal Nazi regime. Lyndon Johnson intended to wage war on poverty, and ended up waging war in Vietnam. George W Bush won election promising to make tax cuts his primary goal: 9/11 changed his priorities.

So with Barack Obama. The President-elect has been trying to keep Congress and the American public solidly behind his domestic economic stimulus package. With difficulty, as Congressional opposition to some features of that programme mounts. "I don't work for Barack Obama," says Harry Reid, leader of the Democrats in the Senate.

Inevitably, foreign affairs are diverting attention from Obama's domestic plans. Looming in the background is Afghanistan, to which he has promised to commit more troops. And Iran, with nuclear ambitions that candidate Obama said he finds unacceptable and a threat to the region and the world. And leaping to the foreground is the Israeli effort to end Hamas's rocket attacks on its civilian population.

In five days Obama will no longer be able to avoid the issue by claiming, quite rightly, that America has only one president at a time. Polls suggest that a majority of rank-and-file Democrats want the Israelis to declare a ceasefire, leaving in place Hamas's ability to rearm using its network of tunnels from Egypt, and with no credible way of preventing the terrorist group from launching hundreds of missiles at increasingly distant targets within Israel.

Never mind that the civilian casualties caused by the Israeli Defence Force are collateral damage, while the casualties caused by Hamas are the purpose of its rocket attacks. Or that Hamas is violating the Geneva Convention by hiding behind its women, endangering children by storing arms in schools, and risking the lives of the sick by placing its headquarters under Gaza City's Shifa hospital - built by the Israelis when they occupied Gaza. Most Democratic voters, understandably appalled by the horrible pictures that Hamas makes available to the Western press, want Israel to stop its attacks. Now.

Whether the Israelis will bow to mounting international pressure remains to be seen. One faction in its government knows that the world has stood silent while thousands of rockets have rained on its people during the years of the

Which way will Obama jump on Israel ?

so-called truce with Hamas, and that history suggests that "the international community" cares little about the survival of the world's only Jewish state.

Another sees the goodwill of other nations as key to Israel's long-run survival, and worries that Britain is taking an increasingly anti-Israel line: foreign minister David Miliband is insisting that Israel labels products of the West Bank in a way that would make their importation into the EU difficult or impossible, and Gordon Brown has lined up with the peace-at-any-price, ceasefire-with-no-conditions crowd. Throw in Nicolas Sarkozy's attempt to strut across the world stage as the arbiter of the current dispute, and you have a powerful coalition forming to deny Israel this chance to enhance its security.

The key, of course, remains the United States, Israel's so-far staunch ally. Which puts Barack Obama front and centre on January 20. The outgoing Bush administration, itself divided between the Condi Rice doves and the Dick Cheney hawks, won't be around to hide behind.

Obama shares his party's belief in diplomacy, in the importance and efficacy of working with allies and international organisations, and will be reluctant to exercise the UN Security Council veto that has stood between Israel and the wrath of Arab nations and others opposed to the existence of the Jewish state or indifferent to its survival. He will feel the tug of his party's Left-wing base - the people who gave him the nomination over the more moderate Hillary Clinton. The new president will also be hearing from those among his advisers who see Israel not as a strategic asset in the Middle East and the global war on terror, but as a liability that dilutes American influence in the Muslim world.

Israel is counting on the realists in the Obama foreign-policy team to make its case. These advisers know that diplomacy cannot bridge the difference between parties when one contestant is so committed to the destruction of the other that it uses its resources to construct tunnels through which to smuggle arms rather than to build a viable economy. International monitors who can't shoot straight, or not at all, will not prevent the rearming of Hamas or the continuation of rocket attacks, as experience in Lebanon proves. Incoming Secretary of State Hillary Clinton knows that, even if the department professionals don't. She knows, too, that despite their posturing most Arab governments have little use for Hamas.

Obama will have to choose between the lady at his State Department and the left-wing talk-at-any price wing of his party. No one can guess which this most opaque of all new presidents will choose.

Load-Date: January 14, 2009

Killing fields of Gaza

The Nation (AsiaNet)

January 6, 2009 Tuesday

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Length: 775 words

Body

The two-year siege of the walled ghetto called Gaza, has been subjected to intensive air attacks since last week, which gave way to a ground assault by Israeli troops. In the first six days of round the clock terror bombing of major and minor population centres, Israel has murdered and seriously maimed over 2,500 people, mostly dismembered and burned in the open ovens of missile fire. Scores of children and women have been slaughtered as well as defenceless civilians and officials.

The West considers it Israel's moral right to retaliate since it was being assaulted by rockets fired by Palestinians in Gaza. It conveniently ignores the root cause of the problem. Even in the US, the Zionist-controlled US print media, in particular The New York Times and the Washington Post, systematically fabricated an account that fit perfectly with Israel's official line defending its massive assault on Gaza; omitting any historical report of the hundreds of Israeli armed incursions and 'targeted' assassinations of Palestinian leaders and officials (even in their own homes) which repeatedly violated the 'ceasefire' agreed by Hamas and provoked its retaliation in self-defence of its people; skipping the years of an Israeli enforced starvation embargo of food and essentials that threatened the lives of 1.5 million Palestinians and led to the desperate efforts of the elected Hamas leadership to secure supplies for the people's survival via secret tunnels across the Egyptian border and through missile attacks against Israel to pressure the Jewish state to negotiate an end of the criminal blockade.

Israel has systematically pre-planned the extermination campaign - months in advance - up to and including the precise hour and day of the bombing to coincide with inflicting the maximum civilian casualties: The rockets and bombs fell as children were leaving school, as graduating police cadets were receiving their diplomas and as frantic mothers ran out from their homes to find their children.

William Sieghart, in his Op-Ed titled We Must Adjust our Distorted Image of Hamas, sheds fresh light, when he states that in the five years that he has been visiting Gaza and the West Bank, he has met hundreds of Hamas politicians and supporters. None of them has professed the goal of Islamising Palestinian society, Taliban-style. Hamas relies on secular voters too much to do that. People still listen to pop music, watch television and women exercise their option whether to wear the veil or not.

The political leadership of Hamas is probably the most highly qualified in the world. Boasting more than 500 PhDs in its ranks, the majority are middle-class professionals - doctors, dentists, scientists and engineers.

Most of its leadership have been educated in Western universities and harbour no ideological hatred towards the West. It is a grievance-based movement, dedicated to addressing the injustice done to its people. It has consistently offered a ten-year ceasefire to give breathing space to resolve a conflict that has continued for more than 60 years.

Killing fields of Gaza

Six months ago the Israeli government agreed to an Egyptian-brokered ceasefire with Hamas. In return for a ceasefire, Israel agreed to open the crossing points and allow a free flow of essential supplies in and out of Gaza. The rocket barrages ended but the crossings never fully opened, and the people of Gaza began to starve. This crippling embargo was no reward for peace.

The Israeli air strikes on the Gaza Strip represent severe and massive violations of international humanitarian law as defined in the Geneva Conventions, both in regard to the obligations of an Occupying Power and in the requirements of the laws of war. Those violations include:

Collective punishment - the entire 1.5 million people who live in the crowded Gaza Strip are being punished for the actions of a few militants.

Targeting civilians - the air strikes were aimed at civilian areas in one of the most crowded stretches of land in the world, certainly the most densely populated area of the Middle East. Disproportionate military response - the air strikes have not only destroyed every police and security office of Gaza's elected government, but have killed and injured hundreds of civilians; at least one strike reportedly hit groups of students attempting to find transportation home from the university.

The UN and OIC as well as most Arab states have been silent bystanders to the gruesome ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians. It is imperative for us in the media to expose Israel's carnage and the duplicity of the West in supporting Israel.

The writer is a political and defence analyst

Load-Date: January 14, 2009

End of Document

**FLAMES OF HELL; VICTORIA WARD REPORTS FROM FRONT LINE IN GAZA
WAR TERROR AS ISRAEL STORMS STRIP 100 CIVILIANS AMONG 500
DEAD**

The Mirror

January 5, 2009 Monday

Eire Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 4

Length: 928 words

Body

THE bombs rained down again, bringing more mayhem and death to Gaza - as they have for more than a week.

As I stood watching, fighter planes and helicopters fired salvos of missiles - backing up Israel's ground invasion of the Gaza Strip.

Local man Azmi Keshawi, 43, told of the terror inside Gaza City as residents struggle to stay alive.

He fled his home with his wife and four kids - the youngest aged just eight months - to find safety before Israel's invasion on Saturday.

But there is nowhere to hide and as I talked to him, our conversation was punctuated by ear-splitting blasts too close for comfort.

Cameraman Azmi said: "Saturday was a night no one will ever forget. I don't know if there are words to describe it. We are barely surviving.

"We have seen waves of attacks and violence for years but this time it went to unprecedented levels.

"From midnight until 6am it was continuous, almost one blast every second. There is no electricity so the Gaza Strip was pitch black. Only the lucky ones with generators could find out what was going on through the news."

As we spoke, there was an explosion.

Azmi asked, startled: "Did you hear that?"

There was a long pause before he was back on the line, shaken. "I can see the plane firing rockets," he went on. "I can see shooting from my window. Never in my life have I witnessed intense firing like this.

"If you had come to Gaza eight days ago, you wouldn't recognise it now."

The fresh fighting brought the death toll in the Gaza Strip to more than 500 since the escalation of the conflict on December 27.

FLAMES OF HELL VICTORIA WARD REPORTS FROM FRONT LINE IN GAZA WAR TERROR AS ISRAEL STORMS STRIP 100 CIVILIANS AMONG 500 DEAD

The grim figure, from Palestinian health chiefs and UN officials, is believed to include at least 100 civilians - around a third of them kids.

Foreign journalists remain banned from Gaza. But last night, from Kfar Aza on the border, just over a mile from the city, I watched - close enough to witness the attacks, too far to hear the screams.

An Israeli helicopter circled slowly above in the sky, hovering over the tall buildings. Then blasts pierced the silence as rockets were fired.

For a moment they glowed bright orange against the blue sky. And then they disappeared. Seconds later clouds of smoke rose from the ground.

Intermittently, a siren sounded and we to a shelter as Hamas retaliated with rockets.

In Gaza, however, there are no shelters.

Azmi said.: "With the strength the Israelis are using, there would be no point using one anyway "As long as you are not in a shelter you can run with your life. Inside, you would be buried." Yesterday's casualties included a paramedic with an Oxfam-funded group - killed as an Israeli shell struck a civilian ambulance in Beit Lahiya just north of Gaza City. Oxfam claims Israel's insistence that it is only targeting Hamas militants rings hollow. The charity's John Prideaux-Brune said from Jerusalem: "It shows again that trying to fight a military campaign in the densely populated Gaza Strip will inevitably lead to civilian casualties.

There are no safe areas."

Azmi went even further as he raged: "My colleague's brother and his 11-year-old son were killed when their house was hit in the middle of the day.

"Civilians are the target in this war. It is punishment for the people of Gaza for backing Hamas." Hospitals and clinics, some with staff working around the clock, are struggling to cope with the rising numbers of dead and wounded.

Blood covers the floors. There are no frequently no tools to sterilise operating equipment. One centre has run out of anaesthetic.

Fikr Shalltoot of Medical Aid for Palestinians said: "We only have 2,050 beds across the whole Gaza Strip but the number of injured already exceeds that.

"There are not enough drugs or ambulances.

Medical teams are resuscitating women and children on the floor. People are waiting to be operated but there is no equipment and they are just given painkillers.

"Relatives are told to find the mortuary on their own, but it is full and many bodies are piled outside. It is a disaster."

Thousands of Israeli troops, along with 100 tanks, are now in Gaza.

Hamas fired 45 rockets fired into Israel yesterday. Israel said one of its soldiers was killed in a mortar attack and 32 injured. three seriously. A senior Israeli military officer said the country's troops were in for the long haul and said the operation was "not a rapid one that would end in hours or a few days".

On Saturday the US blocked a UN Security Council statement urging an immediate ceasefire.

US deputy ambassador Alejandro Wolff said the White House believed Hamas would snub last week's UN call for an immediate halt to the violence.

FLAMES OF HELL VICTORIA WARD REPORTS FROM FRONT LINE IN GAZA WAR TERROR AS ISRAEL STORMS STRIP 100 CIVILIANS AMONG 500 DEAD

And he argued that a new statement "would not be adhered to and would have no underpinning for success and would not do credit to the UN Security Council".

Israeli President Shimon Peres made clear his country had no intention to halt its operations.

He said: "We don't intend either to occupy Gaza nor to crush Hamas but to crush terror.

"And Hamas needs a real and serious lesson. They are now getting it. We shall not accept the idea that Hamas will continue to fire and we shall declare a ceasefire. It does not make any sense."

Firepower

HAMAS

TROOPS: 6,000 but could mobilise 20,000 from cells across territories. Expert in street-to-street fighting.

WEAPONS: Light machine guns. Has now replaced crude Qassam rockets with Russian Katyushas. Says it has US M-16 assault rifles.

ISRAEL

TROOPS: Military service is compulsory.

About 175,000 troops serve in the Israeli Defence Force.

WEAPONS: F15, F16 fighters, Cobra and Apache helicopters give total air supremacy. Merkava tanks and selfpropelled artillery.

Graphic

ARMED An Israeli soldier set for attack; FACE OF FEAR A terrified Palestinian girl hides; FIRE IN THE SKY Flames and smoke over Gaza City; SUFFERING Father carries his burned daughter yesterday

Load-Date: January 5, 2009

Letters - Israel has an obligation to defend its citizens against fanatics

Irish News

January 2, 2009 Friday

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Section: Pg. 46

Length: 221 words

Body

To all those who are demonstrating against the actions of the Israeli government I ask:

why did you not protest as **Hamas** rockets rained down, 80 in one day, on innocent Israeli men, **women** and children?

Hamas must take the blame for this dreadful situation.

It was Ahmed Yousef, chief political adviser to the **Hamas** prime minister, Ismail Haniyeh, who in February 2008 stated:

"If the Israelis want blood, I'm willing to sacrifice my children."

With a fanatic of this type leading the people of Gaza how is it possible to anticipate peace and prosperity emerging?

Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert, addressing the Annapolis conference on November 27 2007 in the presence of President Bush and Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas said:

"We want peace. We demand an end to terror, incitement and hatred. We are willing to make a painful compromise, rife with risks, in order to realise these aspirations." The contrast in positions could not be starker.

It is not in the interests of Israeli or Palestinian citizens that this battle escalates and the fatalities spiral.

However, regardless of what the trendy left-wing, communist-type protesters think, Israel has a right to defend its citizens while at the same time seeking a peaceful co-existence with its neighbours - two states for two peoples.

Robin Newton MBE MLA DUP East Belfast.

Load-Date: January 2, 2009

Truce proposed after deadly shelling

The Bismarck Tribune

January 7, 2009 Wednesday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1A

Length: 508 words

Byline: IBRAHIM BARZAK and JASON KEYSER Associated Press Writers

Body

GAZA CITY, Gaza - France and Egypt announced an initiative to stop the fighting in Gaza late Tuesday, hours after Israeli mortar shells exploded near a U.N. school sheltering hundreds of people displaced by the onslaught on **Hamas** militants. At least 30 Palestinians died, staining streets with blood.

The Egyptian and French presidents didn't release details of their proposal, saying only that it involved an immediate cease-fire to permit humanitarian aid into Gaza and talks to settle the differences between Israel and the Islamic militants of **Hamas** who rule the small coastal territory.

They said they were awaiting a response from Israel. Israeli officials in Jerusalem declined immediate comment on the announcement, which came amid diplomatic efforts by the U.S. and other nations to resolve a conflict that has seen 600 people killed in 11 days.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice welcomed the initiative, but cautioned that no agreement would succeed unless it halted **Hamas** rocket attacks on Israel and arms smuggling into Gaza.

Earlier in the day, President-elect Barack Obama broke his silence on the crisis, saying that "the loss of civilian life in Gaza and in Israel is a source of deep concern for me." He declined to go further, reiterating his stance that the U.S. has only one president at a time.

Israel's military said its shelling at the school - the deadliest single episode since Israeli ground forces invaded Gaza on Saturday after a week of air bombardment - was a response to mortar fire from within the school and said **Hamas** militants were using civilians as cover.

Two residents of the area who spoke with The Associated Press by telephone said they saw a small group of militants firing mortar rounds from a street near the school, where 350 people had gathered to get away from the shelling. They spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisal.

Majed Hamdan, an AP photographer, rushed to the scene shortly after the attacks. At the hospital, he said, many children were among the dead.

"I saw **women** and men - parents - slapping their faces in grief, screaming, some of them collapsed to the floor. They knew their children were dead," he said. "In the morgue, most of the killed appeared to be children. In the hospital, there wasn't enough space for the wounded."

He said there appeared to be marks on the pavement of five separate explosions in area of the school.

Truce proposed after deadly shelling

An Israeli defense official, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not allowed to make the information public, said it appeared the military used 120-mm shells, among the largest mortar rounds.

U.N. officials demanded an investigation of the shelling. The carnage, which included 55 wounded, added to a surging civilian toll and drew mounting international pressure for Israel to end the offensive against **Hamas**.

At a news conference in Sharm-el-Sheik, Egypt, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak said the truce proposal offered by him and French President Sarkozy envisioned an immediate end to combat, so humanitarian supplies can safely enter Gaza.

Load-Date: January 7, 2009

End of Document

**Israeli Attack Splits Gaza; Truce Called Are Rebuffed: Hospital Fills Up,
Mainly With Civilians, and Struggles to Cope**

The New York Times
January 5, 2009 Monday
Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section A; Column 0; Foreign Desk; Pg. 1

Length: 1157 words

Byline: By TAGHREED EL-KHODARY

Dateline: GAZA

Body

A missile hit their uncle's house, which was made of concrete and so, the Basal family had thought in taking refuge there, safer than their more flimsy one. Fida Basal, 20, was not there when it struck. But her sister, Hanin, 18, was.

On Sunday, the day after Israel began its ground invasion of Gaza, Fida found Hanin at Shifa Hospital in Gaza City. One of Hanin's legs, her sister was told, had been amputated.

"I want her leg now!" Fida screamed at her mother, blaming her for moving them to the concrete house. "God has no mercy! You get me her leg now!"

Her uncle lost both legs in the missile strike on Sunday. Another woman found only half of the body of her 17-year-old daughter in the Shifa morgue. "May God exterminate Hamas!" she screamed in a curse rarely heard these days. In this conflict, many Palestinians praise Hamas as resisters, but Israel contends the group has purposely endangered civilians by fighting in and around populated areas.

The scene at the hospital, a singular and grisly reflection of the violence around it, was both harrowing and puzzling. A week ago, after Israel began its air assault, hundreds of Hamas militants were taken to the hospital. Yet on Sunday, the day Israeli troops flooded Gaza and ground battles with Hamas began, there appeared not to be a single one.

The casualties at Shifa on Sunday -- 18 dead, hospital officials said, among a reported 30 around Gaza -- were women, children and men who had been with children. One surgeon said that he had performed five amputations.

"I don't know what kind of weapons Israel is using," said a nurse, Ziad Abd al Jawwad, 41, who had been working 24 hours without a break. "There is so much amputation."

"It's so hard when you do it to women," he said, adding grimly that even the devastating 1967 war here was over in six days.

Israeli Attack Splits Gaza; Truce Called Are Rebuffed: Hospital Fills Up, Mainly With Civilians, and Struggles to Cope

For nine days now, doctors have been battling to keep Shifa running under the most adverse circumstances. Sanitation workers constantly mop up blood while Hamas security officers stand guard. But scant resources are being stretched to a breaking point, and a terrible stench is in the air.

Dr. Mads Gilbert, a Norwegian who was allowed into Gaza last week to give emergency medical aid, and who has worked in many conflict zones, said the situation was the worst he had seen.

The hospital lacked everything, he said: monitors, anesthesia, surgical equipment, heaters and spare parts. Israeli bombing nearby blew out windows, and like the rest of Gaza, here the severely limited fuel supplies were running low.

Oved Yehezkel, the Israeli cabinet secretary, said Sunday that from the information at Israel's disposal, "there is no humanitarian crisis in Gaza."

Many here would dispute that. With power lines down, much of Gaza has no electricity. There is a dire shortage of cooking gas.

The Israeli government says it has allowed 10,000 tons of essential humanitarian aid, mainly food and medicine, to be delivered to Gaza throughout the past week, even as Hamas has fired its longer-range rockets into major cities in Israel's south.

Among the donations were 2,000 units of blood from Jordan, five ambulances from Turkey and five transferred on behalf of the Palestinian Red Crescent Society from the West Bank.

In recent days, most of those arriving at Shifa appeared to be civilians. On Sunday, there was no trace here of the dozens of Hamas fighters that the Israeli military said its ground forces had hit in the past few hours in exchanges of fire. The reason was not clear. Many ambulance drivers refused to go near the fighting. It also seemed possible that Hamas and Israeli fighters were still battling at some less lethal distance. It was difficult to know whether fighters were at other hospitals.

But at Shifa, most of the men who were wounded or killed seemed to have been hit along with relatives near their homes or on the road. Two young cousins and a 5-year-old boy from another family were killed by shrapnel as they played on the flat roofs of their apartment buildings.

A woman who came to the hospital with a daughter, 15, who was wounded by shrapnel, said soldiers had taken over their house in Beit Lahiya, in the north, and had detained the men, who she said were farmers. The family said the daughter was wounded when Israeli forces fired on the upper floors of the house.

The combat was not taking place inside Gaza City on Saturday night and Sunday but in areas like Beit Lahiya and east, closer to the Israeli border. At least five civilians in Gaza City were killed Sunday morning, however, when Israeli shells or rockets landed in the city's market, Palestinian medical officials said. An Israeli military spokesman said the circumstances were being checked.

The Israeli Army has repeatedly emphasized that its operation is not aimed at Gaza's residents. But, sensitive to deep opposition worldwide to the toll on civilians, the military repeated in a statement on Sunday that "the Hamas terror organization operates amongst civilians, using them as human shields."

Parts of Gaza, a narrow coastal strip with a population of 1.5 million, are among the most densely crowded areas in the world. Artillery and tank fire can easily cause collateral damage. Israel all but stopped firing tank and artillery shells into Gaza in November 2006 after 18 Palestinian civilians, most from one family, were killed by Israeli shells that missed their target and hit a row of houses in Beit Hanoun.

Speaking by telephone on Sunday morning from her home in Shajaiya, near the border with Israel, Itidal Mushtaha, 58, said there was shelling all around. She, her four sons, their wives and 23 grandchildren had all

Israeli Attack Splits Gaza; Truce Called Are Rebuffed: Hospital Fills Up, Mainly With Civilians, and Struggles to Cope

huddled, terrified, on the ground floor with no electricity or water. The Israelis had destroyed many houses nearby that were identified as belonging to **Hamas** operatives, she said, adding, "We do not know where to hide."

Yet Ms. Mushtaha, who is not usually a political woman, had nothing but praise for **Hamas**. "God bless these fighters. They are throwing themselves to death to protect us," she said.

At Shifa Hospital in Gaza City, the body of Ahmad Abu Daf had been in the morgue for about two hours on Sunday when his relatives came to collect it. Mr. Abu Daf, 37, was hit and one of his children was wounded by Israeli shrapnel outside their house in the Zeitoun district of Gaza City, the relatives said.

As the relatives carried Mr. Abu Daf's body from the morgue on a stretcher for burial, they suddenly started to shriek. Blood was trickling out of the mouth, and a hand seemed to shake as if Mr. Abu Daf were alive.

Four doctors raced out of the emergency room. One of the men in the family yelled in anger at a doctor: "How could you keep him in this refrigerator for two hours?"

The doctors checked. Hope flickered out. "Believe us, he's not alive," one said. "Just pray for him. There is nothing you can do."

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

PHOTOS: At Shifa Hospital in Gaza City, a Palestinian medic on Sunday helped to carry a girl who had been killed by an Israeli shell. (PHOTOGRAPH BY SUHAIB SALEM/REUTERS) (pg.A1)

Men in Gaza City tended to others who were wounded on Sunday as Israeli ground troops and tanks cut through the Gaza Strip, dividing it in two. (PHOTOGRAPH BY ASHRAF AMRA/ASSOCIATED PRESS)

A wounded boy was carried Sunday into Shifa Hospital in Gaza City, where shortages of equipment were hampering care. (PHOTOGRAPH BY KHALIL HAMRA/ASSOCIATED PRESS) (pg.A10)

Load-Date: January 5, 2009

Overwhelming force is the only way to fight terrorists

The Jerusalem Post

January 6, 2009 Tuesday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 14

Length: 997 words

Byline: SHMULEY BOTEACH

Highlight: STRAIGHT TALK. The writer is the founder of This World: The Jewish Values Network. His new book, The Kosher Sutra: Eight Sacred Secrets to Rediscovering Desire and Reigniting Passion for Life is being published this week by HarperOne. www.shmuley.com

Body

So Israel invades Gaza and the world thinks it's a disproportionate response to the **Hamas** rockets. Which begs the question, what would have been a proportionate response?

When the Allies fought Hitler, they bombed Germany's cities indiscriminately nearly every night for years, seeking to inflict the maximum number of casualties, nearly all of whom were civilians. In Dresden and Hamburg, which they bombed toward the end of the war when it was already clear that Germany was toast, they killed more than half a million civilians in just a few evenings. Harry Truman, of course, dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, killing about 350,000.

Ah, but **Hamas** is not Germany and Gaza is not Japan, you say. These were formidable military machines and maximum force had to be deployed against them. That made sense. But what's a couple of rockets? And **Hamas** is a joke anyway. Get over it.

This gets to the very heart of the matter. The world perceives the Palestinians as weak and the Israelis as strong, when in reality terrorist organizations are much stronger than any democracy. Democracies make themselves weak by subscribing to humane standards of fighting. No matter how strong their tanks, they won't send them crashing into kindergartens. No matter how powerful their jets, they won't deploy them against hospitals. No matter how formidable their artillery, they won't use it against shopping malls.

BUT THE terrorists are all-powerful. Unconstrained by any tinge of moral restraint, they will kill pregnant **women**, dismember infants and detonate the infirm. They kill whom they want, when they want and for as long as they want. Remember the brutal decapitation of Daniel Pearl and the all-powerful posture of the terrorist killers who slit his throat?

Those who live without moral restraints claim a godlike power to define right and wrong and to take life as they see fit. It is one of the reasons that people have always been drawn to evil. Going over to the dark side has its appeal, as Darth Vader discovered. Decency is incredibly limiting, while wickedness gives people an inordinate sense of dominance.

Overwhelming force is the only way to fight terrorists

Witness the constant stream of statements coming from the **Hamas** leadership. Every day we hear how they're "going to make Gaza an Israeli graveyard," they'll transform their streets into "rivers of Israeli blood," or some such other blather that reflects their perception of themselves as all-powerful deities with the power to strike millions at their command.

Which is why there can be no compromise with terrorism; the only proportionality that can be used in fighting cold-blooded killers is overwhelming, maximum force. They can only be fought to the death, since their megalomania precludes the possibility of compromise. Proportionality is not a concept that can be employed in fighting those whose belief in their own power is unlimited. Morality and a respect for innocent civilian life is the only constraint that should limit a democracy in fighting those who operate without constraints.

It's bad enough that democracies have one hand tied behind their backs by their willful and laudable insistence on moral constraints. Their other hand - the military arm - must therefore compensate by employing every available means to crush the terrorists utterly. Nations must, of course, protect innocent civilian lives and minimize collateral harm to innocent bystanders. But short of this, nations must bring all their power to bear on extinguishing the dark night of terrorism.

When the body has cancer, the medical profession deploys every means at its disposal to eradicate it. There is no proportionality. Radiation, chemotherapy and anything else that works is sent into the battle when dealing with a disease that will otherwise snuff out life.

I should add that the destruction of **Hamas** is far more for the benefit of the Palestinians than the Israelis. It is the Palestinians who must live under the barbaric cruelty of an organization that terrorizes its citizens even more than its enemies.

One of my friends in the media was talking to me about how Israel is just as bad as **Hamas** - just as culpable as the terrorists. Rather than engage in a useless debate, I employed a variation on JFK's argument in the famous Ich bin ein Berliner speech of June 1963. OK, they're the same, I said. So I suppose given the choice of living under Israeli or **Hamas** control, you would just flip a coin? No, he said, he would never live under **Hamas**, under any circumstances whatsoever.

So much for the two sides being equal.

Which is why Israel's one million Arab citizens did not elect to live under the control of either the Palestinian Authority or **Hamas**, even though they had every opportunity of voting with their feet and leaving Israeli governance for Palestinian governance once those two regimes were established. In Israel they may have their complaints, but they can protest against the government, petition the High Court and enjoy every freedom. Under Palestinian control they face summary execution for merely being accused of collaborating, as we are seeing in the current conflict in Gaza, without so much as even a makeshift hearing.

And this argument is what gives the lie to all those who claim that their opposition to Israel is motivated by their concern for the Palestinians. If they really cared, they would never want a radical, hate-filled organization which teaches young Palestinians that their highest calling in life is to blow themselves up while committing murder. They would want real peace and prosperity for the Palestinians. For that matter, whoever claims to care about the Arabs throughout the Middle East should protest against them having to live under the House of Saud, Bashir Assad, Hizbullah and other assorted Arab governments which are the great enemies of Arab human rights, press freedoms and political liberty.

Or maybe they really don't care all that much about the Palestinians and just have an irrational dislike of Israel.

Graphic

Overwhelming force is the only way to fight terrorists

Photo: AN ISRAELI soldier watches fighter planes fly over the northern Gaza Strip. Democracies make themselves weak by subscribing to humane standards of fighting. (Credit: AP)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

End of Document

Nothing surprising about Jews disagreeing with Israeli actions

The Toronto Star

January 12, 2009 Monday

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Section: LETTER; Pg. AA07

Length: 1149 words

Byline: Haroon Siddiqui, Toronto Star

Body

Not all Jews are supporting Israel,

Comment Jan. 11

Haroon Siddiqui's column struck a nerve with me. Active Reform Jews, my husband and I have visited Israel several times and are well informed about the politics in the Middle East. There have been things about Israel that we have not liked, including the dogmatic attitude of the Orthodox and the way non-Orthodox Jews are often regarded (I have had personal experience with this).

That said, I am extremely disturbed by Jews who speak out against and protest Israel's actions in Gaza. Jews as a minority group have suffered tremendously over the centuries, and the preservation of the State of Israel should be important to all Jews. I am very saddened by the situation in Gaza. Certainly the people there are suffering, and I truly hope that a solution can be found. However, it began because **Hamas**, which wants to eradicate Israel, targeted Israelis in southern Israel with rocket attacks.

What is Israel to do? There is no choice. Israel may seem to be on the offensive but it is on the defensive. Unless **Hamas** changes its approach and its stated desires, Israel cannot back down. Unfortunately there will be collateral damage.

I question why more Muslims do not speak out against Islamic terrorism. Does it not anger them to see their faith hijacked by those who maim and kill in the name of religion? While certainly not all Muslims are terrorists, almost all terrorist attacks or threats of attacks for the last number of years have been carried out by Muslims. Where is their outrage?

I support the concept of a Palestinian state and hope that a peaceful resolution can be found. I wonder, however, whether a Palestinian state would live peacefully with Israel. Unless the Arab states and residents agree to peaceful co-existence with Israel, there will be no peace. Israel will always be on guard and when necessary will have to defend its land and its people.

Joanne R. Fisher, Thornhill

I strongly support and believe in Israel's right to defend itself against aggression; however, one may not pick a fight or provoke aggression then declare oneself a defender, as Israel has done. Israel has labeled **Hamas** a terrorist organization, but terrorism comes in many different forms. **Hamas** launching rockets into Israel without provocation

Nothing surprising about Jews disagreeing with Israeli actions

would certainly be a terrorist act, but so too would Israel's closing of all border crossings to Gaza, preventing delivery of humanitarian aid and its incursion into Gaza during a ceasefire.

Israel cannot have it both ways: engaging in a terrorist act then hiding under the cloak of defender when the aggrieved retaliate. Its refusal to recognize Hamas as the legally and democratically elected government of Gaza displays a certain arrogance and disdain for the people of Gaza and begs the question: Is Israel's motivation peace or the annihilation of Hamas?

Until Israel gets over its paranoia of being overrun by Palestinians and can accept a Palestinian state free from subjugation, its Goliath-like attacks against Gaza will only inflame its neighbours, diminish the sympathy of the international community and strengthen Hamas' resolve to fight on.

Jeffrey S. Patterson, Thornhill

Why is it that we could never see a column headed, "Not all Arabs support Hamas rocket attacks on Israeli civilians"? Just wondering.

Kenneth Wiener, Toronto

Yes, there are Jewish dissenters to Israeli actions in Gaza, just as there are Muslim dissenters of Arab actions in the Middle East. Even Canadians do not always agree with the actions of their government. But Israel is in an existential battle with terrorist organizations that seek the destruction of the country and the murder of its citizens.

I don't seem to recall these Jewish peace marchers objecting to the daily launching of rockets and mortars from Gaza into Israel when their fellow Jews were the targets. These self-righteous Jews, who say they want peace, stand with supporters or Hamas.

Israel has a right to self defence. If that enrages some Jews, so be it.

Harold Pomerantz, Dundas

Nearly all Jews have very deep feelings for Israel, just as all left-wing critics who abhor Bush's neo-conservative regime have deep feelings for America. However, allegiance is to the original ideals of Israel and America, not their perversion by the militarism that has sprung up on both sides of the divide, always at the cost of civilian lives.

Ron Charach, MD, Toronto

Thanks for this excellent report. It is so important that the Jewish opposition is heard to counter the despicable propaganda and its complicity with this ongoing slaughter. You've opened this up superbly.

Judith Deutsch, Toronto

Haroon Siddiqui gives voice to a handful of anti-Israel Jews who described some pro-Israel supporters as "a mob of thugs, full of hatred." I have never seen a group of Jews who could remotely be described as "a mob of thugs, full of hatred." I have seen in person in the Middle East and on the campus of York University, as well as on CBC and CTV news, many groups who could be described as much worse.

Larry Berk, Toronto

As a regular Star reader who is very critical of your points of view, I would like to commend you on trying to provide a balanced view on the Gaza crisis. You have done an amazing job in bringing to light the current situation. Although in a quest for neutrality, you sometimes equate Israeli aggression with a weak Palestinian resistance, you have shown courage in showcasing the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. I sincerely hope you continue to inform us with the facts, without falling prey to the forceful balancing act of finding the other side, which sometimes doesn't exist.

Ammar Ashraf, North York

Nothing surprising about Jews disagreeing with Israeli actions

Haroon Siddiqui seems to be suggesting that since a small group of Jewish activists are against Israel's military response, more credence is lent to the anti-Israel camp. What I see is that the Jewish community encourages free thought and free speech even if it is counter to Jewish causes. I wish I could say the same for other communities.

While the numerous organizations supporting Hamas' terrorist activities boast some Jewish members, it is obvious that it is the same self-hating Jews repeated in the membership roster of many of these organizations.

Gila Gladstone-Martow, Thornhill

There have always been detractors within Jewish ranks, with opinions ranging from extremist to progressive. But peacefully - no civil wars.

Anton Kuerti asks "what if almost a thousand Israelis had been killed by F-16s and helicopters and 1,000-pound bombs? There'd be immense outrage throughout the world." Fact is, given systemic anti-Semitism, not only would there not be any protest, there'd be celebrations in the streets. Including the West. Those who think there is a moral equivalency between Palestinian suicide bombers and rocketers, and Israeli attempts to secure its safety, are ignoring the facts to promote their own prejudices.

Mel Glickman, Toronto

Graphic

aaron harris toronto star Judy Rebick, left, with unidentified woman, released by police after several prominent women protested at the Israeli Consulate in Toronto last week.

Load-Date: January 12, 2009

End of Document

BLOODIEST YET; 298 dead, 800 wounded as Israel rains 100 tons of bombs on Gaza and gets troops ready for invasion

The Sun (England)

December 29, 2008 Monday

Edition 2

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 9

Length: 473 words

Byline: NICK PARKER

Body

ISRAEL stepped up its bloodiest attacks in history on Islamist strongholds in Gaza yesterday as the Palestinian death toll hit 298.

Fears grew of a bloody ground attack as Israel called up 6,500 reservists.

Hundreds more reinforcements were last night amassing on the Gaza border. The escalation came after Israeli jets blasted targets including the Islamic University - a potent **Hamas** symbol.

F16 warplanes and Apache choppers rained more than 100 tons of bombs and rockets on militants during a weekend of devastation.

Israel's hi-tech war machine zeroed in on key security installations. The main Gaza police HQ was among them.

Most of the dead and 800 wounded were **Hamas** fanatics behind 300 rocket attacks on Israel in the past week.

But the timing of some of the airstrikes - as schools broke for lunch - meant at least 20 children and nine **women** died.

Morgues overflowed, leaving piles of mutilated bodies lying on streets.

Wailing relatives searched the grim heaps for loved ones, while rescuers clawed smoking rubble for survivors.

Hamas fired a revenge salvo of at least 110 rockets deep into enemy territory, killing a civilian.

Israel's leaders vowed to keep bombing until Iranbacked **Hamas** halted its offensive. The onslaught - weeks before elections - followed public clamour for action after rockets traumatised Jewish settlements.

BLOODIEST YET 298 dead, 800 wounded as Israel rains 100 tons of bombs on Gaza and gets troops ready for invasion

But last night Israel was braced for a wave of suicide bombings. **Hamas** urged Palestinian groups to use "all means including martyrdom".

The air assault began eight days after a six-month ceasefire ended. Militants fired 3,000 rockets at Israel during the "truce".

Nine Israelis have been killed by rockets since Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip in 2005.

In the same period, Israeli operations have killed 1,500 Palestinians in Gaza.

Meanwhile, aid groups warned of a humanitarian crisis. And UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, Middle East envoy Tony Blair and the Foreign Office called for a ceasefire.

But Israeli defence minister Ehud Barak said: "The time has come to fight." n.parker@the-sun.co.uk The Sun Says - Page Eight Get the latest on the attacks at the sun.co.uk/news

RIOT COP CLASH AT DEMO

ANGRY protesters clashed with riot police outside the Israeli embassy in London yesterday.

Barriers penning them in were torn down as more than 2,000 flag-waving campaigners crammed the pavement to denounce the bombing of Gaza.

Protesters chanted: "Five, six, seven, eight, Israel is a terror state." Some tried to climb a gate to gain access to the embassy, others threw red liquid - to symbolise blood. One protester threw a bag and a book at the building.

Dozens of campaigners were seen being handcuffed and dragged away by cops in High Street Kensington, West London, and the road was closed. Ten people were arrested.

In Paris, two anti-Israel vigils involving more than 1,000 people passed off peacefully..

Graphic

... protesters storm barriers

Devastation ... mushroom cloud rises after bomb

Terror... bloodied prisoner hauled from rubble of Palestinian jail

Fireball ... family flee as bombed building explodes in Rafah town

Load-Date: December 29, 2008

As conflict expands, U.N. halts Gaza aid

The Salt Lake Tribune

January 8, 2009 Thursday

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Section: BREAKING; News; National; World

Length: 1103 words

Byline: By Ibrahim Barzak and Steve Weizman The Associated Press

Body

The U.N. halted deliveries to the Gaza Strip on Thursday after gunfire from an Israeli tank killed an aid truck driver, and the threat of a wider conflict arose when militants in Lebanon fired rockets into northern Israel.

Israel responded with mortar shells.

During a three-hour pause in the fighting to allow in food and fuel and let medics collect the dead, nearly three dozen bodies were found beneath the rubble of bombed out buildings in Gaza City.

Many of the dead were in the same neighborhood where the international Red Cross said rescue workers discovered young children too weak to stand who had stayed by their dead mothers.

Relations between Israel and humanitarian organizations have grown increasingly tense as civilian casualties have mounted.

The United Nations demanded an investigation after Israel fired shells at a target next to a U.N. school filled with Gazans seeking refuge from fighting that has left nearly 750 Palestinians dead, according to Palestinian hospital officials and human rights workers. Israel said militants had launched an attack from the area, and then ran into a crowd of civilians for cover. Nearly 40 Palestinians died.

"We've been coordinating with them (Israeli forces) and yet our staff continue to be hit and killed," said a U.N. spokesman, Chris Gunness, announcing the suspension.

Eleven Israelis have died since the Dec. 27 beginning of the offensive against the ***Hamas*** militants in charge of Gaza, meant to halt years of Palestinian rocket attacks on southern Israel. But with roughly half the Palestinian dead believed to be civilians, international efforts to broker a cease-fire have been gaining steam.

Israeli envoys traveled to Egypt on Thursday to discuss the proposal being brokered by France and Egypt and now backed by the U.S.

French President Nicolas Sarkozy said any time lost will play into the hands of those who want war.

"The weapons must go quiet, the escalation must stop, Israel must obtain security guarantees and leave Gaza," he said in Paris.

As conflict expands, U.N. halts Gaza aid

The U.N. provides food aid to around 750,000 Gaza residents, and runs dozens of schools and clinics throughout the territory. They have some 9,000 locally employed staffers inside Gaza, and a small team of international staffers who work there.

Elena Mancusi Materi, UNRWA's spokeswoman in Geneva, said the suspension concerned all truck movement in Gaza.

"If someone comes to one of our food distribution centers, we will give that person food. If people come to our clinics with injuries, we will treat them."

For a second straight day, Israel suspended its Gaza military operation for three hours to allow in humanitarian supplies. Shortly before the pause took effect, however, the U.N. said one of its aid trucks came under fire from a gunner on an Israeli tank, killing the driver.

U.N. spokesman Adnan Abu Hasna said the U.N. coordinated the delivery with Israel, and the vehicle was marked with a U.N. flag and insignia when it was shot in northern Gaza. The Israeli army said it was investigating.

Dr. Moaiya Hassanain of the Palestinian Health Ministry said 35 bodies were discovered Thursday during the three-hour pause in fighting in several areas around Gaza City that have seen fierce fighting between Israeli troops and **Hamas** militants.

He said it was unclear how many militants were killed because the remains were in poor condition, but that **women** and children were among the dead. Hassanain said 746 Palestinians have died in Israel's 13-day offensive.

Many of the dead found Thursday were in Gaza City's Zeitoun neighborhood, where the international Red Cross said it found four small children alive next to their mothers' bodies in the rubble of a home hit by Israeli shelling. The neutral aid group says a total of 15 dead were recovered from two houses in the Zeitoun neighborhood of Gaza City on Wednesday.

A Red Cross spokesman says rescuers had been refused permission by Israeli forces to reach the site for four days. It said the delay in allowing rescue services access was "unacceptable."

The Israeli military said in a statement that **Hamas** militants used Palestinian civilians as human shields, and that Israeli forces work closely with international aid groups to help civilians during the fighting in Gaza.

In other Gaza violence, Israel killed at least 12 people, including the U.N. driver and three people who were fleeing their homes, according to Palestinian medical officials.

The rockets from Lebanon raised the specter of renewed hostilities on Israel's northern frontier, just 2½ years after Israel battled the Hezbollah guerrilla group to a 34-day stalemate. War broke out between Hezbollah and Israel in 2006 as Israel battled Palestinian militants in Gaza, on Israel's southern borders.

No group claimed responsibility. Lebanon's government condemned the attack, and Hezbollah -- which now plays an integral role in Lebanon's government -- denied any responsibility for the rocket fire, which lightly injured two Israelis.

"The rocket entered through the roof, hurling the water heaters into the air. It went through bedrooms upstairs and then into the kitchen," said Henry Carmelli, the home's manager.

Israel has repeatedly said it was prepared for a possible attack on the north since it launched its bruising campaign against **Hamas** militants in Gaza, to the south. Israel has mobilized thousands of reserve troops for such a scenario, and leaders have warned Hezbollah of dire consequences if it enters the fighting.

"We are prepared and will respond as necessary," Defense Minister Ehud Barak told reporters.

As conflict expands, U.N. halts Gaza aid

The Israeli offensive has reduced Palestinian rocket fire, but not stopped it altogether. Several barrages were reported Thursday, including one strike that damaged a school and sports center in the southern city of Ashkelon, police said. Both buildings were empty.

For Israel to accept a proposed cease-fire deal, "there has to be a total and complete cessation of all hostile fire from Gaza into Israel, and ... we have to see an arms embargo on Hamas that will receive international support," said government spokesman Mark Regev.

For its part, Hamas said it would not accept a truce deal unless it includes an end to the Israeli blockade of Gaza -- something Israel says it is not willing to do. Israel and Egypt have maintained a stiff economic embargo on Gaza since the Hamas takeover.

The Palestinian Authority controls the West Bank while Hamas rules Gaza -- two territories on opposite sides of Israel that are supposed to make up a future Palestinian state. Hamas took control of Gaza from forces loyal to Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas in June 2007.

Load-Date: January 9, 2009

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British Jews come out to support Israel. Solidarity rallies taking place across America and in parts of Europe

The Jerusalem Post
January 9, 2009 Friday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 6

Length: 1092 words

Byline: JOHNNY PAUL, BENJAMIN WEINTHAL and HILARY KRIEGER, Jerusalem Post correspondents

Body

Pro-Israel rallies will take place on Sunday in London's Trafalgar Square and in central Manchester Albert Square, after rival demonstrations sparked conflict outside the Israeli Embassy this week.

Around 300 police were deployed at the embassy in London on Wednesday night to keep apart pro-Israel and pro-Palestinian demonstrators after the Jewish community staged a rally of support for Israel.

Over 600 people attended the pro-Israel rally waving Israeli flags and banners calling for "peace for the people of Israel and Gaza" and an end to "Hamas terror."

With only 30 minutes between the two demonstrations there was a heavy police presence. The two groups were separated by three police vans, barriers and a line of officers.

However, rival protesters came face-to-face when anti-Israel protesters remained after their demonstration to await the pro-Israel one. The demonstrators hurled abuse at one another as police tried to keep them apart.

Nine people were arrested, all anti-Israel protesters, for public order offences after around 30 of them, many with keffiyehs covering their faces, refused police orders to disperse and staged a sit-down protest. They tried to force their way through to the pro-Israel rally and began throwing objects before police moved in to make the arrests.

Moti Freeland, organizer of the pro-Israel rally, told The Jerusalem Post he arranged it after seeing the anti-Israel protests at the embassy.

"I was disappointed with the lack of support for Israel in the media and their focus on the anti-Israel protests outside the embassy. With the help of my brothers and friends we managed to get nearly 1,000 people to support Israel, and the police and CST [Community Security Trust] did a fantastic job in protecting us," he said.

"The community, together with Christian friends and friends from overseas, came together to express a positive desire for peace for the people of Palestine and Israel. It was an inspiring display and contrasted starkly with the angry and intolerant demonstration of the Hamas supporters several yards away," said Jon Benjamin, chief executive of the Board of Deputies of British Jews.

Meanwhile, the Jewish community launched an SMS service on Thursday that will allow people to donate money to hospitals both in Israel and in Gaza.

British Jews come out to support Israel . Solidarity rallies taking place across America and in parts of Europe

Over the coming weeks people in Britain will be able to text the word "LIFE" to 81400 to support the hospitals where victims on both sides of the current fighting are being treated. At the pro-Israel rallies on Sunday, participants will be asked to make their donation simultaneously in a mass texting.

The cost of the text is £1.50, and the proceeds will be divided equally between organizations caring for civilian victims in Israel and in the Gaza Strip.

"Needless to say, aid organizations do essential work, and this contribution will make a real difference to the lives of those that been affected by the crisis," Benjamin said. "After the vitriol and threats against British Jews that has characterized the response to the conflict, we are pleased that this initiative will actually have a positive impact in the region."

US Jewish were also coordinating a national solidarity day for Israel Thursday, with rallies, prayer services, vigils and other shows of support in the face of pro- Palestinian demonstrations.

Philadelphia, Boston, New Orleans, Chicago and a host of other cities, many of them with smaller Jewish communities, planned events.

Wednesday also saw pro-Israel displays around the US, and other activities are slated throughout the weekend, with New York City set to host a large rally across from the Israeli consulate on Sunday.

In Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, Jewish communities and pro-Israel groups are planning rallies to support Israel's right to defend itself against Hamas terrorism. In Germany, demonstrations will take place on Friday and Sunday in Munich, Frankfurt, Mannheim and Berlin.

In Mannheim, Nickolas Lsbel, the head of the Young Union, part of the Christian Democratic Union, the party of German Chancellor Angela Merkel, plans a rally under the slogan "Pro-Israel - Stop Hamas" on Friday.

Lsbel told the Post he initiated the rally in response to a pro-Palestinian protest in Mannheim and views the IDF's Gaza operation as a "pure self-defense measure" conducted in response to the terrorist aggression of Hamas.

Leo Sucharewicz, the founder of the non-profit "I like Israel," is co-organizing the Munich rally. Speaking from the Bavarian city, he told the Post that supporters of Israel would show their solidarity with the IDF operation and highlight that Hamas is "nothing but a terror organization supported by Iran."

According to Sucharewicz, "I like Israel" was founded in 2003 to "establish Israel as a global festival" and stages pro-Israel cultural events in 60 cities across Germany each May.

The Berlin rally was the brainchild of two Web site editors, Avi Efroni, an Israeli living in Berlin, and Sharon Adler, a German Jew who is editor-in-chief of the on-line women's magazine AVIVA-BERLIN.de.

Efroni oversees Derberlton.de, a Web site that serves as a "meeting point for Germans and Israelis." He told the Post that "two days after the war [began], we had to something, adding that there were "so many anti-Semitic and anti-Israeli demonstrations in Germany."

Efroni said he had received "a lot of positive responses," including from a non-Jewish German in Leipzig whose firm produced a pro-Israeli banner for the rally. "We are for peace, but we cannot tolerate a terror regime," Efroni stressed.

Asked what prompted her to mobilize a rally, Adler told the Post she wanted to show Israelis "that they have people on their side" in Germany.

She added that "the mood in Germany is very pro-Arab" and complained about the lack of "facts behind the war."

According to Adler, German media outlets fail to show "pictures of dead people in Israel" or of Hamas rocket attacks on civilians.

British Jews come out to support Israel . Solidarity rallies taking place across America and in parts of Europe

She noted that the 12,000-member Berlin Jewish community was the main organizer of the rally and that its head, Lala SYsskind, would speak on Sunday.

Michael Friedman, a well-know TV talk show reporter, will speak at the Frankfurt rally, which a plans a minute of silence for the "civilian Palestinian victims who are being misused as human shields" by **Hamas**, as well as for the Israeli victims of the conflict.

The Jewish community in Vienna is slated to demonstrate for Israel's "defensive operation against the terror of **Hamas**" on Monday.

The Swiss-Israeli friendship society plans to hold a rally in Bern on January 17.

Graphic

Photo: PEOPLE SHOW their support outside the Israeli Embassy in London on Wednesday. (Credit: Adrian Korsner/Sound Images Photography)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

Israel's devastating bombardment of Gaza; MIDEAST: Gaza Becomes a Chessboard for Israeli Leaders

IPS (Latin America)

January 9, 2009 Friday

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Length: 1103 words

Byline: Analysis by Mel Frykberg

Body

Despite massive damage to **Hamas**'s infrastructure and the enormous loss of life inflicted on Gaza, the Islamic resistance organisation continues to fire rockets at Israel, with three Israelis killed to date. The Palestinian death toll currently stands at more than 350, with about 1,400 injured. The UN released figures several days ago stating that at a conservative estimate more than 50 of the dead were civilian, and expected the figure to rise within the coming days. Israel's stated goals that its massive aerial campaign was meant to stop **Hamas** and its allies launching rockets at Israel have so far failed to materialise.

Although the firing of projectiles at Israel had been problematic, hundreds of rockets caused little damage and no casualties for many months prior to Operation Cast Lead. The rockets were fired mostly in response to Israeli attacks. Following a six-month ceasefire Israel launched a cross-border military incursion into Gaza last month, provoking a barrage of missiles. Analysts, and some politicians, argue that the real motivation behind the military operation is ambitious Israeli politicians and the upcoming Israeli elections due Feb. 10. During heated debates in the Israeli Knesset, or parliament, Israeli-Arab Knesset Members (MKs) accused the Israeli government of waging a war for electioneering purposes. MK Ahmed Tibi told a Knesset gathering, "There are those who are counting bodies and at the same time counting Knesset seats. Bodies for votes, this is done primarily by the Labour Party." Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak is chairman of the Labour Party and a candidate for premiership. He is the main architect of the Gaza operation and stands the most to gain politically. "There are those who are profiting from Palestinian blood in order to get elected," added MK Mohammed Barakeh. Both MKs were subsequently evicted from the plenum. Israel has a history of becoming dangerous and overly militaristic around election time. Many of the country's leaders have been military men who were seen by the Israeli public as strong men who could take care of Israel's security needs. Israel's Grapes of Wrath campaign into Lebanon in 1996 came during election time. Nearly 150 Lebanese civilians sheltering in a UN base near Qana in the south of Lebanon died as a result of Israeli shelling. It has been hotly disputed whether the shelling was deliberate or accidental. The outbreak of the second Intifadah, the Palestinian uprising, in 2000 followed a controversial visit to Al-Aqsa Mosque by former prime minister Ariel Sharon, despite warnings from his own security advisors and the Jerusalem police. He became prime minister the following year after campaigning on an Al-Aqsa uprising platform. "Two months after Ehud Olmert was elected Israel's prime minister, the Second Lebanon War broke out in 2006. Two months before Olmert departs, the military campaign in the south breaks out," commented Israeli analyst and journalist Yossi Verter in the Israeli daily Haaretz. The Israeli government's failure to stop the rockets and negotiate the release of an Israeli soldier captured by **Hamas** in 2006 have become big election issues, especially for Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni and Defence Minister Ehud Barak. Both Barak and Livni are running for prime minister. They were under heavy pressure from opposition leader and poster-boy of the right-wing, Binyamin Netanyahu, who is leading in opinion polls, to take tough military action against the Palestinians. "It would be political suicide for an incumbent government to sit back while rockets

Israel 's devastating bombardment of Gaza MIDEAST: Gaza Becomes a Chessboard for Israeli Leaders

are raining down, and restrain themselves," says Shmuel Bar, a Middle East expert from Tel Aviv's Interdisciplinary Centre. Barak's political career had hitherto been going nowhere fast, and he had become the laughing stock of the Israeli public. To remind the public of his existence he appeared on satirical TV shows making fun of himself, and plastered posters of himself in Israeli neighbourhoods. As the early days of the Gaza campaign appear to be going Israel's way, his popularity is growing. Netanyahu, who could well become Israel's next prime minister, has been milking photo-ops for scoring political points. Standing beside homes damaged by Qassem rockets, and looking appropriately stern and concerned, he is making the most of an Israeli political tradition which sees right-wingers win big during times of political and military conflict. Livni, who won chairmanship of the ruling Kadima party several months ago, has ambitions of becoming the second **female** prime minister after Golda Meir (1969-74). Her lack of military experience and the fact she is a woman, drawbacks in Israel's macho oriented society, has meant she has been forced to up the war rhetoric to stay in the running. Meanwhile, disgraced Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, who was forced to resign amidst a corruption scandal and will step down in the new year, is concerned about his legacy, and hoping to win some redeeming credit for any successful Gaza campaign. But Israel would not have taken on Gaza without the support of neighbouring Arab regimes. Shortly before the aerial assault, Livni visited Cairo and explained to Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak the need for the forthcoming attack. Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Egypt all regard **Hamas** as an ally of Iran, and fear that the spread of Iranian influence in the region could topple their unpopular regimes, which are engaged in battles with their own Islamists. Saudi Arabia and Egypt have stymied efforts by the Arab League to convene a meeting on Gaza to take appropriate action. Both countries appear happy for **Hamas** to be weakened before further negotiations. The hapless President of the Palestinian Authority (PA) Mahmoud Abbas, a bitter foe of Gaza's **Hamas**, despite the requisite appearances of grief on TV, has placed the blame squarely on the shoulders of **Hamas**. Issues of proportionality, the suffering of the civilian population, and the fact that the cycle of violence actually started a month ago when Israel carried out a cross-border incursion into Gaza, have not registered. Should Israel carry out a threatened ground incursion into Gaza, Israel's politicos-on-the-make could face a different scenario, as **Hamas** may inflict significant casualties. Israeli commentator Akiva Elder wrote in Haaretz, "Israeli planes and tanks cannot replace any Arab government. The only way to kick **Hamas** out of Gaza is to put the enclave under IDF martial law and a civil administration. In other words, to disengage from the disengagement." © 2009 NoticiasFinancieras - IPS - All rights reserved

Load-Date: January 9, 2009

Israel takes fight to the streets of Gaza; * Up to nine Israeli soldiers killed in heavy fighting, according to sources in Jerusalem * Plan for peace via an international force along Gaza's borders faces huge obstacles

The Independent (London)

January 6, 2009 Tuesday

First Edition

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The  **INDEPENDENT**

Section: NEWS; Pg. 6

Length: 892 words

Byline: Donald Macintyre IN JERUSALEM and Kim Sengupta

Body

Heavy fighting was under way in the north of Gaza City last night as the Israeli Defence Minister, Ehud Barak, pledged to continue the war against Hamas - entering its 10th day - until "peace and tranquility" returned to the south of his country.

Residents in the territory's main city reported heavy ground and air bombardments that were sending plumes of smoke into the air as flares and fires lit up the night sky above the northern district of Zeitoun where some of the most intense engagements were believed to be taking place.

There were unconfirmed reports last night that up to nine Israeli soldiers had been killed or seriously injured in Gaza. The Israeli government refused to confirm the reports, saying only that eight soldiers had been injured.

In the first acknowledgement that heavy exchanges of fire had taken place on Gaza streets between troops and Hamas militants, the military said aerial and artillery forces "had assisted ground forces by attacking armed gunmen approaching them, striking launching areas from which Hamas fired rockets at the forces". It added it had "hit dozens of terror operatives". Meanwhile Hamas - which fired about two dozen rockets at Israel - vowed to wait for Israeli soldiers "in every street and every alleyway".

While citing Palestinian Ministry of Health figures saying that the total death toll so far in the offensive had risen to 534 and that at least 2,470 had now been injured, a UN report last night said that "the danger to medical staff and the difficulty of extracting the injured from collapsed buildings" made precise estimates difficult.

Saying the population of Gaza was "bearing the brunt" of the violence, the Palestinian death toll had risen by 94 since the beginning of the ground offensive on Saturday night. It said "many" recent deaths had been women and children "with entire families" among the dead. Reuters quoted local medics as saying that 13 members of a single family had been killed in the shelling of a house in eastern Gaza. By 3pm, 25 Palestinians had been killed since the early morning alone, at least 10 of them thought to be children.

Israel takes fight to the streets of Gaza * Up to nine Israeli soldiers killed in heavy fighting, according to sources in Jerusalem * Plan for peace via an inte....

Some residents were called as many as three times during the previous night with recorded messages in Arabic from the Israeli military saying it was damaging Hamas and "we will use still other means to do so".

According to the UN, Israeli ground forces, backed by aircraft, tanks, and artillery, were deployed around Gazan population centres, including Gaza City, Beit Hanoun, Beit Lahiya and the Jabalya refugee camp as well as eastern Gaza, the northern middle section of the Strip and south-eastern Rafah. With Gaza now divided in two, internal movement is now extremely dangerous.

The report from the UN Office of Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs added: "More than a million Gazans have no electricity or water, and thousands of people have fled their homes for shelter in addition to the destruction of essential infrastructure."

Israeli forces - who a military spokeswoman said had been training for two years in a mock Arab city to prepare for possible urban warfare in Gaza - continued to move into populated areas last night, despite a fresh flurry of diplomatic activity in the region.

As French President Nicolas Sarkozy held talks with the Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in Ramallah last night, calling for a ceasefire "as soon as possible", the potential deployment of a "robust" international force along Gaza borders was emerging as a key component of talks between Israel and the international community.

Some European countries - notably Britain - argue that international efforts should be mounted to reinforce Egyptian security at the southern Gaza border to halt smuggling of weapons by Hamas if the fighting ceases.

Such a plan envisages that the international force would, in effect, be a quid pro quo for opening crossings - including for commercial goods - as a means of reviving Gaza's economy since Israel imposed its embargo after Hamas's enforced takeover last June.

Tony Blair, who has held a series of meetings with Israeli leaders and Mr Abbas, is working full time on trying to devise a formula under which such a plan could bring the conflict to an end.

A deal is fraught with difficulties. Israel, beside resisting a direct linkage between the crossings issue and the anti-smuggling measures it regards as paramount, is arguing that any deal should be made with the international community, the Ramallah-based Palestinian Authority and not with Hamas.

The Foreign Secretary, David Miliband, flew to New York last night where Arab foreign ministers are preparing for a UN Security Council session today focusing on a new draft of a UN resolution calling for an end to the "Israeli aggression" and a permanent ceasefire. The Palestinian Foreign Minister, Riyad al-Malki, told reporters that Arab states hoped the draft would be adopted by the 15-member council today. The latest draft also calls for international border monitors and an international force to protect civilians in Gaza.

However UN diplomats said that after Washington blocked a Libyan draft resolution on Saturday - deemed "unbalanced" - it was hard to see a resolution being adopted today. President Abbas will be in New York for the session

94

Palestinians killed since the start of the Israeli ground offensive on Saturday SOURCE: UN

Load-Date: January 5, 2009

Letters

The Pantagraph (Bloomington, Illinois)

January 12, 2009 Monday

Copyright 2009 The Pantagraph

Section: OPINION; Pg. A5

Length: 801 words

Body

Thomas column shows lack of understanding

It is unfortunate to see Cal Thomas' totally mythical article about Hamas in The Pantagraph. The article was devoid of any knowledge of the reality in Gaza or of Hamas.

Portraying Hamas as modern Nazis is not just wrong but also irresponsibly dangerous, because this reduces the group to some irrational barbarians with whom there is no possibility of negotiation or peace-making.

Yet as any other political movement, Hamas is more pragmatic than is portrayed in the west (ask Harvard's Sara Roy or President Jimmy Carter).

Suffice it to say that despite what it states in its charter, several senior Hamas officials — including Hamas Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh — stated that they would have no problem with a Palestinian state within pre-1967 borders.

Likewise, as admitted by the head of the Israeli internal security service Shin-Bet, Hamas declared its willingness to extend the truce with improved conditions, which referred to Israel's lifting its siege of Gaza. That was an integral part of the earlier truce agreement anyway, but Israel did not comply.

Thomas' prescription for the current chaos is even more regrettable. Stronger Israel, more wars, more bombing, more deaths — as if this is 'the road less traveled' and as if this road has served well for years!

Israelis have shed so much blood for security but achieved little security; Palestinians have shed so much blood for freedom, but achieved little freedom. There is a deplorable vicious cycle of oppression-terrorism-occupation in Palestine. And this cycle will not go away until the Palestinians and Israelis start empathizing with the concerns and aspirations of one another and we outsiders offer some sane ideas and practical help.

But first, everybody needs the facts. If only Cal Thomas read at least Haaretz!

Faruk Ekmekci

Bloomington

All 'political posturing' surrounding Blagojevich

As I hate it the governor is innocent until proven guilty, gets his day in court and does have the right to appoint the senator. He cannot be impeached until he is convicted in court.

Letters

All the garbage you are hearing is "political posturing" and nothing more. He has the same rights we all have.

Just because he is governor and his actions appall us does not mean his rights under the Constitution are "voided." Everyone - and I mean everyone - wants to vilify and distance themselves from him - and they are doing a good job of it.

Honestly, the governor is part of the Chicago Democratic political system. Does all this surprise you? Do you think for just one second that all his "peers" that are screaming for his head are clean and "snowy white"?

Unless you want to violate the Constitution and existing laws while writing "new ones" - like it or not - this has to run its legal course.

We in Illinois have allowed this to happen over the years. This is not the worst of it, and until we all go to the polls on Election Day and change it, we are stuck with it.

Dennis C. Stott

Ellsworth

Don't judge all families by single standard

I hope this letter does not appear as yet another frenzied diatribe, but instead as an honest catharsis lacking malice.

I come from a family which, under certain social norms, is seen as unconventional. Personally, I can't imagine why some people find it strange or even alarming. I have pets, my own room, two loving parents — sounds pretty harmless, huh?

Oh wait, I forgot to mention. I have two mothers.

Oops. Gasp! For while I may appear to be a normal, 20-year-old male college student, I am a prisoner of the gay agenda. These women who I trusted as my caretakers have recruited me into their immoral lifestyle: I'm attracted to women.

Got you there for a second, didn't I? Do people who insist being against gay marriage isn't anti-gay really believe that?

You're effectively saying that while you may have no problem with who someone falls in love with, it's inherently inferior to your love, based purely on a matter of genitals. How romantic.

Who is anyone to judge the legitimacy of another human being's emotions? My mothers are two consenting adults with private lives. As much as you may clamor on about the religious morality of their orientation (not you, the guy next to you), I've got bad news: Not everyone else believes as you do.

Why, some people have even lived their lives not even knowing what hell even was. Your right to believe stops at our right to exist.

As Mark Twain once replied to the comment that America was a Christian institution: "So is hell."

Not all families are the same. Why try and dismantle the ones that are working?

Collin David Harding

Normal

Load-Date: January 12, 2009

Letters

End of Document

Israel must abide by international law

Sydney Morning Herald (Australia)

January 12, 2009 Monday

First Edition

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Section: NEWS AND FEATURES; Opinion; Pg. 9

Length: 774 words

Byline: IZZAT ABDULHADI Izzat Abdulhadi is the head of the General Delegation of Palestine to Australia.

Body

Witnesses tell of Israeli jets bombing apartment blocks in which children are playing. Schools, fruit markets, hospitals and universities have been targeted. Tanks fire into crowded cities such as Gaza City and Khan Younis. In one of the world's most densely populated strips of land, massive civilian casualties are inevitable.

As with Lebanon in 2006, Israel is instituting collective punishment of a people for what it sees as the crimes of a militant group. A year ago, the Israeli Prime Minister, Ehud Olmert, warned that the people of Gaza would suffer for democratically electing the "terrorist" regime of **Hamas**, and instituted harsh power cuts for hospitals, light, heat and cars. Food cuts followed, and now indiscriminate bombing.

The use of collective punishment of a people is illegal under the fourth Geneva Convention. With 600 or more Palestinians killed already, 200 of whom are said to be civilian, we already have a civilian death toll equivalent to the Bali massacre. And still Israel ignores the entreaties from French and British leaders, the European Union, the United Nations, the Arab League, not to mention the Palestinian President, Mahmoud Abbas, and others, to cease its war on Gaza.

As we have seen on the television news, phosphorus bombs, used by the Israeli Air Force in southern Lebanon to devastating effect on the bodies of ordinary Lebanese, are now in use in the crowded streets of Gaza. Terrible injuries will result. Israel continues to defy international legal standards.

It has ignored a series of United Nations resolutions over time, including one allowing the return of refugees, one requiring it to withdraw from the lands it occupied in 1967. It ignored the decision of the International Court of Justice in 2004 declaring its huge concrete wall dividing it from Palestine illegal. It continues to ignore international requirements to declare its stock of nuclear weapons and open them for inspection.

Israel argues, simplistically, that it has a "right to defend itself" against the rocket attacks of **Hamas**. Of course it does. But a disproportionate war against Palestinian people is not the solution.

In the first place, we must recognize the roots of this conflict, which began with the illegal military occupation of Gaza from 1967 to 2005 and the devastation this inflicted on the economy and civil society of the people of Gaza.

In 2005 Ariel Sharon ordered illegal Israeli settlers to leave Gaza but continued a blockade of the Gaza Strip. At the time, the World Bank estimated that 65 per cent of Gazans lived in poverty. Most had problems with access to

Israel must abide by international law

education and health services, and half lived below subsistence levels and were dependent on international food aid.

Hamas won the 2006 Palestinian elections and, in response, the US and the EU cut off all aid to Palestine and Israel froze Gaza government access to tax revenues collected from its people. Electricity was cut, food aid slashed and all movement in and out of Gaza slowed to a trickle. The Israeli army arrested 27 **Hamas** MPs of the new government. It assassinated others.

The **Hamas** government responded with rocket attacks on the Israeli city of Sederot just across the border. The rockets were largely ineffective and killed no Israelis. Meanwhile, attacks on Palestinian civilians by Israeli fighter jets continued to climb, in one instance killing 19 (including four **women** and seven children).

An informal "truce" or "Hudna" was agreed between Olmert's government and **Hamas**. Under its terms, a cessation of the rocket attacks would ease the siege on Gaza. The rocket attacks declined dramatically but as of December last year, no end to the siege was in sight. **Hamas** declared it would resume rocket attacks. Israel has struck back with its terrible cruelty.

Palestine has no air force, tanks or gunships to counter such an onslaught. The tiny strip of Gaza, with its 1.5 million people, only has its human resources to resist an attack from the region's most powerful army.

It is easy to understand why Israel continues to ban foreign journalists from seeing the results of its war crimes in the Gaza Strip. And why it relies on statements such as "we have the right to defend against rockets".

Israel is not interested in abiding by international legal norms which would require it to demolish the apartheid wall, end the occupation, cease the use of illegal weapons and allow the people of Gaza the freedoms most world citizens expect.

Such actions require a mindset of peace, justice, dialogue and freedom for Palestinians in their own state.

Let's end the war, end the rocket attacks, end the siege of Gaza and begin with dialogue.

Load-Date: January 11, 2009

Learning to balance a Canadian identity with a Gaza Strip address

The Toronto Star

December 10, 2008 Wednesday

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Section: WORLD AND COMMENT; Pg. AA01

Length: 895 words

Byline: Oakland Ross, Toronto Star

Dateline: JERUSALEM

Body

For more than two years, the face of the Gaza Strip, presented to the world via television, belonged to a 30-something political science graduate of Ontario's Brock University.

That rendezvous with fame is over for now - cut short last year by a sudden spasm of fratricidal warfare - but former TV anchor Amani Abu-Ramadan, now 33, remains a proud resident of Gaza. However, a part of her still pines for St. Catharines and probably always will.

"I miss the freedom," she says, speaking with an accent that's as Canadian as a pair of sensible winter boots. "I miss the trees. I miss the seasons. I miss the people."

And don't forget the caffeine-based beverages purveyed by a certain nationwide franchise operation specializing in the sale of deep-fried pastry products and coffee.

Or, as Abu-Ramadan puts it: "I miss Tim Hortons."

She remains Canadian - a Canadian in Gaza.

Life is a strapped and challenging affair for all of the Palestinian territory's 1.5 million inhabitants, and Abu-Ramadan - the former English-language news anchor for Palestinian television in Gaza City - is no exception.

But her trials are more cultural than purely economic, and they revolve around the task of balancing a Canadian identity with a Palestinian address, in a corner of the world that is vastly poorer than the land where she grew up, incomparably less secure, and considerably less respectful of individual rights.

Unlike most Muslim women in Gaza, for example, Abu-Ramadan refuses to cover her head with a scarf when she is out in public.

This is no minor act of defiance in a territory ruled since June 2007 by the Islamist militants of Hamas, who govern with a strict religious ideology that favours hijabs for women and beards for men, among many other conservative tenets.

"Everybody is afraid and covers their heads," says Abu-Ramadan. "The pressure is very high."

But she goes about bare-headed.

Learning to balance a Canadian identity with a Gaza Strip address

"It's like I'm taking a stand."

A member of Fatah - **Hamas**'s older and more moderate rival, which now holds power only in the West Bank - Abu-Ramadan now occupies a somewhat awkward position in Gaza, for the two organizations remain bitterly at odds following their bloody split of 17 months ago.

Hamas's assumption of power in Gaza meant the end of her duties as English-language news anchor at the Palestinian Broadcasting Corp. because **Hamas** closed the operation down.

But Abu-Ramadan continues to speak her mind all the same, and much of what she says does not exactly serve to enhance the image of **Hamas**.

Largely isolated from the rest of the world by a partial economic and travel blockade imposed by neighbouring Israel, Gaza has suffered a dramatic economic decline during the past 18 months - bleak news in a territory already deeply impoverished.

Food, fuel, and other products are expensive, and medicine in particular can be difficult to obtain or of dubious quality - troubles compounded by the constant threat of renewed war between **Hamas** and Israel.

Abu-Ramadan, who belongs to a prosperous extended family, is isolated from the economic hardships but not from the political troubles that plague life in the land where she now resides.

Born in France in 1975 after her parents fled the Palestinian territory, she moved with her family to Canada in 1991 and sought refugee status there.

After graduating from Sir Winston Churchill Secondary School in St. Catharines in 1994, Abu-Ramadan accompanied her mother back to Gaza, along with a younger brother, leaving her father and two other siblings behind.

The trio remained in Gaza for two years before returning to Ontario, where the family succeeded in obtaining Canadian citizenship.

In 2005, after completing a bachelor's degree in political science at Brock, Abu-Ramadan received a call from Nabil Shath, a top Palestinian official. He wanted her to come to Gaza and devise a media and communications strategy for the Palestinian Authority.

Shortly after her arrival, she was introduced to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, also known as Abu Mazen, who took an immediate interest in her accomplishments and her linguistic ability.

She speaks Arabic, English and French - each as if it were her first language.

"Abu Mazen basically gave me a presidential order to be principal English anchor for the PBC," she says. "He didn't have to ask me twice."

Since **Hamas**'s ascent to power last year, Abu-Ramadan's professional lot has changed considerably, and so has her personal life.

In August 2007, she married Momen Shawa, a Palestinian engineer and member of a prominent Gaza family.

"He is Gazan royalty, 100 per cent," she says. "We are still in the honeymoon stage."

On the political front, she is anything but starry-eyed, seeing little imminent prospect of a reconciliation between Fatah and **Hamas** or of a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

As she speaks, the lights are out in her part of Gaza City, a frequent occurrence owing to chronic fuel shortages and a reminder of the difficulties of living here.

Learning to balance a Canadian identity with a Gaza Strip address

Abu-Ramadan says she would dearly love to pay a return visit to Canada, to see her family and to renew old acquaintances, but Gaza's borders are closed, and for most people there is no way in or out.

But she hasn't forgotten the country that many years ago took her in, along with her family, and in many ways made her who she is.

"Canada gave me a voice," she says. "Canada gave me an identity. Canada taught me to be me."

Graphic

Amani Abu-Ramadan in a family photo taken at Niagara Falls. The former Gaza Strip TV anchor says she misses many things about life in St. Catharines.

Load-Date: December 10, 2008

Gaza faces humanitarian disaster

Argus Weekend (South Africa)

January 04, 2009

e1 Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 2

Length: 824 words

Body

Israeli artillery shelled along the eastern border of the Gaza Strip yesterday, witnesses said.

Ground troops remained massed on the border waiting for the signal to invade Gaza, but international ceasefire efforts were also gaining momentum amid warnings of a humanitarian crisis in beleaguered Gaza.

The Israeli army made no immediate comment on the operation, which came after days of speculation that Israel would launch a ground offensive to accompany its massive week-long bombardment of **Hamas** targets inside the Gaza Strip.

The shelling came after Israeli warplanes and gunboats blasted more than two dozen **Hamas** positions yesterday, targeting weapons storage facilities, training centres and homes of leaders.

International peace-making efforts are intensifying. French president Nicolas Sarkozy is visiting the region this week, and US president George Bush and UN chief Ban Ki-moon this weekend both spoke in favour of an internationally monitored truce.

Israel claims it launched the offensive last weekend in response to rocket fire by **Hamas** in Gaza.

The operation has killed more than 440 Palestinians, including dozens of civilians, according to Palestinian and UN counts.

Four Israelis have also been killed, and rocket attacks on southern Israel persist.

In the latest attacks, the army struck the homes of two **Hamas** operatives, saying the buildings were used to store weapons and plan attacks. A night watchman at a Gaza City school was killed.

The Israeli airstrikes have badly damaged Gaza's infrastructure, knocking out power and water in many areas and raising concerns of a looming humanitarian disaster.

Israel briefly opened its border on Friday to allow nearly 300 Palestinians with foreign passports to flee the besieged area. The evacuees told of crippling shortages of water, electricity and medicine.

Maxwell Gaylard, UN humanitarian co-ordinator for the Palestinians Territories, said about 2 000 people have been wounded in the past week and a "significant number" of the dead were **women** and children. "There is a critical emergency right now in the Gaza Strip," he said.

Gaza faces humanitarian disaster

Israel denies there is a humanitarian crisis in Gaza and has increased its shipments of goods into Gaza.

Israel's call for international monitors appeared to be gaining steam.

At the United Nations, Ban urged world leaders to intensify efforts to achieve an immediate ceasefire that includes monitors to enforce the truce and possibly protect Palestinian civilians.

In Washington on Friday, Bush branded the rocket fire an "act of terror" and outlined his own condition for a ceasefire in Gaza, saying 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 ceasefire that is fully respected," Bush said in his weekly radio address.

"Another one-way ceasefire that leads to rocket attacks on Israel is not acceptable. And promises from Hamas will not suffice."

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice continued furious telephone diplomacy to arrange a truce, but said she had no plans to make an emergency visit to the region.

Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas will meet Sarkozy in Ramallah tomorrow before going to the United Nations to plead for a truce in Gaza, officials said.

"President Mahmud Abbas will meet with President Sarkozy and the EU troika delegation tomorrow in Ramallah," Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erakat told AFP.

"He will then immediately go to New York, where he will make a speech before the UN Security Council to ask for a halt to the Israeli attack against Gaza," he said. It was not immediately known when Abbas would address the council.

Yasser Abed Rabbo, secretary general of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, said Sarkozy was "carrying an important initiative for a ceasefire."

"President Abbas hopes Sarkozy's initiative will be successful and will stop the killing of Palestinians in Gaza," he added.

Abbas and several Arab foreign ministers intend to urge the UN Security Council to adopt an Arab draft resolution that would condemn Israel and demand a halt to its bombing campaign in Gaza. Abbas, whose forces in Gaza were ousted by Hamas in June 2007, still claims authority over the area.

The council is expected to discuss the draft resolution tomorrow. But the US said the draft was "unacceptable" and "unbalanced" because it makes no mention of halting the Hamas rocket attacks.

Turkish prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan flew to Saudi Arabia yesterday as Turkey engaged in shuttle diplomacy with Arab countries in the search for a ceasefire in the Middle East.

An EU delegation headed by Czech foreign minister Karel Schwarzenberg is set to visit the Middle East today to discuss ceasefire efforts.

Meanwhile, there have been large protests against the Israeli offensive in several parts of the world, including London, the Turkish capital Ankara, and within Israel itself. - Sapa-AP and AFP

Load-Date: January 4, 2009

Israeli troops move on Gaza City

Sydney Morning Herald (Australia)

January 6, 2009 Tuesday

First Edition

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Section: NEWS AND FEATURES; Pg. 1

Length: 748 words

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

Body

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

But as the number of Palestinians killed since the start of Operation Cast Lead 11 days ago rose towards 550, Israeli leaders continued to reject international demands for a ceasefire, deciding to press ahead until the goal of destroying Hamas's military capacities had been achieved.

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

One military source told the Herald the battle in Gaza was progressing "cautiously and according to plan".

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

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

According to reports in the Israeli media, the army had trained for its ground attack against Gaza for 18 months on a model of the main city built at a desert army base.

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

"For a year and a half our soldiers trained on a reduced model of Gaza City built on the Tsehilim base," in the Negev desert of southern Israel, near the frontier with Gaza, he said.

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

"We will not make ourselves sitting ducks and we will continue hitting the terrorists."

According to the newspaper Haaretz, some deserted houses had been turned into fortresses.

Israeli troops move on Gaza City

"In one case, troops stormed a Palestinian house from where shots had been fired at them," the newspaper reported. "After the initial 'cleansing' during which troops ensured that the house was not booby trapped, the troops discovered that the terrorists had escaped through tunnels that had been dug under the house."

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

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

Five children were killed in two separate Israeli strikes around Gaza City early yesterday, Palestinian medics said.

Three children were killed by a tank shell in Zeitun and two were killed in Shati by a naval strike, according to the head of Gaza medical emergency services Moawiya Hassanein.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Graphic

TWO PHOTOS: A Palestinian hurt by a tank shell in Gaza yesterday. Photo: Reuters A Palestinian hurt by a tank shell in Gaza yesterday. Photo: Reuters MAP: Pincer movement

Load-Date: January 5, 2009

Possible ground invasion to follow Israeli air onslaught

Irish News

December 29, 2008 Monday

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Section: Pg. 6

Length: 662 words

Body

Warplanes pressing one of Israel's deadliest assaults ever on Palestinian militants widened their sights yesterday, dropping bombs on smuggling tunnels that are a major weapons pipeline for the Gaza Strip's Islamic Hamas rulers.

Crowds of Gazans, backed by a bulldozer, breached the border wall with Egypt amid the ensuing chaos. Syria, reflecting the rage in the Arab world over Israel's aerial onslaught, announced it would break off indirect peace talks with the Jewish state.

Early yesterday Israel's cabinet authorised the military to call up 6,500 reserves soldiers for a possible ground invasion.

Israel's offensive against Gaza rocket squads who have been barraging southern Israel for years has been carried out exclusively from the air since it began on Saturday.

The air strikes, which initially targeted Hamas security compounds, killed more than 280 Palestinians and wounded hundreds more in its first 24 hours, Gaza health official Dr Moaiya Hassanain said.

A Palestinian human rights group said among 251 dead it counted, 20 were children under 16 and nine were women.

The Palestinian Centre for Human Rights said it was difficult to keep an exact count because of chaos at the hospitals and difficulty in identifying some of the dismembered bodies.

The civilian casualties included a 15-year-old boy who died in southern Gaza yesterday in an attack on a greenhouse near the border.

At least 644 people were wounded, Dr Hassanain said.

Militants launched more than 20 rockets and mortars at Israeli border communities. The number of attacks was down sharply from a day earlier, indicating the Israeli airstrikes had taken a stiff toll.

Israel's head of military intelligence told Israel's cabinet that Hamas' ability to fire rockets had been reduced by 50 per cent.

Still, two rockets struck ominously close to Israel's largest southern city, Ashdod, reaching dramatically deeper into Israel than ever before and confirming Israel's concern that militants are now able to put major cities within rocket range. No serious injuries were reported.

Possible ground invasion to follow Israeli air onslaught

The rockets landed some 23 miles from Gaza, doubling the militants' previous range.

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.

The carnage has inflamed Arab public opinion and the diplomatic fallout came swiftly.

A Syrian official said Damascus would suspend indirect peace talks with Israel, which began earlier this year, over the Gaza attacks.

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorised to speak to the media, said "Israel's aggression closes all the doors" to any move toward a settlement in the region.

Israel and Syria held four rounds of negotiations in Turkey.

Condemnations and protests against the Israeli offensive swept the Arab world for a second straight day, occasionally turning violent. A suicide bomber on a bicycle blew himself up in the midst of a large demonstration in northern Iraq.

Israeli troops fired on a violent protest in the West Bank, killing a Palestinian man.

Hamas's fiercest rival, the Western-backed Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas, urged the Islamic militant group to renew a truce with Israel that collapsed last week.

However, Mr Abbas has had no influence in Gaza since **Hamas** seized control there by force in June last year.

The Israeli army says Palestinian militants have fired more than 300 rockets and mortars at Israeli targets over the past week and 10 times that number over the past year.

Israel's foreign minister Tzipi Livni told the US news show, Meet the Press, that Israel launched its strike because Gaza's **Hamas** rulers were smuggling weapons and building up "a small army".

"Our goal is not to reoccupy the Gaza Strip," she said.

Israeli soldiers and settlers left the tiny seaside territory in 2005 after a 38-year occupation, though Israel retained control of Gaza's borders.

Load-Date: December 29, 2008

Israeli PM rejects ceasefire proposal; GAZA CRISIS - Reports of Government split as international pressure mounts

The Age (Melbourne, Australia)

January 1, 2009 Thursday

First Edition

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Section: NEWS; International News; Pg. 8

Length: 648 words

Byline: JASON KOUTSOUKIS, JERUSALEM

Body

ISRAEL has rejected French efforts to broker a 48-hour pause in the aerial and naval bombardment of the Gaza Strip, which has claimed 380 lives in five days.

Despite mounting international pressure for a halt to Operation Cast Lead, Israeli authorities appear likely to mount a land invasion of the besieged territory.

However, ahead of an Israeli security cabinet meeting, a split had emerged between leading Israeli ministers, media reports suggested. They said Defence Minister Ehud Barak had argued in favour of the French proposal, but was overruled by Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, who favours a ground operation.

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas was scheduled to meet Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan overnight to advance his efforts to forge a ceasefire.

Mr Erdogan landed in Jordan yesterday as part of a four-nation visit, which also includes Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Syria.

Mr Abbas had earlier expressed reservations on the Turkish offer to sponsor a dialogue that gathered together his Fatah party and **Hamas**, preferring instead to proceed with Egyptian attempts at mediating a ceasefire.

But **Hamas** spokesman Fawzi Barhoum rejected talk of a ceasefire, calling for "more heroic operations and more resistance rockets ... and we call on them to move the battle to the depth of the enemy fronts and to be ready at all times to confront any Zionist ground attack".

Privately, **Hamas** figures do not rule out the possibility of a ceasefire, but make it clear it would be dependent on the immediate opening of the crossings that connect the Gaza Strip to the outside world.

Around 10,000 Israeli troops have massed along Israel's border with the Gaza Strip, home to 1.5million Palestinians.

"The proposition by the French Foreign Minister, Bernard Kouchner, for a unilateral temporary ceasefire is not useful as it is evident that **Hamas** will not stop firing rockets against Israel," an Israeli official was quoted as saying.

Israeli PM rejects ceasefire proposal GAZA CRISIS - Reports of Government split as international pressure mounts

But a spokesman for Israel's Foreign Ministry said Israel was examining international proposals for reaching a permanent ceasefire in its massive offensive against **Hamas**.

Late on Tuesday, Mr Olmert discussed the French proposal for a 48-hour truce, but his office said Mr Olmert had imposed a strict reporting blackout on details of the meeting.

A spokesman for Mr Barak said the Defence Minister was looking favourably at the proposal for a brief ceasefire, but stressed that this would not prevent Israel from preparing for a ground offensive.

An Israel Defence Forces official, who was authorised to speak to The Age on condition of anonymity, said that there were no grounds for a 48-hour ceasefire.

"There is no basis to this. Our objective is to halt the rockets being fired from Gaza," the official said. "**Hamas** is still firing rockets, so the operation will continue."

The official said the IDF believed there were sufficient food and medical supplies in Gaza and "no fear of a humanitarian crisis there".

In a strongly worded statement, foreign ministers representing the "quartet" of Middle East peace brokers - the United Nations, United States, European Union and Russia - called for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and southern Israel.

Christopher Gunness, a spokesman for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, which has a large presence in Gaza, said the Israeli operation had caused terrible loss of life.

"The overwhelming air bombardment as a matter of certainty was always going to lead to scores of casualties," Mr Gunness said.

"Any military planner preparing for an operation of this magnitude in a place as tiny and as densely populated as Gaza must have known what damage this would cause, and the likelihood that innocent people, among them **women** and children, would die."

KEY POINTS

- Israel likely to mount land invasion of Gaza.
- Ehud Barak reportedly in favour of 48-hour truce.
- Mahmoud Abbas advances efforts to forge ceasefire.

Graphic

PHOTO: Anti-riot police surround hundreds of people protesting in Cairo, Egypt, against the Israeli attacks on Gaza, which have left 380 people dead. PICTURE: AP

Load-Date: December 31, 2008

Talks as troops pour into Gaza

The Advertiser (Australia)

January 13, 2009 Tuesday

1 - State Edition

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Section: FOREIGN; Pg. 23

Length: 556 words

Byline: MAI YAGHI, GAZA CITY

Body

ISRAEL has poured reservists into Gaza as the death toll in its war on **Hamas** reportedly neared 900.

Officials say an end to the fighting might be in sight as more ceasefire talks are scheduled in Egypt.

Israeli troops pushed deeper into Gaza's main city yesterday, as warplanes carried out nearly 60 air strikes to combat Palestinian rocket fire, which has continued despite the offensive.

An Israeli television channel said the army had begun sending in some of the thousands of reservists called up when the war began, and an army spokesman said they would be increasingly ``integrated" into combat units.

Civilians again fell victim in the impoverished and isolated Palestinian enclave, one of the world's most crowded territories where half of the 1.5 million residents are less than 18 years old.

Two **women** and four children were killed in a strike on a house in Beit Lahiya, medics and witnesses said. Israeli officials suggested the offensive might be approaching its end despite the rejection of a UN Security Council resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire.

``The decision of the (UN) Security Council doesn't give us much leeway," Deputy Defence Minister Matan Vilnai told public radio.

``Thus it would seem that we are close to ending the ground operation and ending the operation altogether."

Earlier, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said Israel was nearing the goals it had set for its operation, but that fighting would continue for now. ``Israel is approaching these goals, but more patience and determination are required," Olmert told a Cabinet meeting.

Israeli forces have demolished some 200 smuggling tunnels beneath the Gaza-Egypt border - **Hamas**'s main resupply route - representing two-thirds of the total, military spokeswoman Avital Leibovich said.

Hamas, which also ignored the Security Council resolution, has vowed to keep on fighting. Yesterday, 19 rockets were fired into Israel from Gaza, including four military-grade Grad rockets, without wounding anyone.

As well, troops entered the narrow streets of Gaza City's southern Tal al-Hawa neighbourhood, encountering roadside bombs, mortar and gunfire from Palestinian fighters, witnesses said.

Talks as troops pour into Gaza

They withdrew at daybreak, but hundreds of panicked residents fled the area, clutching small children and hastily packed bags.

“We couldn't take anything with us, not even milk for the children,” said Ibtisam Shamallah, 22, as she fled with her two children.

Twelve bodies were later pulled from the rubble in Tal al-Hawa, including 10 fighters, medics said. At least 26 Palestinians were killed in clashes, they said.

Egypt has spearheaded Western-backed efforts to end the fighting, calling for an immediate truce, opening Gaza's border crossings, preventing arms smuggling and relaunching Palestinian reconciliation efforts.

Yesterday, it ramped up pressure on Israel by summoning its ambassador to demand that the Jewish state comply with the Security Council resolution and open humanitarian corridors to relieve the besieged territory.

It also held what it said were positive talks with a **Hamas** team, saying the Islamists agreed “on the importance of . . . stopping the shedding of Palestinian blood as soon as possible”.

Osama Hamdan, **Hamas**'s representative in Lebanon, told Al-Jazeera television that “there was some progress on some points” of the Egyptian proposal.

Load-Date: January 12, 2009

Israel attackers will not succeed

Sowetan (South Africa)

December 31, 2008 Wednesday

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Sowetan

THE SOUL TRUTH

Section: OPINION & EDITORIAL

Length: 245 words

Byline: Gary Seikow

Body

Israel attackers will not succeed

Israeli citizens have been under the threat of daily attack from Gaza for years.

In the week before the justified Israeli anti-terror incursion into Gaza, hundreds of missiles and mortar shells were fired at Israeli civilian communities.

When Israeli children were killed by Hamas rockets the world was silent. Once again, those who would like to see Israel destroyed and its people subjected to genocide are falling over themselves to join in the chorus against Israel.

Hamas rains rockets down on Israel, targeting Jewish men, women and children for death, in accordance with their charter which calls for the killing of all Jews.

One marvels at how in a world filled with enormous evils such as totalitarian states that make their countries into large prison camps (Iran and North Korea); that massacre and enslave millions of citizens (Sudan); that wage deadly war against their own populations (Zimbabwe and Myanmar); that destroy entire cultures (as China is doing in Tibet) - it would seem a puzzle as to why the Jewish state and the US are the two most vilified countries in the world.

Where were all these hysterical people when Jewish people were incinerated by Hamas and the Islamic Jihad? We will never again walk quietly to the gas chambers. We will react when our people are killed in cold blood.

Even though the Palestinians will continue to work towards our destruction, they will not succeed.

Gary Selikow, Johannesburg

Load-Date: January 22, 2009

Israeli offensive in Gaza

The Irish Times

January 13, 2009 Tuesday

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Section: LETTERS; Pg. 15

Length: 2236 words

Body

Madam, The Israeli ambassador's polemic of January 9th (Israel's actions necessary so our citizens can live in peace) is a misuse of history. People with traumatic memories tend to block out parts of their own past.

Mr Zion Evrony is selective with the truth. To accuse Fintan O Toole of intellectual dishonesty is disingenuous. Mr O Toole did not equate Israel with Nazi Germany. As usual, he got to the heart of the matter by showing the sad reality of Victor Hugo's dictum: yesterday's oppressed can become today's oppressors.

The one thing Israel has not displayed is a willingness to accept UN Resolution 242 and return to its internationally recognised borders. Such an initiative would transform the Middle East conflict, break the cycle of hatred and violence, and undermine Islamic fundamentalism more quickly than pursuing a futile military solution. Yours, etc,

BRENDAN Ó CATHAOIR,

Bray,

Co Wicklow.

Madam, The mental somersaults that must have taken place in Senator David Norris's mind to reach the conclusion that he only has serious reservations about Hamas (January 12th) are amazing. The irony that Hamas would kill Senator Norris in a heartbeat for the crime of being homosexual would be funny were it not so tragic for those who suffer every day in regimes controlled by Hamas and its supporters and who can only dream of the sort of human rights and freedoms enjoyed by Israeli citizens.

It also seems to have slipped Senator Norris's mind that Hamas received 440,409 (44.45 per cent) of votes cast in the 2006 election while Fatah received 410,554 (41.43 per cent). Hardly a resounding mandate for Hamas. It was the quirks of the list and constituency system used which gave Hamas an advantage in seats.

Senator Norris won't be unaware that the Nazis were also elected to power. Yours, etc,

DESMOND FITZGERALD,

Canary Wharf,

London E14.

Madam,- The Irish Times's commitment to balanced analysis of the Gaza crisis has produced a large number of articles and letters which support the Israeli offensive with an unchanging chorus of arguments. These remind us

Israeli offensive in Gaza

that Israel is a small democratic country surrounded by hostile enemies who are bent on its destruction and against whom it has the right to defend itself. They also emphasise the use of civilians as human shields by Hamas.

While these claims are valid, their use to justify the oppression of an entire people has reached morbidly surreal proportions. The tendency to represent both sides by balancing a letter or opinion piece which opposes the Israeli offensive with one that supports it belies the fact that this is nowhere near an equal situation.

In following this principle *The Irish Times* has given ample exposure to the rhetoric of commentators such as Senator Eoghan Harris (January 9th) and the more polished sophistry of the Israeli embassy. These analyses are completely disconnected from international law, from the brutal, indiscriminate reality of Israeli military operations and even from recent facts such as the breach of the Gaza ceasefire on November 4th. Yet they constitute roughly half the space allocated to this issue.

Allotting roughly equal column space to supporters and opposers of this illegal, outrageous incursion maintains an impression that the suffering of Israelis is of similar proportion to that of Palestinians. This policy also entrenches the notion that commentary on this conflict involves taking a side: you're pro-Israeli or pro-Palestinian. Let us not contribute to these distortions with a misguided sense of what constitutes balanced journalism and let us all be on the side of human rights for Israelis and Palestinians. Yours, etc,

LIAM QUAIDE,

Lower Mayor Street,

Dublin 1.

Madam, Anti-Israeli sentiment is but a thinly veiled form of anti-Semitism – this old refrain has been identified by eminent US researchers Mearsheimer and Walt (pub. London 2006) as a hugely successful ploy by America's powerful Israel Lobby to stifle democratic debate on Israel in US public circles.

What with the flurry of accusations against politicians for even the mildest criticism of the war crimes currently taking place before our eyes, one may argue that something similar is being attempted here.

I have long harboured the impression that people of Jewish origin have produced proportionately more champions of liberty and social justice than most other peoples – due, perhaps, to their own bitter experience of being denied these rights.

Yet Israel's international role has largely been the reverse of this tradition: it is in breach of more United Nations resolutions and international law, such as it exists, than any nation since the foundation of the world body over half-a-century ago. Its security forces have acted as advisers to military dictatorships in Latin America and elsewhere in the world and Israel was the most unashamed supporter of apartheid South Africa.

We are told there are some within Israel who do not subscribe to official Israeli policy. We know there are many prominent Jews outside Israel who totally oppose it. Far from being anti-Semitic, one could easily argue that to support present Israeli policies is counter to the Jewish tradition. Yours, etc,

BILLY FITZPATRICK,

Terenure,

Dublin 6W.

Madam, The 41 Oireachtas members who signed the letter in last Friday's edition are right to support the creation of a secure and independent Palestine living alongside a secure and independent Israel. No other long-term solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is feasible. However, no such solution can be achieved while Palestinian fundamentalist groups such as Hamas are opposed to any such arrangement and resolutely committed to the total destruction of the Israeli state.

Israeli offensive in Gaza

Of course, the mere creation of a Palestinian state is not enough to end conflict permanently. Such a state must be prepared to live in peace alongside Israel as its neighbour and this has long been recognised by the international community and successive Irish governments. It is curious that the importance of this is ignored by the 41 Oireachtas signatories. Of course it is not only this that they choose to ignore.

They allege that Israel has acted disproportionately and in a manner counter-productive to achieving security for the people of Israel or peace in the Middle East. They choose to ignore that Hamas has rejected every peace initiative since Oslo 1 in 1993; murdered over 500 men, women and children in Israel and injured and maimed thousands in suicide bombing campaigns to sabotage peace initiatives; is sponsored and armed by Iran, whose president and other leaders have repeatedly publicly advocated that Israel be wiped off the map; fired over 5,000 rockets into Israel since its evacuation from the Gaza Strip in August 2005; launched 215 rockets at Israel from Gaza during the 2008 lull; used the lull to smuggle into Gaza substantial weaponry through hundreds of tunnels dug under the border with Egypt; and unilaterally rejected a continuation of any lull or ceasefire, launching an average of 80 rockets and missiles a day into Israeli towns and cities in the first week of its ending.

My Oireachtas colleagues also choose to ignore that Hamas in its commitment to Jihad and advocacy of death and martyrdom has turned Gaza into a terrorist entity in which it has terrorised thousands of Palestinians, murdered hundreds of Fatah supporters during its takeover of Gaza in June 2007 and boasted of using women, children and the elderly as human shields.

Under Article 51 of the UN Charter Israel is entitled to defend its citizens and prevent subsequent attack and states are entitled to take the action necessary to defeat an adversary's military capacity and overcome it. There is a tragic inevitability of civilian deaths in the current conflict. However, there is no moral equivalence between the wilful murder of civilians, which is the objective of every Hamas rocket fired, and Israel's targeting of combatants and stored armaments, resulting in the accidental and tragic death of civilians due to Hamas deliberately launching rockets and maintaining such storage in densely populated areas. Those who criticise Israel for a lack of proportionality are essentially arguing that Israel has no right to take effective action to defend and protect its citizens and are playing into the hands of fundamentalist propaganda.

On occasions members of the Oireachtas suffer collective amnesia. This State, as part of the EU, which is a member of the International Quartet (EU, Russia, USA, UN), has since the Palestinian elections set three conditions for Hamas involvement in the peace process. They are that Hamas recognises Israel, accepts previous agreements concluded between Israel and the Palestinians, and ends terrorism. Hamas has not only refused to do so but has, with the support of Iran, continued to advocate its genocidal policies and its objective of perpetrating a second Holocaust.

If Hamas chose the path of peace and economic development instead of Jihad and terrorism, there would today be no conflict in Gaza. If Iran encouraged the achievement of peaceful resolution instead of advocating Israel's total destruction, the peace that both I and my Oireachtas colleagues desire in the Middle East might be achievable. Perhaps they might reflect on this. And when Chris Andrews TD ends his obsession with calling for the expulsion of Zion Evrony, the Israeli ambassador, he might make a genuine contribution to the peace process by talking to the Iranian ambassador and demanding a change of policy by the Iranian government.

Should he fail to effect such change, he may then want to consider calling for the Iranian ambassador's expulsion.
Yours, etc,

ALAN SHATTER TD,

Dáil Éireann,

Dublin 2.

Madam, On Sunday a number of people calling themselves Christian supporters of Israel, including members of the Irish Christian Friends of Israel, prayed and demonstrated outside the Dáil and the Israeli embassy. To all

Israeli offensive in Gaza

intents and purposes they were praying for the slaughter of Palestinian Muslims and Christians at the hands of the Israeli army to continue.

I wish to ask a straight question: are these people Christian Zionists? In that event, do they believe in the central tenets of that doctrine, which include support for the total occupation of Palestine by Jews, leading to the battle of Armageddon and the second coming of Christ?

If these are indeed their views, do they also believe that at the end of days 144,000 Jews will be perfected by converting to Christianity, while the rest will burn in Hell for all eternity?

If so, then I would maintain they are friends neither of Israel nor of the Jewish people. Yours, etc,

RAYMOND DEANE,

Dún Laoghaire,

Co Dublin.

Madam, I read with interest the letter of January 9th from members of the Oireachtas. In the course of their condemnation of the state of Israel, the politicians state that Palestinian rocket attacks that traumatise the lives of communities in southern Israel are also utterly unacceptable.

I have a simple question for the authors of this righteous tirade. Why, if they regarded the 5,000 rockets fired at Israel over the past six months as unacceptable, did they never write a letter to The Irish Times condemning them? Where was their sense of outrage when terrified Israelis were fleeing for their lives?

It would appear from this letter that our politicians have once again exposed themselves for the moral hypocrites that they are. Yours, etc,

Dr RUAIRI HANLEY,

Drogheda,

Co Louth.

Madam, - Apologists for Israel's ongoing action, such as the Israeli Ambassador, Tom Carew and Senator Eoghan Harris, miss the point at issue. Consequently, their arguments can have no effect on the people they want to persuade.

The point is that people in Ireland and elsewhere are horrified by the amount and nature of the killing which Israel is engaging in. This is happening against the background of the past 20 years in which Israel has been, after the US, the world's principal killer nation. And here they go again, people are thinking cruel, arrogant, flaunting the superiority and killing power of their armaments against a weak, virtually defenceless people men, women and children.

Until the defenders of Israel show that the amount and nature of Israeli killing is justified and necessary, they might as well say nothing. People see the horror on television and in the newspapers, are naturally horrified, loathe the state that is doing the killing, and arguments about other matters pass them by. Yours, etc,

Dr DESMOND FENNELL,

Maynooth,

Co Kildare.

Israeli offensive in Gaza

Madam, The calls by Fianna Fáil TD Chris Andrews to expel the Israeli ambassador is pointless populist rhetoric, crudely wrong and ironic in the extreme given our attitude to Nazi diplomats during the second World War. More importantly, it is self defeating.

Every means of communication should remain open. The ambassador should be called to the Department of Foreign Affairs and our Minister should directly let him know of our justifiable concerns and condemnation of the disproportionate Israeli response in Gaza. And we should continue to use this channel to apply pressure on Israel, in conjunction with some form of EU agreed sanctions, so that it might come to realise that its policies have been and continue to be an obstacle to sustainable peace in the region. Yours, etc,

Cllr JIM O LEARY (FG),

Dundrum,

Dublin 16.

Load-Date: January 13, 2009

End of Document

Gaza pounding must stop now; Letters to the editor

Kalgoorlie Miner (Western Australia)

January 10, 2009 Saturday

First Edition

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Section: KAL; Pg. 2

Length: 271 words

Body

THE world cries in sympathy for Gaza residents enduring another day of merciless pounding - from land, sea, and air - by Israeli soldiers. They are struggling to survive after 18 months of extreme deprivation, which is pushing 80 per cent of Gazans into abject poverty, unable to feed or support themselves.

Pro-Gaza demonstrations abound and sympathy is rightfully placed.

Among the 1.5 million people crammed into the most densely populated 360sq km on earth (barely 140 square miles), a tiny fraction are **Hamas** members and far fewer fire Qassams - Israel's justification for their current attacks.

Since 2001, when Qassams were introduced, more than 4000 have been fired and a similar number of mortars. Some days bring nearly 200 Qassams and rockets raining on Israeli citizens living well within the 1949 armistice lines.

About 30 Israelis have died and more than 400 wounded.

Israelis around Gaza live in daily fear - Israelis wanting only security for themselves, a better life for their children and living peacefully with their neighbours.

That is what most Gaza residents desire for themselves and their children, too.

More than 700 Gazans are dead - about a quarter of them **women** and children, and 2000 have been wounded - many civilians. Gaza civilians are being terrorised.

Hamas' response is 30 Qassams and rockets fired into Israel daily, which triggered Israel's violent onslaught - terrorising Israeli civilians.

I'll be at the next pro-Gaza demonstration, holding the banner imploring Israel to cease immediately its violence in Gaza and demanding **Hamas** to stop lobbing Qassams into Israel.

Judy Bamberger,

O'Connor, ACT.

Gaza pounding must stop now Letters to the editor

Load-Date: January 9, 2009

End of Document

BLOODIEST YET; 296 dead, 700 wounded as Israel rains 100 tons of bombs on Gaza militants behind 300 rocket attacks

The Sun (England)

December 29, 2008 Monday

Edition 1

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 9

Length: 371 words

Byline: NICK PARKER

Body

ISRAEL stepped up its bloodiest attacks in history on Islamist strongholds in Gaza yesterday as the Palestinian death toll hit 296.

F16 warplanes and Apache choppers rained more than 100 tons of bombs and rockets on militants in just one day..

Most of the dead and 700 wounded were Hamas fanatics behind 300 rocket attacks on Israel in the past week.

But the toll of civilian dead - including women and children - was rising last night as frantic UN efforts to broker a ceasefire stalled.

Jets blasted targets including Gaza police HQ on Saturday.

Hamas fired a revenge salvo of 110 rockets deep into enemy territory, killing a civilian. Israel continued its blitz yesterday.

Its leaders vowed to keep bombing until Iran-backed Hamas halts its offensive.

Fears grew yesterday of a bloody ground attack as they called up 6,500 reservists.

Israel's assault, weeks before elections, came amid public clamour for action after rockets traumatised Jewish settlements. Its hi-tech war machine zeroed in on key security installations.

But the timing, as schools broke for lunch, meant many children and women died.

Morgues overflowed, leaving piles of mutilated bodies lying on the street.

Wailing relatives searched the grim heaps for loved ones, while rescuers clawed smoking rubble for survivors.

BLOODIEST YET 296 dead, 700 wounded as Israel rains 100 tons of bombs on Gaza militants behind 300 rocket attacks

Israel was braced for a wave of suicide bombings last night. A **Hamas** spokesman urged Palestinian groups to use "all available means including martyrdom".

The air assault began eight days after a six-month ceasefire expired. Militants fired 3,000 rockets over the border during the "truce".

Nine Israelis have been killed by rockets since Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip in 2005. In the same period, Israeli ops have killed 1,500 Palestinians in Gaza.

Saturday was Gaza's deadliest day since the territory was occupied in 1967. Israel hammered targets in key towns, including Gaza City.

Streets were deserted yesterday as aid groups warned of a humanitarian crisis.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, Middle East envoy Tony Blair and the Foreign Office called for a ceasefire.

But Israeli defence minister Ehud Barak said: "The time has come to fight." n.parker@the-sun.co.uk The Sun Says - Page Eight Get the latest on the attacks at the sun.co.uk/news

Graphic

Terror... bloodied prisoner hauled from rubble of Palestinian jail

Impact . . Israeli bomb hurls earth and smoke in air

Fireball ... family flee as bombed building explodes in Rafah town

Load-Date: December 29, 2008

ARMY CLOSES IN ON GAZA AS THE DEATH TOLL CLIMBS

Metro (UK)

January 14, 2009 Wednesday

London and all shared stories Edition

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Section: Pg. 13

Length: 242 words

Byline: JO STEELE

Body

ISRAELI forces advanced into the suburbs of Gaza City yesterday as the offensive against **Hamas** entered its 18th day.

Overnight, Israeli jets attacked more than 60 targets. Explosions and heavy machine gun fire could be heard across the city, home to 500,000 people.

Medical workers said three civilians and 18 Palestinian gunmen, most of them members of the Islamist **Hamas** group that rules the Gaza Strip, were killed. Two rockets hit Beersheba in southern Israel, causing no casualties.

To date, violence has killed more than 900 Palestinians many of them **women** and children and 13 Israelis, including three civilians hit by rockets fired from the Gaza Strip.

The latest strikes came as Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert decided against ordering troops to engage in all-out urban warfare fearing that opening a phase three of the offensive could complicate truce efforts. In Cairo, a **Hamas** delegation resumed talks with Egypt on a ceasefire plan proposed by the country, which borders the Gaza Strip and Israel. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon was heading to the region for a week of talks. He said: My message is simple, direct, and to the point the fighting must stop. To both sides, I say: Just stop now. Human rights groups have reported shortages of vital supplies, including water. Israel has permitted daily shipments of food and medicine. But Human Rights Watch said Israel's daily three-hour break in attacks to allow aid in was woefully insufficient.

Graphic

On the march: Israeli troops head towards Gaza City yesterday Picture: Reuters

ARMY CLOSES IN ON GAZA AS THE DEATH TOLL CLIMBS

Load-Date: February 5, 2009

End of Document

**BARELY SURVIVING; VICTORIA WARD REPORTS FROM THE FRONT LINE
IN THE GAZA WAR TERROR AS ISRAEL STORMS STRIP 100 CIVILIANS
AMONG 500 DEAD**

The Mirror

January 5, 2009 Monday

2 Star Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 6

Length: 847 words

Byline: VICTORIA WARD

Body

THE bombs rained down again, bringing more mayhem and death to Gaza - as they have for more than a week.

As I stood watching, fighter planes and helicopters fired salvos of missiles - backing up Israel's ground invasion of the Gaza Strip.

Local man Azmi Keshawi, 43, told of the terror inside Gaza City as residents struggle to stay alive.

He fled his home with his wife and four kids - the youngest aged just eight months - to find safety before Israel's invasion on Saturday.

But there is nowhere to hide and as I talked to him, our conversation was punctuated by ear-splitting blasts too close for comfort.

Cameraman Azmi said: "Saturday was a night no one will ever forget.

I don't know if there are words to describe it. We are barely surviving.

"We have seen waves of attacks and violence for years but this time it went to unprecedented levels.

"From midnight until 6am it was continuous, almost one blast every second. There is no electricity so the Gaza Strip was pitch black.

Only the lucky ones with generators could find out what was going on through the news."

As we spoke, there was an explosion. Azmi asked, startled: "Did you hear that?"

There was a long pause before he was back on the line, shaken. "I can see the plane firing rockets," he went on. "I can see shooting from my window. Never in my life have I witnessed intense firing like this.

"If you had come to Gaza eight days ago, you wouldn't recognise it now."

BARELY SURVIVING VICTORIA WARD REPORTS FROM THE FRONT LINE IN THE GAZA WAR TERROR AS ISRAEL STORMS STRIP 100 CIVILIANS AMONG 500 DEAD

The fresh fighting brought the death toll in the Gaza Strip to more than 500 since the escalation of the conflict on December 27.

The grim figure, from Palestinian health chiefs and UN officials, is believed to include at least 100 civilians - around a third of them kids.

Foreign journalists remain banned from Gaza. But last night, from Kfar Aza on the border, just over a mile from the city, I watched - close enough to witness the attacks, too far to hear the screams.

An Israeli helicopter circled slowly above in the sky, hovering over the tall buildings. Then blasts pierced the silence as rockets were fired.

For a moment they glowed bright orange against the blue sky. And then they disappeared. Seconds later clouds of smoke rose from the ground.

Intermittently, a siren sounded and we to a shelter as Hamas retaliated with rockets.

In Gaza, however, there are no shelters. Azmi said: "With the strength the Israelis are using, there would be no point using one anyway.

"As long as you are not in a shelter you can run with your life. Inside, you would be buried." Yesterday's casualties included a paramedic with an Oxfam-funded group - killed as an Israeli shell struck a civilian ambulance in Beit Lahiya just north of Gaza City. Oxfam claims Israel's insistence that it is only targeting Hamas militants rings hollow.

The charity's John Prideaux-Brune said from Jerusalem: "It shows again that trying to fight a military campaign in the densely populated Gaza Strip will inevitably lead to civilian casualties. There are no safe areas."

Azmi went even further as he raged: "My colleague's brother and his 11-year-old son were killed when their house was hit in the middle of the day.

"Civilians are the target in this war.

It is punishment for the people of Gaza for backing Hamas." Hospitals and clinics, some with staff working around the clock, are struggling to cope with the rising numbers of dead and wounded.

Blood covers the floors. There are frequently no tools to sterilise operating equipment. One centre has run out of anaesthetic.

Fikr Shalltoot of Medical Aid for Palestinians said: "We only have 2,050 beds across the whole Gaza Strip but the number of injured already exceeds that.

"There are not enough drugs or ambulances.

Medical teams are resuscitating women and children on the floor.

"People are waiting to be operated but there is no equipment and they are just given painkillers.

"Relatives are told to find the mortuary on their own, but it is full and many bodies are piled outside. It is a disaster."

Thousands of Israeli troops, along with 100 tanks, are now in Gaza.

Hamas fired 45 rockets into Israel yesterday. Israel said one of its soldiers was killed in a mortar attack and 32 injured. three seriously.

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A senior Israeli military officer said the country's troops were in for the long haul and said the operation was "not a rapid one that would end in hours or a few days".

On Saturday the US blocked a UN Security Council statement urging an immediate ceasefire.

US deputy ambassador Alejandro Wolff said the White House believed **Hamas** would snub last week's UN call for an immediate halt to the violence.

And he argued that a new statement "would not be adhered to and would have no underpinning for success and would not do credit to the UN Security Council".

Israeli President Shimon Peres made clear his country had no intention to halt its operations.

He said: "We don't intend either to occupy Gaza nor to crush **Hamas** but to crush terror.

"And **Hamas** needs a real and serious lesson. They are now getting it. We shall not accept the idea that **Hamas** will continue to fire and we shall declare a ceasefire. It does not make any sense."

Graphic

Gaza City Yesterday; SUFFERING Father carries his burned daughter yesterday Pictures: AFP/GETTY IMAGES/REUTERS/AP; ARMED An Israeli soldier set for attack; FACE OF FEAR A terrified Palestinian girl hides; FIRE IN THE SKY Flames and smoke over Gaza City

Load-Date: January 5, 2009

STREETWISE; War of terror in Gaza

BusinessWorld

January 9, 2009 Friday

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Section: Pg. S1/4

Length: 1003 words

Byline: Carol Pagaduan-Araullo

Body

Remember Sabra and Shatilla? These were the two Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon where 1,700 to 3,500 civilian residents - men, women, and children - were massacred in 1982 by pro-Israel Lebanese Phalangist militia units with the protective shield and go-ahead of Israeli Defense Forces. IDF commander Gen Ariel Sharon was found "indirectly responsible" for the massacres and was forced to resign. But he eventually went on to be Israel Prime Minister after several years.

This long record of impunity for the Israeli government, in barefaced aggression and military overkill, perpetrating gross human rights violations, war crimes, and even genocide must be seen in the context of unshakeable US backing - military, economic, political, and diplomatic. With the acquiescence of the other big powers, this continuing US support explains in large part the destructiveness, brutality, and callousness exhibited by the IDF in the recent attacks on Gaza.

Malaysia's former Prime Minister Mahathir said that no matter how clever or powerful Israel was, it would not be able to carry out the offensive without the US acting as a "big brother" providing the money and the weaponry for Israel's renewed war of aggression. Thus, the US is "much more guilty than even the Israelis" for the civilian carnage and the ratcheting up of the Israel-Palestine conflict in the Middle East.

Israel remains the single biggest recipient of US aid, getting a hefty US \$3 billion annually. A country of around 6 million people, it is currently receiving more US aid than all of Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean, taking out Egypt and Colombia. It has a nuclear arsenal that would be the envy of the countries named by US President Bush as constituting an "axis of evil..

Despite international outcry against mounting civilian casualties and the massive humanitarian crisis the Israeli assault has given rise to, the US government is unrelenting in its support.

The US sabotaged a draft UN resolution that called for a ceasefire, addressing the humanitarian crisis, as well as the resumption of peace talks. It rejected calls for Israel to lift its blockade of Gaza and attacked the proposed resolution for not condemning Hamas' firing rockets into Southern Israel as "terrorist" acts.

In fact, it was Israel that had made a months-old truce untenable by keeping Gaza under siege. Since Hamas won a majority in the Palestinian Legislative Council in January 2006, Israel, Washington, and the West have withheld recognition and all outside aid; an economic embargo and sanctions were imposed; and the legitimate government subjected to vilification and political isolation.

STREETWISE War of terror in Gaza

Israeli claims that Hamas initiated the hostilities by raining rockets on Israeli villages are belied by reports that IDF forces had earlier intruded into Palestinian territory purportedly to close off tunnels allegedly used by Hamas to smuggle arms and had killed six Hamas officers in the process. Since the six-month ceasefire ended, Israeli troops have crossed the border several times, while Hamas resumed shelling nearby Israeli towns

US President Bush justified Israel's attack by demonizing the Hamas regime as a "terrorist group supported by Iran and Syria." US Secretary of State Rice rejected outright any ceasefire that didn't meet Israel's conditions. President-elect Barack Obama, heretofore silent on the raging global issue, finally expressed "deep concern" for the loss of civilian life after Israeli tank shells killed at least 40 Palestinians at a UN school where civilians had taken shelter.

The Israel-Palestine conflict is not about Israel and Palestine alone. It is about oil. It is about who controls the Middle East. And it is about the US drive for world domination currently in the guise of a US-instigated "global war on terror."

Mainstream media have always portrayed the conflict in terms of the Palestinians' struggle to return to their homeland, on one hand, and the Israeli state's right to exist, on the other. But, in fact, from the very start, world powers have manipulated the conflict according to their interests and designs, the ordinary Palestinians and Israelis be damned.

The British government played a central role in arranging the migration of tens of thousands of Jews to Palestine and in displacing the Palestinians from their lands. Then, the US engineered the lopsided 1948 UN resolution to partition Palestine into a Jewish state and a Palestinian state. The Palestinians rejected the resolution, protesting that they were not consulted, and the partition favored the Jews heavily. The resulting conflict ended in their defeat, expulsion from Palestine, and their seeking refuge in neighboring Arab states. To this date, their just struggle to return to their homeland continues.

With the intensification of the Cold War and the rise in Arab nationalism in the late 1950s, the Middle East became a flashpoint with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in focus. The so-called Arab-Israel wars, ostensibly over the Palestinian issue, were in fact proxy wars by the world superpowers for control of the Middle East, with Israel serving as the US' surrogate force against the Soviet-backed Arab states. Since then, Israel has grown into a bully whose arrogance, brutality, and ruthlessness is matched only by its mentor and backer, the US.

The International League for People's Struggle, in a statement condemning the invasion, said: "The US has used Israel as the bridgehead of US imperialist hegemony in the Middle East and as the platform for threatening and blackmailing countries in the region, making them military and political clients and controlling the oil resources."

One does not have to be partisan for Hamas or against the Israeli government to acknowledge the truth articulated by UN President Miguel d'Escoto Brockman on the day of the Gaza air strikes, "The behavior by Israel in bombarding Gaza is simply the commission of wanton aggression by a very powerful state against a territory that it illegally occupies."

Load-Date: January 8, 2009

**BARELY SURVIVING; VICTORIA WARD REPORTS FROM THE FRONT LINE
IN THE GAZA WAR TERROR AS ISRAEL STORMS STRIP 100 CIVILIANS
AMONG 500 DEAD**

The Mirror

January 5, 2009 Monday

3 Star Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 6

Length: 848 words

Byline: VICTORIA WARD

Body

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Graphic

Gaza City yesterday; SUFFERING Father carries his burned daughter yesterday Pictures: AFP/GETTY IMAGES/REUTERS/AP; ARMED An Israeli soldier set for attack; FACE OF FEAR A terrified Palestinian girl hides; FIRE IN THE SKY Flames and smoke over Gaza City

Load-Date: January 5, 2009

Egypt bolsters Gaza border force as Palestinians demonstrate

Daily News Egypt

November 24, 2008 Monday

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Length: 281 words

Body

AL-ARISH: Egypt on Monday sent 400 police to bolster security at its Rafah border terminal with the Gaza Strip amid demonstrations by Palestinians calling for the crossing to be opened.

The officers were deployed around the crossing point - the sole Gaza frontier post which bypasses Israel - "to deal with any possible violence by Palestinian demonstrators," a security official told AFP.

Hundreds of Palestinians have been gathering on the Gaza side of the border crossing since Saturday, demanding the crossing be opened for the sick to receive medical attention and for Muslim pilgrims to travel to Saudi Arabia.

A demonstration by Palestinian women was due to take place later on Monday, the official said.

Earlier this month, Egypt opened its border with the Gaza Strip to allow thousands of students and people needing medical attention to leave the besieged Palestinian territory.

Israel said on Monday it allowed some supplies into Gaza amid mounting international concern over the worsening humanitarian situation for the territory's 1.5 million inhabitants, virtually sealed off from the outside world.

In July, thousands of Palestinians stormed the border in a bid to flee the impoverished territory which has been under a crippling Israeli blockade since Hamas seized power in June 2007.

In the ensuing clashes, Egyptian security forces drove the crowd back from the border with water cannons as Palestinians hurled rocks before being dispersed by baton-wielding Hamas security men.

In January and February after Hamas destroyed parts of the border barrier, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians flooded into Egypt in search of vital supplies denied them by the Israeli blockade. -AFP

Load-Date: November 25, 2008

Front: Gaza's day of carnage - 40 dead as Israelis bomb two UN schools: *
Bloodiest attack of campaign so far * Obama breaks silence on conflict: 40
dead in Gaza's day of carnage

The Guardian - Final Edition

January 7, 2009 Wednesday

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theguardian

Section: GUARDIAN HOME PAGES; Pg. 1

Length: 900 words

Byline: Chris McGreal, Jerusalem, Hazem Balousha, Gaza City

Body

Israel's assault on Gaza has exacted the bloodiest toll of civilian lives yet, when the bombing of UN schools being used as refugee centres and of housing killed more than 50 people, including an entire family of seven young children.

The UN protested at a "complete absence of accountability" for the escalating number of civilian deaths in Gaza, saying "the rule of the gun" had taken over. Doctors in Gaza said more than 40 people died, including children, in what appears to be the biggest single loss of life of the campaign when Israeli bombs hit al-Fakhora school, in Jabaliya refugee camp, while it was packed with hundreds of people who had fled the fighting.

Most of those killed were in the school playground and in the street, and the dead and injured lay in pools of blood. Pictures on Palestinian TV showed walls heavily marked by shrapnel and bloodstains, and shoes and shredded clothes scattered on the ground. Windows were blown out.

Hours before, three young men who were cousins died when the Israelis bombed Asma elementary school in Gaza City. They were among 400 people who had sought shelter there after fleeing their homes in Beit Lahiya, in northern Gaza.

Abed Sultan, 20, a student, and his cousins, Rawhi and Hussein Sultan, labourers aged 22, died. Abed Sultan's father, Samir, said the bodies were so mangled that he could not tell his son from the cousins. "We came to the school when the Israelis warned us to leave," he said. "We hoped it would be safe. We were 20 in one room. We had no electricity, no blankets, no food.

"Suddenly we heard a bomb that shook the school. Windows smashed. Children started to scream. A relative came and told me one of my sons was killed. I found my son's body with his two cousins. They were cut into pieces by the shell."

Front: Gaza's day of carnage - 40 dead as Israelis bomb two UN schools: * Bloodiest attack of campaign so far
 * Obama breaks silence on conflict: 40 dead in Gaz....

The UN was particularly incensed over targeting of the schools, because Israeli forces knew they were packed with families as they had ordered them to get out of their homes with leaflet drops and loudspeakers. It said it had identified the schools as refugee centres to the Israeli military and provided GPS coordinates.

Israel accused **Hamas** of using civilians as cover, and said the Islamist group could stop the assault on Gaza by ending its rocket attacks on Israel.

The Palestinian authority president, Mahmoud Abbas, last night delivered an impassioned plea to the UN security council to act immediately to stop the Israeli operation, which he described as a "catastrophe" for his people. Israel has agreed a "humanitarian corridor" to allow Palestinians to get essential goods.

The rising casualty toll, more than 640 Palestinians killed since the assault began 12 days ago, gave fresh impetus to diplomatic efforts. The White House offered its first hint of concern at Israel's actions by calling on it to avoid civilian deaths. The president-elect, Barack Obama, broke his silence by saying he was "deeply concerned" about civilian casualties on both sides. He said he would have "plenty to say" about the crisis after his swearing in.

Gordon Brown said the Middle East was facing its "darkest moment yet" but hoped a ceasefire could be arranged soon.

Explaining its attack on al-Fahora school, the Israeli military claimed that a mortar was fired from the playground, and it responded with a single shell which killed known **Hamas** fighters; the resulting explosion was compounded because **Hamas** "booby-trapped the school". Two **Hamas** militants were among the dead, both part of a rocket-launching cell.

The head of the UN Palestinian refugee agency, John Ging, said three shells landed at the perimeter of the school. "It was entirely inevitable if artillery shells landed in that area there would be a high number of casualties," he said.

He said UN staff vetted those Palestinians who sought shelter at the school. "So far we've not had violations by militants of our facilities," he said, though responding to questions he accepted there had been clashes between **Hamas** and the Israeli army in the area.

Earlier in the day, Ging visited Gaza's hospital and was shocked at the scale of civilian casualties. "What you have in this hospital is the consequences of political failure and the complete absence of any accountability for actions that are being taken. It's the rule of the gun now, and it has to stop," he said.

At least 12 of one family, seven children aged from one to 12, three **women** and two men, were killed in an air strike on their house in Gaza City. Nine others were believed trapped.

Israel continues to insist most of those killed by its forces are **Hamas** and Islamic Jihad fighters - although its assertion it is going to extraordinary lengths to target only "terrorists" has been undermined by a tank firing on a building used by Israeli troops, killing four of them, on Monday.

Another soldier was killed yesterday as Israeli forces continued their push into Gaza City. Tanks and troops also moved on the southern town of Khan Yunis.

The invasion has yet to achieve what Israel says is its goal of stopping rocket attacks. **Hamas** fired more than 30 into Israel yesterday, one to within 20 miles of Tel Aviv at Gadera, wounding a baby.

The de facto **Hamas** prime minister in Gaza, Ismail Haniyeh, issued a statement from hiding, saying that the Gazans would defeat Israel. "(Israel) has failed to force the population to surrender," he said.

Jonathan Freedland, page 29

Nick Clegg, page 30

Leader comment, page 32

Front: Gaza's day of carnage - 40 dead as Israelis bomb two UN schools: * Bloodiest attack of campaign so far
* Obama breaks silence on conflict: 40 dead in Gaz....

Load-Date: January 7, 2009

End of Document

LETTERS FROM READERS YOUR VIEWS

St. Louis Post-Dispatch (Missouri)

January 7, 2009 Wednesday

THIRD EDITION

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Section: EDITORIAL; Pg. D8

Length: 1484 words

Body

Education is first step to professional renewal

Congratulations to Diana Baron, highlighted in "Hard knocks sending people back to school" (Jan. 2), for looking her future in the eye and taking the steps necessary to change it. Ms. Baron prepared for and then took the GED examination before moving on to community college for further education. Unfortunately, many people are unaware that there are seven Missouri Adult Education and Literacy programs in the area offering free preparation for the GED examination to people 16 years of age or older who are not enrolled in school. Preparation classes are essential because the GED examination is composed so that 40 percent of high school graduates would be unable to pass it.

Parkway Adult Education and Literacy served 3,100 students in free classes last year. Many of those students needed to obtain the GED credential. Others already had a high school diploma but needed to retool and improve their skills in areas such as reading or math. However, adult education programs do not stop there. For example, Parkway Adult Education also offers a specialized work-skills program covering work habits or "soft skills," resume-writing and mock interviews. We offer an in-depth, higher-level preparation program in academic and study skills for post-secondary school or for specialized trade school or apprenticeship entrance examinations. We also have an extensive English as a Second Language program and citizenship preparation sessions.

All Missouri adult education program teachers are state certified. In addition to our 61 certified teachers, our program also has more than 100 trained volunteer tutors and partners with eight faith-based organizations and 10 community organizations to offer programming at 37 sites located throughout a seven school districts.

For many people, education is the first step to personal and professional renewal. The seven metro-area Missouri Adult Education programs stand ready to serve.

Sally Sandy | Creve Coeur Director, Parkway Adult Education and Literacy

Better service needed

Regarding "Doctors hard to come by as Medicaid ranks swell" (Dec. 31): My office receives calls from individuals with Medicaid who need psychiatrists and therapists. We requested and received the Department of Social Services' psychiatrist list in an effort to assist individuals who call us. We found many inaccurate addresses and phone numbers, as well doctors who do not accept Medicaid.

Also, the list is not in any particular order, such as alphabetical or by geographic area.

LETTERS FROM READERS YOUR VIEWS

I contacted the department and was also told that the problem is with the doctors, not with the department.

The Department of Social Services has a responsibility to provide better service. If it can reimburse doctors providing services, it certainly can provide the public with better information.

Sharon D. Lyons | St. Louis Director of Volunteers, NAMI St. Louis

While the world slept ...

For eight years, missiles have rained terror, misery, death and destruction on southern Israel while the world, including the Arab Street and Arab coalition of states, has slept.

For five years, since the United States' invasion of Iraq, Sunni and Shia suicide bombers have murdered Muslim civilians weekly, occasionally at rates exceeding 300 per week, while the world, including the Arab Street and Arab coalition of states, has slept.

Hamas brigands summarily execute suspected Israeli Palestinian collaborators and Fatah supporters; the world sleeps.

Israel, as any other sovereign nation would, defends itself against the **Hamas**-lead terrorist onslaught in Gaza, and the world and Arab Street suddenly awaken and bemoan the loss of Palestinian and Muslim life. Cries deploring Israel's "disproportionate response" to **Hamas** terror reverberate the world over.

- Is Israeli and Jewish life of no value under any circumstances?
- Is Palestinian and Muslim blood of value only if spilled by an Israeli or Jew, but not by another Muslim? Even if the Palestinian death at the hands of an Israeli is in self-defense?
- Why is a Palestinian suicide bomber who kills innocent **women** and children considered a martyr, while an Israeli who kills a **Hamas** terrorist a murderer?
- While Israel faces a people bent on its destruction, what is a "disproportionate response" to the existential and real attempt at a country's annihilation?

The hypocrisy of it all is self-evident.

Sidney Machefsky | University City

Indiscriminate killing

Israel indiscriminately kills hundreds of people in attacks in Gaza under the guise of "retaliatory measures" against armed **Hamas** persons. Israel clearly understands that its actions hurt innocent Palestinians. And it knows that the United States supports Israel when it violates U.N. resolutions that forbid acts of collective punishment. Yet we look the other way and ask **Hamas** to stop provoking Israel.

For decades, we have had weak leadership in the White House. Our politicians care more about reelection than justice and peace. Maybe President-elect Barack Obama will be the leader who gets both parties to reconcile the very tough issues facing the region. Unfortunately, it will take members of Congress to help support such an effort, and as long as the American Israel Public Affairs Committee keeps greasing congressional wheels, there will be no serious discussions about peace in the Middle East.

We make a lot of noise about "democracy" and "supporting democracy." But we do not support the democracy in the occupied lands of Palestine. We remain friendly with oil-rich baron-dictators in the Middle East while claiming that supporting Israel is in our national security. What irony.

Asma Ghafoor | Chesterfield

LETTERS FROM READERS YOUR VIEWS

What response to fanatics?

Israel is trying to end the power of **Hamas** to kill civilians indiscriminately by rocket attacks from Gaza. Some argue that the Israeli response is not "equivalent" or "proportional." What are Israelis expected to do after absorbing thousands of missile attacks? **Hamas** perfected the suicide bomb and its use by young Palestinians; its stated goal is the total destruction of Israel. What is a "measured response" to such fanatics?

According to the Associated Press, **Hamas** terrorists are hiding in hospitals and maternity wards and storing weapons and rockets in mosques. They use crowded residential neighborhoods and civilians as cover, hoping that retaliation will harm innocents and thus swell the "always blame Israel" chorus.

Israel is sending hundreds of truckloads of medical supplies and food into Gaza. Israeli hospitals have been treating injured Gazans at the request of Palestinian medics, including several hurt by malfunctioning **Hamas** rockets. That's not "proportional," either - supplying humanitarian aid to those trying to destroy you, even as your own towns and cities are being continuously bombarded.

Israel is acting in self-defense after years of deadly provocations. When **Hamas** is defeated, Palestinians who seek peace will find willing partners: the people of Israel.

Irl Solomon | St. Louis County

Safer lefts

The proposed Michigan Left Turn for motor vehicles has merit ("St. Louis County may go with 'Michigan Left' at Hanley-Manchester," Dec. 31). The idea echoes the Cyclist's U-Turn, which I teach in a bike education course, and is the safest way to turn left at a busy intersection on a two-lane or multi-lane road. Otherwise, you not only have to look simultaneously in two opposite directions for approaching traffic, but also a gap in traffic from both directions must exist for you to complete the turn safely. The Cyclist's U-Turn splits this operation into two much safer maneuvers: First, look left. When a safe gap appears in traffic, turn right and merge to the left-hand side of the lane. Second, look ahead. When a safe gap appears in oncoming traffic, do a U-turn to complete the turn. This is the safest way to make a left turn at a busy intersection on a bicycle.

The difference between the Michigan Left Turn and the Cyclist's U-turn is that the small size and maneuverability of a bicycle allows this to be done in a much narrower width. But it is desirable for the cyclist to practice on quiet streets with little traffic to acquire the low-speed control needed for the U-turn.

Martin Pion | Ferguson Cycling Instructor, League of American Bicyclists

Troubling responses

The Iraq Central Court may postpone the trial of Muntadhar Al-Zeidi, who threw his shoes at President George W. Bush in an act of protest ("Court may reduce shoe thrower charge," Dec. 31). It also may change the charge from assaulting a foreign leader to a reduced charge of insulting Mr. Bush. Iran is offering Al-Zeidi a scholarship to any university, treating him like a hero. Isn't it time for our government to defend our president?

Most troublesome is the slow security response in subduing this radical. If he had had a weapon, we would have had a dead president.

Bud Leach | South St. Louis County

Load-Date: January 7, 2009

Israeli troops flood Gaza

Herald Sun (Australia)

January 13, 2009 Tuesday

1 - FIRST Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 22

Length: 292 words

Body

ISRAEL has poured reservists into Gaza as the death toll in its war on *Hamas* neared 900.

Officials say an end to the fighting might be in sight as more ceasefire talks are scheduled in Egypt.

Israeli troops pushed deeper into Gaza's main city yesterday, as warplanes carried out nearly 60 air strikes to combat Palestinian rocket fire, which has continued despite the offensive.

An Israeli television channel said the army had begun sending in some of the thousands of reservists called up when the war began, and an army spokesman said they would be increasingly ``integrated" into combat units.

Civilians again fell victim yesterday. Two *women* and four children were killed in a strike on a house in Beit Lahiya, medics said.

Israeli officials suggested the offensive might be approaching its end despite the rejection of a United Nations Security Council resolution calling for a ceasefire.

``The decision of the Security Council doesn't give us much leeway," Deputy Defence Minister Matan Vilnai said. ``Thus it would seem that we are close to ending the operation altogether."

Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said Israel was nearing the goals, but fighting would continue for now.

``Israel is approaching these goals, but more patience and determination are required," he told Cabinet.

Hamas, which also ignored the Security Council resolution, has vowed to keep on fighting. Yesterday, 19 rockets were fired into Israel without wounding anyone.

Egypt yesterday ramped up pressure on Israel by summoning its ambassador to demand it comply with the Security Council resolution and open humanitarian corridors.

It also held talks with *Hamas*, saying the Islamists agreed ``on the importance of . . . stopping the shedding of Palestinian blood as soon as possible".

Load-Date: January 12, 2009

Israeli troops flood Gaza

End of Document

LETTERS

The Herald (Glasgow)
December 31, 2008 Wednesday
Final Edition

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The Herald

Section: FEATURES; Pg. 14

Length: 2777 words

Body

World leaders must try to stop the bloodshed

WE ARE writing to express our disgust, condemnation and concern at the attacks carried out by Israel on the Gaza Strip, killing more than 300 people - including women and children. There is little doubt that the number of civilian deaths will rise in the next few days and weeks as Israel shows no signs of stopping its offensive on the people of Gaza.

The situation is bleak, with hospitals running out of medical supplies as the Israeli blockade continues to suffocate the people of Gaza. The region's power and infrastructure networks are on the verge of collapse with over 85 per cent of Gazans depending on UN food aid - which is at critically low levels.

We call on the UK and Scottish governments to do all they can to pressure the Israeli government to halt attacks on the Gazan people who are being collectively punished for the actions of a minority. While we believe that Israel has the right to defend itself and its civilians from rocket attacks, it cannot be allowed collectively to punish, maim and kill innocent Palestinian civilians in the process.

In the past 48 hours we have heard from the Israeli Defence Minister, Ehud Barak, that the attacks will not be short and will become increasingly intense. We believe a strong statement of condemnation of Israel's actions must be forthcoming from world leaders and political institutions before the attacks escalate and further air attacks are intensified and ground troops sent to the region.

We urge world leaders to do all they can to halt the killing of innocent lives and to send a strong message of condemnation to the Israeli's for their current attacks.

Sandra White MSP, Glasgow; Pauline McNeill MSP, Glasgow Kelvin, Convener, Cross-party Group on Palestine; Mohammad Sarwar MP, Glasgow Central; Jamie Hepburn MSP, Central Scotland, Cross-party Group on Human Rights and Civil Liberties; Osama Saeed, Chief Executive, Glasgow, Scottish-Islamic Foundation; Bashir Ahmad MSP; Jim Devine MP, Livingston; Michael Connarty MP, Linlithgow and Falkirk East; Katy Clark MP, North Ayrshire and Arran; Jim Sheridan MP, Paisley and Renfrewshire North; Russell Brown MP, Dumfries and Galloway; Bill Kidd MSP, Glasgow; Angus Robertson MP, Moray, Westminster SNP Leader; Mike Weir MP, Angus; Christina McKelvie

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MSP, Central Scotland; Joe Fitzpatrick MSP, Dundee West; Jim McGovern MP, Dundee West; Alyn Smith MEP, Scotland; Anas Sarwar, Labour PPC; Trevor Cope and John McHugo, Liberal Democrats Friends of Palestine; Baroness Jenny Tonge, House of Lords Lib-Dem Councillor; Councillor Jonathan Bloch, London Borough of Haringey; Barry Levine, Jews for a Just Peace; Sgt Amar Shakoor, Scotland, Strathclyde Police Muslim Association; Glasgow Central Mosque; Lebanese Community in Scotland; Nicola Fisher, Glasgow Stop the War Coalition; Aamer Anwar, Scottish Human Rights Lawyer; Mick Napier, Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign; Glasgow Palestine Human Rights; Scottish Friends of Palestine; Dave Watson, Unison; Association of Indian Organisations; Scottish Afghan Society; Rev Ian Galloway, Convener Church and Society Council, Church of Scotland; Rev Donald Reid, Committee for Relations with People of Other Faiths, Scottish Episcopal Church, 5 Royal Exchange Square, Glasgow.

I REGRET very much the excessive force used by the Israeli military to punish the leadership in Gaza for the recent shelling of Ashdod in Israel and I am deeply concerned by the reports which our Church is receiving from our partners on the ground.

Dr Bernard Sabella, who was a delegate at the last Church of Scotland General Assembly, has written from Jerusalem: "The situation in Gaza is absolutely disastrous. The borders remain closed and the bombardments are inflicting civilian casualties. As a result, Gaza is in a most deplorable humanitarian situation as the Israeli air strikes have devastated the governmental and civil society infrastructure such as universities, mosques and other localities where civilians usually congregate. The targeting of individual homes raises concern that civilians would be hurt and entire families would be wiped out. We are deeply concerned about these developments and we are praying and hoping that the Israeli air strikes and naval bombardments would come to a close immediately. Powers and States need to put pressure on the Israeli government to get it to take the decision to stop this awful situation in which hundreds of Palestinians are falling victims, not to speak of the social and psychological scars left by this conflict."

The casualties reported as a result of the Palestinian shelling may be relatively few, but it, too, must stop. The death toll in Gaza is already around 300, with more than 1000 casualties. The shelling appears as futile as a pinprick against a machete.

As Bishop Suheil Dawani, the Anglican Bishop in Jerusalem, stated yesterday: "Of immediate concern is the urgent medical services needed by the victims of this violence. The immensity of providing care for the injured and wounded is overwhelming a healthcare system struggling to provide essential healthcare services for 1.5 million Palestinians, most of whom live in refugee camps."

We are proud that our partner, the Al Ahli Arab Hospital, with its many Scottish connections, continues to offer medical care to all who need it, continuing a commitment, which has been unbroken for more than a century, to the wellbeing and peace of the community in Gaza City.

The stakes are high in this tinderbox region, in which the Abrahamic faiths all have a rightful interest. Would there be any willingness for faith leaders to talk together to see if there is any common ground, any way to shared goals, any possibility of living together, any path to peace? "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, " says the Lord through the prophet Zechariah.

Governments have their responsibilities and today I have written to Israeli Ambassador Ron Proser and our own Foreign Secretary, David Miliband, to urge a peaceful approach to resolving the crisis. I also call on the governments of the EU, the US and the Arab states to use what moral influence they have to restrain. The problem has become too big for the Israelis and Palestinians to solve themselves and now is the time for the UN to unite the nations, and for the religions of the world to demonstrate the nature of the God we believe in.

For church members and all people of good will this is the time to write to their MPs and to the Prime Minister, and to make this whole dreadful business a matter for sustained prayer, in the name of the one who has come among us as the Prince of Peace.

Dr Sabella concludes: "The conflict in Gaza and, in fact, in Israel and Palestine cannot and will not be resolved by force. Only the victims pay the price and politicians are left to weigh the advantages of their positions, especially at

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the eve of upcoming Israeli elections. In the long run, however, what is right is right, and violence will not move us in this land towards an acceptable end of conflict."

Rt Rev David Lunan, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, 121 George Street, Edinburgh.

SIX months of the so-called "ceasefire" between Israel and **Hamas** resulted in the Islamists digging a network of tunnels to smuggle arms and advanced Iranian rockets, and given a chance, to abduct more Israelis. At the same time, during this period of "quietude" which **Hamas** violated on a daily basis, 126 rockets were fired on Israel on November 8 alone, or 4.2 per day. In total, there were 2900 during 2008, eight per day, and recently as many as 80 per day.

I ask your correspondents who are so eager to accuse Israel of massacres and ethnic cleansing: How many rockets can, for instance, Sandra White MSP and David Martin MEP cope with before their constituents ask them to act?

Ms White (Letters, December 29) is wrong in concluding there is an international silence. Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Abdul Gheit has gone on record in support of Israel. Gheit must know something neither Ms White nor Mr Martin knows. Furthermore, humanitarian aid from the international community and Israel gets into Gaza, only to be requisitioned by **Hamas** for the "war effort", even if in the process hospitals are deprived of vital supplies. Islamofascist have never cared for their own people if it meant they could score PR points against Israel. No difference this time again.

As to the nature of the Gaza casualties, Noman Tahir (Letters, December 29) asserts "the majority are innocent **women** and children". Mr Tahir is living in denial in the face of the overwhelming evidence that they are mostly **Hamas** people. Does this not remind you of the April 2003 accusations when Israel entered Jenin to finish off suicide bombers, when the Jewish State was accused of massacring more than 500 civilians, while the UN investigations found some 52 bodies only, mostly wearing helmets and army boots.

The facts are that **Hamas**, instead of building on the Israel withdrawal in August 2005, has been provoking the Jewish state by firing well over 6000 rockets. Now that Israel finally reacts, **Hamas** and some of your correspondents are crying foul. This game is over for **Hamas**, not only for the benefit of Israel, but of all the free western world.

A Soudry, 318 Ayr Road, Glasgow.

IT IS often said that "the first casualty of war is the truth". This is seen in some of the media reporting on the current Gaza situation.

Fact: **Hamas**'s PM, Ismail Haniyeh (and TV), stated that of the 290 killed in the past two days just 15 were civilians, the majority **Hamas** operatives and assorted Islamic Jihadists. Even military experts in Britain acknowledge that this is a remarkably low number of civilian casualties given the density of the population. Fact: 110 Kassam rockets and mortar shells hit Israel on Saturday alone, but most international media didn't bother to report this. (Nor the 6300 rockets fired since the 2005 withdrawal.) Even a cursory look on YouTube shows some clips of the **Hamas** attacks on Netivot and elsewhere - not shown on other outlets.

R Oakley, Esslemont Road, Edinburgh.

IT'S wrong for **Hamas**'s armed wing to kill civilians by indiscriminate rocket fire, but equally wrong for Israel to bomb indiscriminately and kill more than 50 times as many (at least 62 so far, according to the UN) to try to overthrow **Hamas**.

Hamas is involved in terrorism but it is also democratically elected. Many Israeli Prime Ministers, such as Begin and Sharon, were terrorists before Israel's foundation; and every Israeli government has ordered war crimes that kill civilians.

LETTERS

Israel's government has restricted supplies for Gaza to under half the number of trucks required daily since Hamas's election, with many Gazans now searching rubbish dumps for food, according to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency.

Palestinian Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh of Hamas has repeatedly offered negotiations on recognising Israel. Israel's government has refused unless Hamas "renounces violence", which it won't do itself, and recognises Israel before negotiations begin, in return for nothing.

Claiming Fatah is moderate but Hamas is extremist and can't be negotiated with is a charade. Before Hamas's election in 2006 Israeli spokesmen claimed Fatah was extremist and couldn't be negotiated with; and Israel's Foreign Ministry website still records killings of Israelis by Fatah's armed wing every year.

The Israeli government is trying to replace the government Palestinians elected with one imposed by bombs, bullets and hunger; too weak to resist West Bank land and water grabs.

It won't work, either. Ariel Sharon bombed and starved Palestinians to try to overthrow Arafat's Fatah government. That brought Hamas into power.

Negotiations are the only way forward.

Duncan McFarlane, Beanshields, Braidwood, Carlisle.

Air travel detractors are the modern-day pied pipers CONSTANCE Ross (Letters, December 27) attributes the legend of thirteenth-century Hamelin to an epidemic of leptospirosis that killed many children. A radio documentary I heard gave a more prosaic explanation that did not require any piper with a magic flute able to attract rats. I doubt that people in those days would attribute disease to rat-borne disease. They didn't make such a connection at the time of the Black Death.

In 1284 the town of Hamelin was economically depressed, with poor prospects for young men. Re-locators were employed to move children to places where prospects were better. Eldest sons were left at home. Those re-located children were moved only 30 or 40 miles, but because of lack of universal transport, they were effectively disconnected from their families.

Since the Second World War, many people have emigrated to countries where the prospects were better, but because of cheap, rapid air travel these fractured families were able to keep in touch. Cheap air travel has also meant that families such as my own were able to re-bond with descendants of members who had emigrated to North America many years ago. Before that the only communication was mail.

Those who advocate a drastic reduction in air travel on climate grounds are likely to be seen as modern-day pied pipers.

Chris Parton, 40 Bellshill Road, Uddingston.

Red hot Oban YOUR review of Scotland's main Hogmanay celebrations (Revellers gear up for Hogmanay celebrations across Scotland, December 30) does not mention the biggest of them all - Oban.

Headed by The Red Hot Chilli Pipers, this celebration will show the rest how to do it!

W Raymond Shaw, 9 Drimvargie Road, Oban, Argyll.

The National Health Service can be a medical marvel or a bureaucratic nightmare I AM glad Iain Macwhirter is making a good recovery from his heart problem (his column on the negative image of the NHS, Monday December 29) dealt with expeditiously at Edinburgh Royal Infirmary.

Iain has every right to be grateful, as I have, to the NHS but he must know that in attempting to counter the negativity he refers to, his own experience is not universal.

LETTERS

My experience shows that when you are in the care of surgeons and nurses you really are in good hands but the NHS is a bureaucratic nightmare for many patients. Iain was fortunate to be diagnosed and treated in three weeks, that is most certainly not the norm and yes people have died while waiting for treatment.

Nevertheless, the NHS as an institution deserves our support and is the best and only option for most of us.

With regard to Scotland's poor health record, that requires a lot more research. I read some years ago that research showed that in nineteenth century Norway a remote community in the far north had been exposed to famine and starvation; the resulting malnutrition caused genetic damage to the survivors and is still present in descendants, to this day, who lead relatively affluent and healthy lifestyles.

I have no doubt that because of Scotland's history Iain will, like most of us, have ancestors who lived pretty wretched lives, is there a link?

John Fowler, 16 Benview, Bannockburn.

WHAT to make of Iain Macwhirter's article on the NHS? Ah well ? If only . . .

The good news is, that we appear to be advanced in the treatment of coronary heart disease, but Iain's euphoria is not what we hear on the streets, nor has there been much rapturous applause from the doctors who have contributed much to the health debate in these pages.

But the article tells us more about Iain than it does about the real state of the NHS. I don't doubt he was a frightened man, who, when he needed it, got the best care for free.

This would send anyone into a state of euphoria. It teaches us about real 'value' but not in the lotterywinning sense. This is the New Year so we can forgive him his momentary hallucinations!

Morag McKinlay, 36A Weir Street, Falkirk.

NHS - yes, let's applaud it. Good to hear of Iain Macwhirter's NHS experience and of the satisfactory outcome for him. I wish to second Iain's thoughts and say that what we do need is some more positive news to be broadcast re our splendid Health Service, which is often quoted as best in the world, but still gets a hard time in many headline articles.

One can always find fault and maybe the NHS is a victim of its own success as it has made so many developments through ongoing research and we all inevitably expect more all of the time. Maybe at times it therefore seems that the benefits appear to get spread more thinly.

Going from my experience over a number of years, when it matters it cannot be faulted, just as Iain's experience has shown.

Let's accentuate the positive and eliminate the negative for a change !

James C Orr, 59 Main Street, Pathhead, Midlothian.

Load-Date: December 31, 2008

ISRAEL: NO LET-UP; They defy international calls for ceasefire in Gaza

The Sun (England)

January 1, 2009 Thursday

Edition 1

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 19

Length: 270 words

Byline: BRIAN FLYNN

Body

ISRAEL ignored calls for a Gaza ceasefire yesterday - saying it had "no intention" of ending the blitz.

International pressure had mounted for a 48-hour truce to allow in humanitarian aid for 1.5million Palestinians.

But Israel reacted by stepping up preparations for a possible ground offensive.

Rockets

An aide of Prime Minister Ehud Olmert described the French ceasefire plan as a "Band-Aid solution". He quoted Olmert as saying a diplomatic peace plan "at the moment, it's not there".

Cabinet minister Meir Sheerit was blunt: "There's no intention of stopping the military activity."

The Palestinian death toll is at least 387 - including many women and children. Three Israeli civilians and a soldier have been killed.

Public anger inside Israel mounted yesterday after Hamas rockets hit deeper into civilian areas, including an empty school in Beersheba, 24 miles from Gaza.

Israeli ministers said a ground offensive was "still on the table" and approved 2,500 army reservists to join a call-up of 6,500 troops. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Gordon Brown yesterday said some aid was getting through but called the situation a "humanitarian crisis".

He said it was "vital that moderation must now prevail". Save The Children UK launched a Eur6.8million appeal, saying food shortages have left thousands of Gaza children battling to stay alive after five days of Israeli air strikes.

Among yesterday's targets was the office of ex-Hamas PM Sheikh Ismail Haniya.

ISRAEL : NO LET-UP They defy international calls for ceasefire in Gaza

Last night, as more rain fell on Gaza delaying any ground offensive plans, taxi driver Mazen Ahmen called it "a truce imposed by God".

b.flynn@the-sun.co.uk

Graphic

Blasted ... ex-**Hamas** PM office, left, and school deep inside Israel

Load-Date: January 1, 2009

End of Document

Death of innocents

The Jerusalem Post

January 7, 2009 Wednesday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 13

Length: 729 words

Highlight: Editorial

Body

How do Israelis feel when our artillery strikes a UN- run school building, killing dozens of people? The answer is: deeply shaken, profoundly distressed, sorrowful at the catastrophic loss of life.

But we do not feel guilt. We are angry at **Hamas** for forcing this war on us; for habitually using Gaza's civilians as human shields; and - in this latest outrage - for transforming a center where people had sought refuge into a shooting gallery and weapons depot.

To paraphrase Golda Meir, there may come a time when we will forgive the Arabs for killing our sons, "but it will be harder for us to forgive them for having forced us to kill their sons."

Images of carnage take on a momentum of their own, and it requires a certain amount of savvy to realize that, sometimes, a picture is not worth 1,000 words. Images that jumble people's thinking and distort reality are less than worthless - they're propagandistic.

News consumers rely on journalists to keep them from being duped. But what if the media becomes part of the problem?

Take, for instance, a report by Gaza-based BBC producer Rushdi Abu Alouf from Shifa Hospital. The segment opened as frenzied crowds crying Allahu akbar encircled ambulances bringing war-wounded to Shifa's emergency room. The camera took us inside. This "you-are-there" treatment, patented by Al Jazeera, provides a voyeuristic, nearly pornographic, view from inside emergency rooms, operating theaters and morgues.

The BBC producer interviewed a Norwegian physician, Mads Gilbert, presumably to get the view of an impartial foreigner, a Good Samaritan who had arrived in Gaza days earlier to volunteer his medical skills. Gilbert, clad in green scrubs, stethoscope slung around his neck, expressed outrage that international aid agencies were absent from the hospital. He called what is now happening in Gaza the worst man-made medical disaster he'd ever seen.

The Israelis, prompted the producer, were claiming that most of the killed were gunmen - Gilbert's cue to assert that of the hundreds of patients flooding Shifa, maybe two were "militants." He elucidated: 2,450 had been injured, 45 percent of them **women** and children - and that didn't even include innocent men. Twenty-five percent of the dead were innocents; 801 children were "killed or injured."

Faced with heartrending images of blood-drenched hospital floors, and funeral processions bearing white- shrouded toddlers, who could be bothered to recall that Gaza's Palestinians empowered **Hamas** knowing full well that its raison d'etre is relentless struggle against the existence of a Jewish state? Or that some of **Hamas's** leadership is

Death of innocents

operating out of that very Shifa hospital? Or that **Hamas** hijacks international medical aid intended for the Gazan masses, diverting it to special locations where its gunmen are being treated?

When readers of Britain's Guardian are confronted by a front-page photo of a father collapsed in front of his three dead children, they can be forgiven for losing sight of the bigger picture: that between 2001-2008, over 8,000 flying bombs were launched at Israel, traumatizing an entire generation of Israeli children; and that unless the IDF manages to stop **Hamas**, the months ahead could see life in metropolitan Tel Aviv become as perilous as it is in Sderot.

And when readers of London's Times see the headline: "We're wading in death, blood and amputees. Pass it on - shout it out" they, too, may be forgiven for overlooking the fact that **Hamas** purposely situates its launchers in densely populated areas.

When the Arizona Republic reports: "Israel ignores calls for peace," a photo isn't even necessary.

A WORD about Dr. Mads Gilbert: It turns out he's no neutral medical man, but active in "solidarity work with Palestinians" for 30 years. Responding to 9/11, Gilbert didn't rush to New York's Bellevue Hospital to offer his services. Instead, he defended the moral right of the "oppressed" to have launched that attack.

Too many news outlets have allowed their coverage of Gaza to be agenda-driven, to willfully disregard the duty of presenting news and images in context.

Cynically thrusting pictures of dead toddlers at readers and viewers obfuscates truth, bedevils news consumers, and robotically demonizes those "who could do such a thing."

What a devious way of giving succor to the uncompromising fanatics who are really to blame for the horror of it all.

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

ISRAEL: NO LET-UP; They defy international calls for cease fire in Gaza

The Sun (England)

January 1, 2009 Thursday

Edition 1

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Byline: BRIAN FLYNN

Body

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Rockets

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Israeli ministers said a ground offensive was "still on the table" and approved 2,500 army reservists to join a call-up of 6,500 troops.

British Prime Minister Gordon Brown yesterday said some aid was getting through but called the situation a "humanitarian crisis".

He said it was "vital that moderation must now prevail".

International charities have launched appeals saying food shortages have left thousands of Gaza children battling to stay alive after five days of Israeli air strikes.

ISRAEL : NO LET-UP They defy international calls for cease fire in Gaza

Among yesterday's targets was the office of ex-**Hamas** PM Sheikh Ismail Haniya.

Last night, as more rain fell on Gaza delaying any ground offensive plans, taxi driver Mazen Ahmen called it "a truce imposed by God".

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Graphic

Blasted ... ex-**Hamas** PM office, left, and school deep inside Israel

Load-Date: January 1, 2009

End of Document

885 dead as Gaza fighting rages

Daily News Egypt

January 11, 2009 Sunday

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Length: 771 words

Body

GAZA CITY: Israel claimed on Sunday that an end was in sight to its war on Gaza, amid some of the heaviest clashes of an offensive that has killed nearly 900 people in the Gaza Strip.

Israeli troops pushed deeper into Gaza's main city, sparking some of the fiercest battles yet of the 16-day-old war that Israel claims to have launched in response to rocket fire, but that has failed to completely stop the rockets.

Civilians again fell victim in Israel's offensive in the Palestinian enclave, one of the world's most densely populated places where every other person of the 1.5 million population is under 18 years of age.

Two women and four children were killed in a strike on a house in Beit Lahiya, medics and witnesses said. Twelve bodies were pulled from the rubble in Tal Al-Hawa including 10 fighters, according to medics.

Israeli officials suggested the Jewish state was nearing the end of its offensive, which has killed hundreds of civilians, despite having last week waved off a UN resolution calling for an immediate halt to the fighting.

"The decision of the (UN) security council doesn't give us much leeway," Deputy Defence Minister Matan Vilnai told public radio.

"Thus it would seem that we are close to ending the ground operation and ending the operation altogether."

Earlier Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said the Jewish state was nearing the goals it had set for its operation, but said fighting would continue for now.

"Israel is approaching these goals, but more patience and determination are required," Olmert said at the start of the cabinet meeting.

The premier told ministers that Israel "dealt Hamas an unprecedented blow," government secretary Oved Yehezkel quoted Olmert as saying. "It will never be the same Hamas."

Hamas, however, has vowed to keep fighting and on Sunday some 17 rockets were fired into Israel from Gaza by mid-afternoon, without wounding anyone.

885 dead as Gaza fighting rages

Both Israel and Hamas last week brushed off the UN Security Council resolution that called on both sides to stop fighting, and the early Sunday hours saw Israeli troops push deep into the territory's main population centre.

Troops crept into the southern Tal Al-Hawa neighborhood of Gaza City, encountering roadside bombs, mortar and gunfire from Palestinian fighters, witnesses said.

The troops withdrew at daybreak, but hundreds of panicked residents fled the area, clutching small children and hastily packed bags after a sleepless night.

"We couldn't take anything with us, not even milk for the children," said Ibtisam Shamallah, 22, as she fled with her two children.

Defence Minister Ehud Barak told reporters that Israel was "examining the diplomatic channel" while continuing its offensive.

"There's no contradiction between the two," said Barak, who is due to again send senior aide Amos Gilad to Cairo in the coming days for Egyptian-led talks on ending the war.

Israeli warplanes bombed more than 60 targets throughout Gaza overnight and into morning, hitting arms depots and smuggling tunnels as well as a mosque that was allegedly used to store weapons and train fighters, the army said.

In all, at least 26 Palestinians have been killed in clashes on Sunday, medics said.

With the body count spiraling, the exiled political chief of Hamas, Khaled Meshaal, remained defiant, vowing in an address televised late Saturday that the resistance group would not strike a deal on a permanent truce with Israel.

"We will not accept a permanent truce because ... as long as there is an occupation there is a resistance," he said, adding that his group will not hold talks on a temporary truce until Israel stops its offensive.

Since the Israeli offensive began on Dec. 27, at least 885 people have been killed, including 275 children, and another 3,620 wounded, according to Gaza medics.

Ten Israeli soldiers and three civilians have been killed in combat or in rocket attacks since the operation began, as Palestinian militants have fired more than 600 rockets, some of them penetrating deeper than ever inside Israel.

Egypt has been spearheading Western-backed efforts to end the fighting, calling for an immediate truce, opening Gaza's border crossings, preventing arms smuggling and relaunching Palestinian reconciliation efforts.

A senior Israeli official told AFP that "Olmert believes Israel can reach an understanding with Egypt but at the moment, there is no intention to let up the pressure on Hamas."

In Washington, US president-elect Barack Obama pledged to immediately engage in Middle East peace efforts as soon as he takes office in nine days.

The conflict has sparked worldwide pro-Palestinian demonstrations. €AFP

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Load-Date: January 20, 2009

Mideast Turmoil Hits Close To Home ; Opinions Here And There Vary As War Rages

Intelligencer Journal (Lancaster, Pennsylvania)

January 7, 2009 Wednesday

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Section: A; Pg. 1

Length: 1102 words

Byline: Lori Van Ingen

Dateline: Lancaster, PA

Body

When Dan Jacobson moved from Manheim Township to Tel Aviv to become an Israeli citizen on July 4, he stepped into the middle of a war zone.

Although Israel governed the Gaza Strip from 1967 to 2005, when it was turned over to the Palestinians, it still maintained control of the Strip's airspace, territorial waters and offshore maritime access.

In 2007, **Hamas** took over the government of the 139-square-mile piece of land along the Mediterranean Sea.

Since that time, **Hamas** and other Gazan militant groups have continued to fire rockets from the Strip across the border into Israel.

Israeli reports have said between the **Hamas** takeover of the Gaza Strip and the end of January 2008, 697 rockets and 822 mortar bombs were fired at Israeli towns.

Although a five-month cease-fire was declared, Israel said **Hamas** continued to fire rockets into Israel.

The cease-fire officially ended about two weeks ago, and Israel now has begun renewed attacks on Gaza.

Although Jacobson now lives about 50 miles from Gaza, he visited Sderot, a small town across the border from Gaza, on Sunday.

"I got to experience what it was like to have a rocket shot at you," the 2004 Manheim Township graduate said in a telephone interview Tuesday.

"When a rocket is shot, if it's close enough, you can see the smoke and hear the pop. In Sderot, everywhere is close enough, because it is just 700 meters from the border of Gaza," Jacobson said. "You have 10 to 15 seconds, if you're lucky, to get in a shelter and down and hope it's not near you."

Jacobson said when a rocket is launched, a siren blares and the recorded voice of a woman saying "tdeva adom," or code red, is played until the rocket hits. "It's really not pleasant."

Mideast Turmoil Hits Close To Home & Opinions Here And There Vary As War Rages

The experience is not so bad during the day and evening when you are awake, but when you're asleep, Jacobson said it is "absolutely terrifying" trying to get to a safe room - every apartment in Israel has one - in 10 seconds.

When the first rocket hit on Sunday, it was just 100 to 150 meters from Jacobson. "It reminded me of our vulnerability," he said. But when another rocket hit even closer, Jacobson didn't hear it because he was in shock.

"This has been going on every day for eight years, and one day was too much for me," he said. "When a rocket is shot at you and an Israeli jet strikes back, you don't care what happens, just get the job done. It feels good to hear someone defend you. That has not been done for eight years."

But even though the Israeli army is fighting back, "I see no solution in sight. I have a very pessimistic view," Jacobson said. "Peace is a joke in this situation. There is no possibility of it in the near future."

Jacobson said he's not unsympathetic to the civilian casualties in Gaza, but "Hamas has - as has been clearly reported - used human shields, waiting outside of schools."

Because this is the most densely populated area on Earth, he said, "it's impossible not to hit civilians. But there's not a lot of choice. It's a war. There's no other word for it."

In August, Jacobson will be fighting in this war, he said. He will be drafted into the Israeli army for six months and then plans to volunteer for two to three years more, the standard time of service.

"I'm very much looking forward to serving," Jacobson said. He recently graduated from Clark University in Massachusetts with a degree in international relations. "I'm more afraid of a career in an office than as a soldier," he said. He currently is a research intern at the International Institute for CounterTerrorism, a think tank based in Herzliya.

Palestinian native Ismaeil Hussein said he "feels bad about (the war). Innocent life is dying, innocent civilians are being killed. ... I wish they were able to live together, side by side." Hussein lived most of his life in Kuwait before moving to Lancaster 19 years ago. His wife, Fatima, has family living in the West Bank.

Omar Saif said, "It is very sad to see that happen. For kids, women, old people dying (in Gaza). There is no medicine or food and have been surrounded by a siege for years."

Although Saif was born in the Palestinian territories, he lived for many years in Kuwait before becoming a Manheim Township resident more than 30 years ago.

The problem started, Saif said, when Hamas was chosen as a political entity to replace the Palestinian Liberation Organization and create a democratic government.

"Hamas was a nonpolitical party, helping people find missing wives and husbands," Saif said. "It was chosen because it cared for people."

But the corruption in the Palestinian territories didn't just end with the PLO, he said.

"A Muslim organization leading it is a threat to Israel and surrounding states - Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia," Saif said. "Israel doesn't want that. That's why they're starving there. What's good for them is not good for others. It's a damned if you do, damned if you don't situation."

In Gaza, Saif said, there's no food, no water, no medicine. You can't get out of Gaza and if you do leave, you can't go back, he said.

With 1.5 million people there starving, "they have to do something. Make a noise to say 'Please help us,'" Saif said.

"Hopefully, God will be with both nations - Israel and Palestine," he said. "They need to put (the fighting) behind them and find a way to resolve the issue. If they really wanted to do it, they would. God will find a way somehow."

Mideast Turmoil Hits Close To Home & Opinions Here And There Vary As War Rages

Rabbi Stephan Parnes of Lancaster's Temple Beth El said his feeling is "the State of Israel has been under attack by rockets for far too long, too many years. They needed to take action to protect themselves.

"If the United States had received a fraction (of the missiles) from across the border in Mexico or Canada, the U.S. would not have hesitated to have gone in. ... Any self-respecting nation would have.

"Israel alone has been pressured by far too many groups for far too long to stand down and not retaliate on behalf of itself. It is no longer possible for Israel to do that."

Rabbi Jack Paskoff of Congregation Shaarai Shomayim said, "I'm sorry it's come to this. I fully support Israel's action in taking steps necessary to defend itself.

"**Hamas** made it clear even before the cease-fire was officially over that it would not renew it by firing missiles and talking about the destruction of Israel," Paskoff said. "A country can't tolerate that; it has to protect its citizens."

Paskoff said the collateral damage the renewed attacks has created is "sad, but Israel's not targeting civilian areas, which **Hamas** has been doing. My prayer is for a quick end for this for both sides and to bring about a lasting peace in the area."

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Load-Date: January 7, 2009

New Gaza truce plan offered

The Salt Lake Tribune

January 6, 2009 Tuesday

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Section: NEWS; National; World

Length: 1250 words

Byline: By Ibrahim Barzak And Jason Keyser The Associated Press

Body

Gaza City, Gaza » France and Egypt announced an initiative to stop the fighting in Gaza late Tuesday, hours after Israeli mortar shells exploded near a U.N. school sheltering hundreds of people displaced by the onslaught on **Hamas** militants. At least 30 Palestinians died, staining streets with blood.

The Egyptian and French presidents didn't release details of their proposal, saying only that it involved an immediate cease-fire to permit humanitarian aid into Gaza and talks to settle the differences between Israel and the Islamic militants of **Hamas** who rule the small coastal territory.

They said they were awaiting a response from Israel. Israeli officials in Jerusalem declined immediate comment on the announcement, which came amid diplomatic efforts by the U.S. and other nations to resolve a conflict that has seen 600 people killed in 11 days.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice welcomed the initiative, but cautioned that no agreement would succeed unless it halted **Hamas** rocket attacks on Israel and arms smuggling into Gaza.

Earlier in the day, President-elect Barack Obama broke his silence on the crisis, saying that "the loss of civilian life in Gaza and in Israel is a source of deep concern for me." He declined to go further, reiterating his stance that the U.S. has only one president at a time.

Israel's military said its shelling at the school -- the deadliest single episode since Israeli ground forces invaded Gaza on Saturday after a week of air bombardment -- was a response to mortar fire from within the school and said **Hamas** militants were using civilians as cover.

Two residents of the area who spoke with The Associated Press by telephone said they saw a small group of militants firing mortar rounds from a street near the school, where 350 people had gathered to get away from the shelling. They spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisal.

Majed Hamdan, an AP photographer, rushed to the scene shortly after the attacks. At the hospital, he said, many children were among the dead.

"I saw **women** and men -- parents -- slapping their faces in grief, screaming, some of them collapsed to the floor. They knew their children were dead," he said. "In the morgue, most of the killed appeared to be children. In the hospital, there wasn't enough space for the wounded."

He said there appeared to be marks on the pavement of five separate explosions in area of the school.

New Gaza truce plan offered

An Israeli defense official,said it appeared the military used 120-mm shells.

U.N. officials demanded an investigation of the shelling. The carnage, which included 55 wounded, added to a surging civilian toll and drew mounting international pressure for Israel to end the offensive against Hamas.

At a news conference in Sharm-el-Sheik, Egypt, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak said the truce proposal offered by him and French President Sarkozy envisioned an immediate end to combat, so humanitarian supplies can safely enter Gaza.

Mubarak said the plan also calls for an urgent meeting between Israel and the Palestinians to discuss ways to resolve the conflict and provide necessary guarantees to ensure fighting doesn't erupt again.

There was no indication of the plan's chances. Sarkozy said at the news conference that he saw it as a "small hope" for ending the Gaza violence.

Sarkozy said he had spoken to Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert to inform him of the initiaitive and was awaiting a response.

In Jerusalem, Olmert's spokesman, Mark Regev, told AP: "We are holding off comments on that for the time being."

At U.N. headquarters, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas welcomed the proposal. "I express my support for the plan set in motion today by President Mubarak and President Sarkozy," said Abbas, who was in New York for a Security Council meeting on the Gaza crisis.

Israeli officials have said any cease-fire agreement must prevent further rocket attacks by Gaza militants and put in place measures to prevent the smuggling of missile and other weapons into the small Palestinian territory.

Rice told the Security Council meeting that the U.S. understood the growing desire for a cease-fire. "In this regard, we are pleased by, and wish to commend, the statement of the president of Egypt and to follow up on that initiative," she said.

But Rice added that any solution must address Israel's security.

"There must be a solution this time that does not allow Hamas to use Gaza as a launching pad against Israeli cities. It has to be a solution that does not allow the rearmament of Hamas, and it must be a solution that finds a way to open (border) crossings so that Palestinians in Gaza can have a normal life," she said.

In the wake of the criticism over civilian casualties, Israel agreed to set up a "humanitarian corridor" to ship vital supplies into the Gaza Strip, an idea that had been raised by the U.N. Security Council. Under the plan, Israel would suspend attacks in certain areas to allow people to get supplies.

At U.N. headquarters, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called the Israeli bombardment of U.N. facilities in Gaza "totally unacceptable." Israel's shells have fallen around three schools, including the girls school hit Tuesday, and a health center for Palestinian refugees.

Ban added that it was "equally unacceptable" for militants to take actions that endanger Palestinian civilians, referring to the practice of militants making attacks from residential areas.

Some 15,000 Palestinians have packed the U.N.'s 23 Gaza schools because their homes were destroyed or to flee the violence. The U.N. provided the Israeli military with GPS coordinates for all of them.

New Gaza truce plan offered

The three mortar shells that crashed down on the perimeter of the U.N. school struck at midafternoon, when many people in the densely populated camp were outside getting some fresh air, thinking an area around a school was safe.

Images recorded by a cameraman from AP Television News showed crowds fleeing the scene, pavements smeared with blood and battered bodies being carried off by medics and bystanders. A youth who limped away was helped along by several others. Sandals lay scattered on the pavement by a pock-marked wall.

"There's nowhere safe in Gaza. Everyone here is terrorized and traumatized," said John Ging, head of Gaza operations for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency.

An Israeli military statement said it received intelligence that the dead at the girls school included **Hamas** operatives, among them members of a rocket-launching squad. It identified two of them as Imad Abu Askar and Hassan Abu Askar.

Two residents who spoke to an AP reporter by phone said the two brothers were known to be low-level **Hamas** militants. They said a group of militants -- one of them said four -- were firing mortar shells from near the school.

An Israeli shell targeted the men, but missed and they fled, the witnesses said. Then another three shells landed nearby, exploding among civilians, they said, refusing to allow their names to be published because they feared for their safety.

A total of 71 Palestinians were killed Tuesday -- with just two confirmed as militants, Gaza health officials said.

An Israeli infant was wounded by one of about two dozen rockets fired into southern Israel by Gaza militants.

Eleven Israelis have been killed since the offensive began: three civilians and a soldier by rocket fire and seven soldiers in the ground offensive, according to Israeli officials.

Associated Press writers Ibrahim Barzak reported this story from Gaza City and Jason Keyser from Jerusalem.

Load-Date: January 9, 2009

UN halts Gaza aid shipments, cites Israeli attacks

The New Zealand Herald

January 9, 2009 Friday

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Section: NEWS; World

Length: 1288 words

Body

JERUSALEM - The UN halted deliveries to the Gaza Strip on Thursday after gunfire from an Israeli tank killed an aid truck driver, and the international Red Cross said it would restrict activities after one of its drivers was injured in a similar incident.

The threat of a wider conflict arose when militants in Lebanon fired two rockets into northern Israel. One rocket crashed into a retirement home, but there were no serious injuries. Israel responded with mortar shells.

During a three-hour pause in the fighting to allow in food and fuel and let medics collect the dead, nearly three dozen bodies were found beneath the rubble of bombed out buildings in Gaza City.

Many of the dead were in the same neighborhood where the international Red Cross said rescue workers discovered young children too weak to stand who had stayed by their dead mothers.

Relations between Israel and humanitarian organizations have grown increasingly tense as civilian casualties have mounted.

The United Nations demanded an investigation after Israel earlier this week fired shells at a target next to a UN school filled with Gazans seeking refuge from fighting that has left nearly 750 Palestinians dead, according to Palestinian hospital officials and human rights workers. Israel said militants had launched an attack from the area, and then ran into a crowd of civilians for cover. Nearly 40 Palestinians died.

"We've been coordinating with them (Israeli forces) and yet our staff continue to be hit and killed," said a UN spokesman, Chris Gunness, announcing the suspension. The UN is the largest aid provider in Gaza.

Israeli police, meanwhile, said militants in the Gaza Strip fired 24 rockets into Israel on Thursday, injuring four people, one of them seriously. Militants fired larger numbers of rockets in the early days of the conflict.

The Israeli military said one soldier attached to a tank battalion was killed by gunfire in the Gaza Strip on Thursday.

Twelve Israelis, including nine soldiers, have died since the Dec. 27 beginning of the offensive against the **Hamas** militants in charge of Gaza, meant to halt years of Palestinian rocket attacks on southern Israel. But with roughly half the Palestinian dead believed to be civilians, international efforts to broker a cease-fire have been gaining steam.

Israeli envoys traveled to Egypt on Thursday to discuss the proposal being brokered by France and Egypt and now backed by the U.S.

UN halts Gaza aid shipments, cites Israeli attacks

French President Nicolas Sarkozy said any time lost will play into the hands of those who want war.

"The weapons must go quiet, the escalation must stop, Israel must obtain security guarantees and leave Gaza," he said in Paris.

The UN provides food aid to around 750,000 Gaza residents - about half of Gaza's population - and runs dozens of schools and clinics throughout the territory. They have some 9,000 locally employed staffers inside Gaza, and a small team of international staffers who work there.

Elena Mancusi Materi, UNRWA's spokeswoman in Geneva, said the suspension concerned all truck movement in Gaza.

"If someone comes to one of our food distribution centers, we will give that person food," she said. "If people come to our clinics with injuries, we will treat them."

For a second straight day, Israel suspended its Gaza military operation for three hours to allow in humanitarian supplies. Shortly before the pause took effect, however, the UN said one of its aid trucks came under fire from a gunner on an Israeli tank, killing the driver.

UN spokesman Adnan Abu Hasna said the UN coordinated the delivery with Israel, and the vehicle was marked with a UN flag and insignia when it was shot in northern Gaza. The Israeli army said it was investigating.

In Geneva, the international Red Cross said it would restrict its aid operations to Gaza City for at least one day after one of its convoys came under Israeli fire at the Netzarim crossing during the three-hour lull in fighting Thursday. One driver was lightly injured.

Dr. Moaiya Hassanain of the Palestinian Health Ministry said 35 bodies were discovered Thursday during the three-hour pause in fighting in several areas around Gaza City that have seen fierce fighting between Israeli troops and Hamas militants.

He said it was unclear how many militants were killed because the remains were in poor condition, but that women and children were among the dead. Hassanain said 746 Palestinians have died in Israel's 13-day offensive.

Many of the dead found Thursday were in Gaza City's Zeitoun neighborhood, where the international Red Cross said it found four small children alive next to their mothers' bodies in the rubble of a home hit by Israeli shelling. The neutral aid group says a total of 15 dead were recovered from two houses in the Zeitoun neighborhood of Gaza City on Wednesday.

A Red Cross spokesman says rescuers had been refused permission by Israeli forces to reach the site for four days. It said the delay in allowing rescue services access was "unacceptable."

The Red Cross statement was a rare public criticism from the aid group, which normally conducts confidential negotiations with warring parties.

The Israeli military said in a statement that Hamas militants used Palestinian civilians as human shields, and that Israeli forces work closely with international aid groups to help civilians during the fighting in Gaza.

In other Gaza violence, Israel killed at least 12 people, including the UN driver and three people who were fleeing their homes, according to Palestinian medical officials.

The rockets from Lebanon raised the specter of renewed hostilities on Israel's northern frontier, just 2½ years after Israel battled the Hezbollah guerrilla group to a 34-day stalemate. War broke out between Hezbollah and Israel in 2006 as Israel battled Palestinian militants in Gaza, on Israel's southern borders.

UN halts Gaza aid shipments, cites Israeli attacks

No group claimed responsibility. Lebanon's government condemned the attack, and Hezbollah - which now plays an integral role in Lebanon's government - denied any responsibility for the rocket fire, which lightly injured two Israelis at a retirement home.

"The rocket entered through the roof, hurling the water heaters into the air. It went through bedrooms upstairs and then into the kitchen," said Henry Carmelli, the home's manager.

Israel has repeatedly said it was prepared for a possible attack on the north since it launched its bruising campaign against Hamas militants in Gaza, to the south. Israel has mobilized thousands of reserve troops for such a scenario, and leaders have warned Hezbollah of dire consequences if it enters the fighting.

"We are prepared and will respond as necessary," Defence Minister Ehud Barak told reporters.

The Israeli offensive has reduced Palestinian rocket fire, but not stopped it altogether. Several barrages were reported Thursday, including one strike that damaged a school and sports center in the southern city of Ashkelon, police said. Both buildings were empty.

For Israel to accept a proposed cease-fire deal, "there has to be a total and complete cessation of all hostile fire from Gaza into Israel, and ... we have to see an arms embargo on Hamas that will receive international support," said government spokesman Mark Regev.

For its part, Hamas said it would not accept a truce deal unless it includes an end to the Israeli blockade of Gaza - something Israel says it is not willing to do. Israel and Egypt have maintained a stiff economic embargo on Gaza since the Hamas takeover.

The Palestinian Authority controls the West Bank while Hamas rules Gaza - two territories on opposite sides of Israel that are supposed to make up a future Palestinian state. Hamas took control of Gaza from forces loyal to Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas in June 2007.

- AP

Load-Date: January 9, 2009

Hundreds killed and hospitals overrun as Israeli warplanes launch attack on Gaza Strip

Scotland on Sunday

December 28, 2008, Sunday

1 Edition

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Section: Pg. 2

Length: 1154 words

Byline: Fiona Gray

Body

THE first strike came without warning, just before noon, as children were walking home from school for lunch and their mothers were waiting on the doorsteps.

Inside the police headquarters of Gaza City, new recruits in black uniforms with red berets were standing in ranks in the sunny courtyard of the security compound, receiving medals at a graduation ceremony.

Minutes later, 15 of them were lying dead on the ground as pools of blood streamed into the dust. Nearby, their surviving colleagues shrieked in terror as more waves of Israeli rockets hit their targets. It was the beginning of an onslaught.

Yesterday's bombing of Gaza City and the towns along the Israeli border was unprecedented in its severity, as Israel's warplanes and helicopters dropped an estimated 100 tonnes of bombs on the densely populated area in a few hours.

The Israeli attack obliterated more than 30 of Gaza's security compounds across the city and surrounding towns, killing almost 200 and injuring hundreds more.

Israeli officials insisted the attacks, which continued throughout the afternoon, targeted "terrorist infrastructure" following days of rocket attacks from Gaza on southern Israel that caused some damage but few injuries.

But the compounds, headquarters for the **Hamas** police force, were almost all buried deep in residential areas, many with schools close by. Some of the Israeli missiles struck as children were leaving school, and **women** rushed into the streets looking frantically for their children.

At the main police headquarters, which was hit at noon by Israeli rockets, rescue workers beat their heads and shouted "God is greatest."

A badly wounded man lying nearby quietly recited verses from the Koran. **Hamas** called the assault a "massacre". Another survivor could only raise his index finger in a show of Muslim faith, uttering a prayer.

Hamas estimated at least 140 members of its security forces had been killed, including Gaza police chief Tawfiq Jabber and the head of **Hamas**'s security and protection unit.

Hundreds killed and hospitals overrun as Israeli warplanes launch attack on Gaza Strip

But in one of the bloodiest days of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the death toll was almost doubled by civilian casualties as bodies piled up outside the hospitals and children disappeared in the chaos and rubble of the attacks.

Shopkeeper Said Masri sat in the middle of a destroyed 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. He said he sent his nine-year-old son out to buy cigarettes minutes before the air strikes began and now could not find him.

Ayman Mohyeldin, Al Jazeera's correspondent in Gaza, was in the middle of several attacks. He said: "A series of explosions were heard over Gaza City. From where we were, there were at least seven different clouds of smoke from the strikes. We were seeing some casualties being evacuated in cars."

A missile hit the town of Netivot, about a mile west of Gaza City, killing an Israeli man and wounding four people. Dozens of stunned residents gathered around the house that took the deadly rocket hit. Many wept openly. The crowd broke up after an alert siren went off and sent the onlookers running.

On a construction site in Jabaliya, north of Gaza City, Tamer Kahruf, 24, said he saw his two brothers and uncle killed when the Israeli planes bombed a security post nearby. Kharouf, wounded and bleeding from the head, had been working on the site when the bomb hit.

Closer to the Israeli border, in the town of Sderot, which was pummelled hardest by the rockets, the streets were nearly empty.

A few cars carried panicked residents out of the city, and dozens congregated on a hilltop to watch the Israeli aerial attacks as columns of thick black smoke rose from the nearby towns and sirens rang out.

At a hospital in Rafah, a large town on the border of Israel and Gaza, friends and relatives dragged their loved ones into wards and demanded treatment for them.

Men, women and children, blood pouring from their wounds, lined up outside the hospital, waiting for the attention of a doctor.

Hospitals in Gaza City also struggled to cope with the large numbers of injured, piling three children on a single bed while a constant stream of wounded arrived in cars and vans.

Inside Shifa Hospital, Gaza's main treatment centre, relatives carried a five-month old baby who had suffered a serious shrapnel wound to the head. Overwhelmed hospital staff seemed unable to offer help.

One doctor said: "We are treating people on the floor, in the corridors. We have no more space. We don't know who is here or who to treat first."

Outside the front of the hospital, scores of dead bodies were laid out waiting for family members to identify them. For many it would be a horrible, even impossible, task: many corpses were dismembered and some were headless.

Health officials appealed for outside help. "We lack everything, medical equipment, anaesthesia, bandages, fuel for ambulance vehicles, medicine, everything," cried Muawiyah Hassanein, head of Gaza's Ambulance and Emergency department.

"What happened was unexpected and our hospitals were neither ready nor prepared to receive such huge numbers of casualties."

But Israeli warplanes kept up attacks on targets in Gaza after darkness fell, striking at a metal foundry and other sites in the south of the coastal strip.

Hundreds killed and hospitals overrun as Israeli warplanes launch attack on Gaza Strip

Women braved the streets as evening fell, wailing as they searched for their relatives among the dead. Sawsan Al-Ajab, 50, made her way to the main police station in Gaza City looking for two sons, aged 32 and 24, who both worked there.

Umm Mohammed went back to the office she had been working in. "It is a war. Look at the smoke, look at the bodies and the body parts, it is like Afghanistan or Iraq," she said as she looked over one flattened **Hamas** office.

In the wake of the worst offensive Israel has ever delivered on Gaza, **Hamas** quickly vowed revenge, ordering "all fighters to respond to the Israeli slaughter".

It did not say what form this action would take but one fighter, maddened by the sight of the mangled bodies of his comrades, said suicide bombers would blow themselves up in Israeli restaurants, cafés and streets.

Yesterday, **Hamas** said all its security installations were hit, and fired at least 50 medium-range Grad missiles at Israel in response, reaching deeper into its territory than in the past.

One Israeli was killed and at least six people were wounded in the rocket attacks yesterday, a count that is likely to increase over the next week.

Hamas leaders released a statement about future retaliation, saying: "All options are open to the Palestinian resistance to strike the Zionist enemy. One leader will be replaced by a hundred leaders."

Defiant **Hamas** leaders said they "will continue the resistance until the last drop of blood", while Israel told its civilians near Gaza to take cover as militants began retaliating with rockets.

Load-Date: December 29, 2008

BLOODIEST YET; 296 dead, 700 wounded as Israel rains 100 tons of bombs on Gaza militants behind 300 rocket attacks

The Sun (England)

December 29, 2008 Monday

Edition 1

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Section: Pg. 13

Length: 443 words

Byline: NICK PARKER

Body

ISRAEL stepped up its bloodiest ever attacks on Islamist strongholds in Gaza yesterday as the Palestinian death toll hit 296.

F16 warplanes and Apache choppers rained more than 100 tons of bombs and rockets on militants in one day.

Most of the dead and 700 wounded were Hamas fanatics behind 300 rocket attacks on Israel in the past week.

But the toll of civilian dead - including women and children - was rising last night as frantic UN efforts to broker a ceasefire stalled. Jets blasted targets such as Gaza police HQ on Saturday and the blitz carried on yesterday.

Hamas fired a revenge salvo of 110 rockets on Saturday.

One civilian died.

Israel vowed to keep bombing until Iranian-backed Hamas ends its offensive.

Mutilated Fears mounted of a bloody Israeli ground attack as 6,500 reservists were called up.

Israel's assault, weeks before elections, came amid public clamour for action after rockets hit Jewish settlements.

Its hi-tech war machine zeroed in on key security installations.

But the timing - as schools broke for lunch - meant many children and women died.

Morgues overflowed yesterday, leaving piles of mutilated bodies on the street.

Wailing relatives searched the heaps for loved ones while rescuers clawed smoking rubble for survivors.

BLOODIEST YET 296 dead, 700 wounded as Israel rains 100 tons of bombs on Gaza militants behind 300 rocket attacks

Israel was braced for a wave of suicide bombings last night. A **Hamas** spokesman told Palestinian groups to use "all available means, including martyrdom".

The air assault began eight days after a six-month ceasefire expired.

The Israelis say militants have fired 3,000 rockets into

Israel during the supposed truce.

Nine Israelis have been killed by rockets since Israel withdrew from Gaza in August 2005. In the same period, 1,500 Gaza Palestinians have been killed.

Saturday was Gaza's deadliest day since Israel occupied the territory in 1967.

Deserted Israel hammered targets in all its main towns, including Gaza City in the north and Khan Younis in the south.

The streets were deserted yesterday amid fears of a humanitarian crisis.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, Middle East envoy Tony Blair and the Foreign

Office called for a ceasefire.

Foreign Secretary David Miliband called for an "immediate halt to all violence".

But Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak said: "The time has come to fight." Meanwhile, angry protesters clashed with riot police outside the Israeli embassy in London yesterday.

The cops were called in as flag-waving families and campaign supporters tore down barriers as they protested against the bombings in Gaza.

The 500-strong crowd in Kensington chanted: "Five, six, seven, eight, Israel is a terror state." n.parker@the-sun.co.uk Get the latest on the attacks at the scottishsun.co.uk/news

Load-Date: December 29, 2008

'We're wading in death, blood and amputees. Pass it on - shout it out'; A doctor's desperate text message to friends reveals the plight of Palestinian civilians caught in the crossfire, write Azmi Keshawi and James Hider

The Times (London)

January 6, 2009 Tuesday

Edition 2, National Edition

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THE TIMES

Section: NEWS; Pg. 32,33

Length: 922 words

Byline: Azmi Keshawi; James Hider

Body

Amid the tidal wave of human misery swamping Gaza City's central hospital a horrified Norwegian volunteer doctor found a minute to type a text message on his mobile phone to friends back home.

;"We are wading in death, blood, and amputees. Many children. A pregnant woman. I have never experienced anything so terrible. Now we hear tanks.

;Pass it on, send it around, shout it out.

;Anything. DO SOMETHING! DO MORE! We are living in a history book now, all of us." It was signed Mads Gilbert, one of two Norwegian doctors toiling relentlessly alongside exhausted Palestinian medics.

;So far, despite a flurry of diplomatic activity, no one has done anything. As Israel and **Hamas** fought a bloody battle to the death on Gaza's tightly packed streets and alleys, there was no slowing of the flow of broken bodies in al-Shifa hospital. To make matters worse, the United Nations said that Gaza was about to run out of food, water and basic medicines in a matter of days.

;Israel has said that it is making surgical strikes to cut **Hamas** out of the Gaza society. It is a brutal surgery, though, with blunt instruments and without anaesthetic. Entire families vanish beneath the rubble of broken homes. With **Hamas**'s die-hard fighters taking cover among a terrified civilian population, there is nowhere to run.

;Bassim Naim, the **Hamas** Health Minister, ordered **Hamas** fighters yesterday not to use ambulances to move around after his nephew, Arafat Abed el-Daim, a paramedic, was killed when an Israeli tank shell hit his ambulance. As mourners gathered at a traditional tent to pay their respects to the young man's family, another Israeli shell struck the area, killing three people and wounding 40, medics said.

;"We were sitting in the mourning tent when suddenly they bombed us.

'We're wading in death, blood and amputees. Pass it on - shout it out' A doctor's desperate text message to friends reveals the plight of Palestinian civilians

;We ran to rush the casualties to hospital but they bombed again," Jabr al-Daim, an uncle, said.

;In the al-Shifa mortuary - which is quickly becoming as overpopulated as the tiny territory that it serves - the father of the Samoudi family wept, speechless, over the corpses of his three children, the youngest a baby, the eldest just a few years old.

;"They are still digging his wife and his other kids out of the rubble," a medic said. The family was obliterated in Zaytoun, where fighting has been particularly heavy.

;Saber Abu Aisha, whose brother was killed with his two wives and four children when an F16 rocket struck the basement directly beneath his apartment, vented his anger in the mortuary, where grieving relatives kissed their loved ones goodbye on the floors and in freezers. "The Israelis claim they are not killing civilians but that is all they are killing. They are barbarians, and the whole world should do something," he said.

;"We are a family, we have nothing to do with the resistance or this fighting," his brother, Amr, said. "It is random killing to break the will of the Palestinian people." But the killing went on, as Israeli bombers blew up the houses of Hamas military leaders, often destroying nearby buildings.

;Later in the day ambulance drivers brought in the body of a pregnant mother and her four children, killed in the Shurjaiyah area. Palestinian medics say that since Israel launched its ground offensive on Saturday night, 28 children and 13 women have been killed. More than 100 children have died since Israel began Operation Cast Lead ten days ago. One bereaved father who had lost 13 relatives in an explosion east of Gaza City pleaded with his dead son to answer him. "Get up, boy, get up. Please get up. I am your dad and I need you." Thousands of Gazans have fled their homes to escape the immediate onslaught of the Israeli tanks battling Hamas fighters who refuse to halt the rocket fire that has provoked this campaign. The UN refugee agency has quickly converted its schools into shelters but thousands more are leaving their homes to be nearer to the shops that are still open or to the ever-decreasing number of areas that have a few hours of electricity a day..

;Travelling across town is a potentially lethal undertaking.

;The refugee agency has all but run out of wheat to supply Gaza's bakeries, while the World Food Programme has stocks but cannot reach the warehouses because of the shelling. People wait in queues for hours to buy a loaf of bread. "I've been here for three hours and I will have to wait longer.

;Maybe a missile will bomb us so we can be rid of such a miserable life," said Abu Othman, a father of seven, as he queued for bread. He said that his anger at Hamas's rocket fire had been supplanted by a new rage. "I used to criticise the rockets. Maybe I still do but not like before. Now I want to see buses blown up in Israel," he said.

;Israel and its banks have cut off supplies of cash to Gaza, meaning that people increasingly have no money to buy the meagre supplies available.

;Maxwell Gaylard, the UN humanitarian co-ordinator, said that a quarter of a million people were without running water. "There is an overall atmosphere of fear," he said..

;Paying the price

530,000 people have no access to running water. There are severe shortages of food, fuel and cooking gas and 75 per cent of Gaza's electricity has been cut off 270,000 Gazans regularly receive sponsored food handouts. The fighting has cut UN Food Programme distributions to a small fraction of this \$ 9m UN World Food Programme says it urgently requires this amount to meet additional food needs in Gaza caused by the upsurge in fighting

'We have nothing to do with the resistance. This is random killing'

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Graphic

The United Nations has set up shelters in school buildings, but many Gazans have chosen instead to move nearer to shops as the supply of bread falls. Any travel is potentially lethal

GETTY IMAGES

Load-Date: July 30, 2009

End of Document

300 die in Israeli attacks on Gaza; Deadly days

The Daily Gleaner (New Brunswick)

December 29, 2008 Monday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A5

Length: 621 words

Byline: IBRAHIM BARZAK and AMY TEIBEL The Associated Press

Body

Bombing campaigns target **Hamas**, but civilians killed too

Warplanes pressing one of the Israel's deadliest assaults ever against Palestinian militants widened their sights Sunday, dropping bombs on smuggling tunnels that are a major weapons pipeline for the Gaza Strip's Islamic **Hamas** rulers.

Israel's cabinet authorized the military to call up 6,500 reserve soldiers for a possible ground invasion and moved tanks, infantry and armoured units to the Gaza border. Since it began Saturday, Israel's offensive against Gaza rocket squads has been carried out exclusively from the air.

Crowds of Gazans, backed by a bulldozer, breached the border wall with Egypt and poured across the frontier to escape the chaos. Egyptian security officials said a border officer was killed in clashes with Palestinian gunmen.

Syria, reflecting the rage in the Arab world over Israel's aerial onslaught, broke off indirect peace talks with the Jewish state.

The air strikes, which initially targeted **Hamas** security compounds, killed about 300 Palestinians and wounded hundreds more in its first 24 hours, said Gaza health official Dr. Moaiya Hassanain.

A Palestinian human rights group said among the dead it counted, 20 were children under 16 and nine were **women**.

The Palestinian Center for Human Rights said it was difficult to keep an exact count because of chaos at the hospitals, and difficulty in identifying dismembered bodies.

The civilian casualties included a 15-year-old boy who died in southern Gaza on Sunday in an attack on a greenhouse near the border. At least 644 people were wounded, Hassanain said.

Battered militants managed to launch more than 20 rockets and mortars at Israeli border communities. The number of attacks was down sharply from a day earlier, indicating the Israeli air strikes took a stiff toll. Israel's head of military intelligence told Israel's cabinet on Sunday that the group's ability to fire rockets had been reduced by 50 per cent.

300 die in Israeli attacks on Gaza; Deadly days

Still, two rockets struck close to Israel's largest southern city, Ashdod, reaching deeper into Israel than ever before, and confirming Israel's concern that militants are now able to put major cities within rocket range. No serious injuries were reported. The rockets landed some 38 kilometres from Gaza, doubling the militants' previous range.

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.

The carnage has inflamed Arab public opinion, and the diplomatic fallout came swiftly.

A Syrian official said Damascus would suspend indirect peace talks with Israel, begun earlier this year, over the Gaza attacks. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he wasn't authorized to speak to the media, says "Israel's aggression closes all the doors" to any move toward a settlement in the region. Israel and Syria held four rounds of negotiations in Turkey.

Condemnations and protests against the Israeli offensive swept the Arab world for a second straight day, occasionally turning violent. A suicide bomber on a bicycle blew himself up in the midst of a large demonstration in northern Iraq. Israeli troops fired on a violent protest in the West Bank, killing a Palestinian man.

Hamas' fiercest rival, the western-backed Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, urged the Islamic militant group to renew a truce with Israel that collapsed last week. However, Abbas has had no influence in Gaza since **Hamas** seized control there by force in June 2007.

The Israeli army says Palestinian militants have fired more than 300 rockets and mortars at Israeli targets over the past week and 10 times that number over the past year.

Load-Date: December 29, 2008

End of Document

**War-torn refugees rush to; Sympathy for displaced Palestinians does not
translate into a welcome with open arms**

The West Australian (Perth)

January 7, 2009 Wednesday

Third Edition

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Section: MAI; Pg. 10

Length: 620 words

Byline: RAFAH

Dateline: RAFAH

Body

The wounded come, speckled with shrapnel, blistered by flame. The man in the sunglasses and untucked shirt puts them into ambulances bound for hospitals in northern Egypt. It's been like this for days, bandaged Palestinians trickling out of the Gaza Strip.

This is a harsh land where the desert meets the sea and farming is a trick against nature and the elements. It is not easy terrain, not one for coddling, and perhaps that is why the Egyptian in the shades, Emad Eddin Kharboush, believes his country should permit only wounded Palestinians to cross its borders. Otherwise, Israel will win in Gaza.

"We shouldn't accept refugees. The Palestinians have to defend themselves or die," Dr Kharboush, head of a network of 130 ambulances in the northern Sinai peninsula, said. "If we allow the Israelis to take Gaza, the problem remains."

Smoke from the Israeli offensive against the militant group **Hamas** curls above the Egyptian border. As Israeli planes and tanks continue to pound **Hamas** targets in Gaza, Egyptians in Cairo, 320km to the south-west, have been protesting against a decision by President Hosni Mubarak's Government to keep most Gaza residents out.

The gate at Rafah remains closed except to the injured who are ferried through in ambulances.

Dr Kharboush's support of his President's policy speaks to the conundrum faced by Arab nations that have populations mainly sympathetic to the Palestinians but either are powerless to stop the Israelis or choose for political reasons not to aid Gaza's extremist leadership.

"We can't send the Egyptian army to fight for the Palestinians," Dr Kharboush said. "We are doing all we can. Egypt is being unfairly blamed. You can't expect me to fight for you, a Palestinian. I have no reason to go to war with Israel."

The fate of the Palestinians is a history in which Arab kinship is often trumped by national interests.

War-torn refugees rush to Sympathy for displaced Palestinians does not translate into a welcome with open arms

No country understands this more acutely than Egypt. It fought several wars with Israel before signing an unpopular 1979 peace treaty with its longstanding enemy and emerging as a key power in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Cairo brokered the six-month ceasefire between Hamas and Israel that the Palestinian group let expire.

Mr Mubarak's Government is a US ally that opposes Hamas' Islamic radicalism. But geographically and psychologically, Egypt cannot escape the turmoil in the Palestinian enclave.

One year ago this month, more than 250,000 Palestinians fled Israel's blockade of Gaza by blowing holes through the Rafah fence and pouring into the Sinai. Many Egyptians greeted them warmly, but within days the Gazans, who spent millions of dollars stocking up on supplies, had worn out their welcome.

Bedouin tribal leaders accused their guests of eyeing their women and stealing from their markets. The Egyptian military forced the Palestinians back into Gaza and reinforced the border's walls and gates.

There is also the realisation that Egypt, where more than 40 per cent of the population live on less than \$2 a day, cannot absorb more despair.

"Egypt has done a lot for the Palestinians, but the Palestinians forget about all this in a minute," Mohammed Ayed said, standing in a small grocery shop in Rafah.

His friend, Mosleh Sweilan, struggled to figure out the boundaries between compassion and pragmatism.

"Egypt should not allow the Palestinians back in because there would be a lot of problems between them and the Bedouins," Mr Sweilan said. "The Palestinians robbed the Bedouins. They stole cars and sheep. But the Palestinians' dilemma is difficult. I believe Hamas is doing the right thing in standing up to Israel, but at the same time this war is happening

'The Palestinians robbed the Bedouins ... But the Palestinians' dilemma is difficult.'

Load-Date: January 6, 2009

'We're wading in death, blood and amputees. Pass it on - shout it out'; A doctor's desperate text message to friends reveals the plight of Palestinian civilians caught in the crossfire, write Azmi Keshawi and James Hider

The Times (London)

January 6, 2009 Tuesday

Edition 1, National Edition

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THE TIMES

Section: NEWS; Pg. 32,33

Length: 922 words

Byline: Azmi Keshawi; James Hider

Body

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Graphic

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GETTY IMAGES

Load-Date: July 30, 2009

End of Document

Arab foreign ministers meeting falls short

Daily News Egypt

January 1, 2009 Thursday

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Length: 1079 words

Body

CAIRO: Efforts to end the Israeli assault on Gaza continue with an emergency meeting of Arab foreign ministers in Cairo on Wednesday discussing an action plan to resolve the issue.

Arab League Secretary General Amr Moussa called on Wednesday for an immediate meeting of rival Palestinian factions, at the opening of an emergency session on how to deal with Israel's Gaza onslaught.

"We call on our Palestinian brothers to hold an immediate reconciliation meeting," said Moussa at the opening of the meeting, referring to the Palestinians factions **Hamas** and Fatah.

Foreign ministers at the meeting agreed with Moussa and condemned the Palestinian division. Saudi Foreign Minister, Prince Saud Al-Faisal, said Arab nations could not "extend their hand" to the Palestinians as long as they remain divided between **Hamas** in Gaza and president Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah in the occupied West Bank, according to AFP.

"It's time for Palestinian factions to hold a decisive meeting that will lead to (forming) a government of national unity," he said.

The foreign ministers of the 22 Arab nations have come up with a draft resolution which condemns Israel's violent attacks and calls for an immediate ceasefire between Israel and **Hamas** in Gaza.

Political analysts are, however, disappointed at the meeting's outcome.

"Nothing practical came out of the Arab foreign ministers' meeting," said Walid Kazziha, head of the political science department at the American University in Cairo. "On the one hand, they are condemning Israel and on the other hand they are attempting to strengthen the position of Egypt," he explained.

"There has to be a Palestinian unity for the issue to be resolved and there wasn't any practical steps agreed upon which could bring about Palestinian unity," he added.

"[The meeting] fell short of the expectations of the Arab people," said Kazziha.

Arab foreign ministers meeting falls short

Diaa Rashwan, political analyst at Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies also echoes the same sentiments, saying that there "wasn't any real action taken" at the meeting.

The resolution was presented by Libya on behalf of the Arab League on the same day, Wednesday, to the United Nations' Security Council which held an emergency meeting in order to discuss the draft resolution.

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 women and children."

It calls for "an immediate ceasefire and for its full respect by both sides."

It also calls on Israel "to scrupulously abide by all of its obligations under international humanitarian law, particularly under the Geneva Convention relative to the protection of civilians in time of war."

However, it was immediately rejected by the United States as "unbalanced" and "one-sided" because it makes no mention of halting the Hamas rocketing of southern Israel which led to the Israeli offensive.

US Ambassador to the UN Zalmay Khalilzad said the United States is working very hard to achieve an immediate cease-fire implemented by both sides. He however added that Washington has not seen "any evidence" yet that Hamas is willing to end its rocket attacks.

The best way to move forward, he said, would be to get an agreement among the parties for a cease-fire and humanitarian access to Gaza through diplomacy, "and for that agreement to be enshrined in a Security Council resolution if necessary."

Britain's UN Ambassador John Sawers also called the resolution "one-sided" but he told reporters a balanced resolution would have "a good chance of [gaining] support" in the council.

At the start of the council meeting, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon condemned "the indiscriminate rocket attacks by Hamas militants and the disproportionality of the continuing Israeli military operation."

He said he was "profoundly troubled" that the council's call for an end to the violence had gone unheeded and demanded that the parties "step back from the brink" and observe an immediate cease-fire.

Israel's UN Ambassador Gabriela Shalev defended Israel's decision to attack in response to more than 300 rockets and mortars launched at Israeli cities and towns by "Hamas terrorists."

"Israel cannot, and will not, allow its citizens to be sitting ducks for terrorist attacks," she said. "Israel will continue to take all necessary measures to protect its citizens and stop terrorism."

Shalev said any resolution must be balanced, and "Hamas must not only stop the fire but must give guarantees that this is the end of the barrage of rockets and mortars over Israel."

"It was expected that the Security Council will not approve of a resolution condemning Israel and won't approve a resolution or make a decision unless it is biased towards Israel," he added.

"With the UN Security Council taking no action until the resolution is amended, they are indirectly giving Israel a license to continue its attacks on Gaza," said Rashwan.

A delegation of Arab foreign ministers, including Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Syria, Qatar, Lebanon, Libya, Egypt and Morocco, will be flying to New York beginning of next week "to give a boost to the diplomatic activity here," said Sudan's UN Ambassador Abdalmahmood Abdalhaleem Mohamed, adding that therefore he doesn't see an adoption of the resolution until Monday.

Moussa asked Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas "to lead the diplomatic campaign in New York."

Arab foreign ministers meeting falls short

Arab citizens have been outraged by the inaction of their leaders towards the matter. There was a Gulf Cooperation Council summit involving Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates held in Muscat last Tuesday but has deferred any decision on Gaza to the Cairo meeting which discussed a Qatari proposal to hold an emergency Arab summit in Doha which has been deferred till after the Security Council's meeting discussing the proposed resolution.

"Why would they decide to postpone the Arab summit till after the Security Council's decision on the draft resolution, why wouldn't they be in parallel which would even give a push to the Security Council," he said.

"Until now no real action has been taken nor were decisions made to stop the attacks on Gaza," he added.

"The funny thing is that the Arab foreign ministers have met on Wednesday to discuss the onslaught on Gaza while the European ministers met on Tuesday," said Rashwan. -Additional reporting by AFP and AP.

Load-Date: January 3, 2009

End of Document

Clinton on a diplomatic tightrope to prove she can deal with the Arabs

Scotland on Sunday

January 4, 2009, Sunday

1 Edition

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Section: Pg. 10

Length: 613 words

Body

WHEN Hillary Rodham Clinton ran for a New York Senate seat nine years ago, she struggled to persuade sceptical Jewish voters of her support for Israel. After all, she had once stood by as the wife of Yasser Arafat delivered an inflammatory attack on Israeli policies.

Now, having secured her standing as a friend of Israel, Clinton must show a new audience that she can also be a mediator in her next role as US Secretary of State, when her first challenge may well be the renewed violence in Gaza. Given Clinton's chequered history with Arab-Israeli issues, that could be tricky.

Clinton brings several strengths, according to current and former aides and Middle East experts, including her knowledge of the region and lingering goodwill among Arabs and Israelis won by her husband, Bill Clinton, for his efforts to broker a peace deal in the waning days of his presidency.

But Hillary Clinton will have to reassure the Palestinians that she too can be a broker, working with Egypt and other Arab neighbours - and putting pressure on the Israeli government when needed.

"She's going to have to demonstrate her independence from Israel," said Aaron David Miller, a public policy analyst at the Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars. "Our interests are inevitably going to diverge from their interests. We cannot be an 'amen corner' for them."

The diplomatic tightrope was evident last week as the departing secretary of state, Condoleezza Rice, condemned **Hamas** for firing rockets into southern Israel while she privately urged Israeli leaders to agree to a ceasefire.

Clinton has not commented on the latest violence; a spokesman said she would abide by the principle that "there is one Secretary of State at a time".

But the evidence supporting her pro-Israeli stance is strong. As New York's junior senator, she condemned a round of **Hamas** rocket attacks on Israeli towns in May 2007. "I stand with the people of Israel who live in fear as their homes are besieged, and maintain my unwavering commitment to the welfare and survival of the state of Israel," Clinton said in a statement at the time. Her opposition to talks with either **Hamas** and Iran have also been cited.

But when she was First Lady, Clinton made waves on two occasions for seeming to tilt towards Palestinian interests. In 1998, she told a gathering of Israeli and Arab teenagers that creating a state of Palestine was "very important for the broader goal of peace in the Middle East."

Clinton on a diplomatic tightrope to prove she can deal with the Arabs

At the time, the White House disavowed her comments. Today, the two-state solution is a central part of the American blueprint for a peace deal.

More trouble loomed in November 1999, when Clinton, by then a Senate hopeful, visited the West Bank town of Ramallah. At a ceremony with Palestinian health officials, the First Lady did not react when Suha Arafat accused Israeli forces of using "toxic gases" against Palestinians, causing cancer in women and children. At the end of the ceremony, Clinton gave Arafat a polite kiss.

Some predict that Clinton will be given the benefit of the doubt merely because she represents a new White House. While Obama's response to the Israeli assault on Hamas has not differed much from that of President Bush, Asali said the Bush administration would bear the brunt of any anti-American feeling that bubbled up as a result of the attacks.

The challenge for Clinton, experts said, will be establishing strong relations with Egypt - critical to brokering a durable ceasefire in Gaza.

"She has to quickly restore the relationship with Egypt," said Miller, a former State Department veteran. "In doing so, she's going to have to bear the brunt of being accused of indirect negotiations with Hamas."

Load-Date: January 5, 2009

End of Document

Network of tunnels and traps -- Israeli troops dodge ambushes and suicide bombers

The Australian

January 9, 2009 Friday

2 - All-round First Edition

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Section: WORLD; Pg. 8

Length: 628 words

Byline: ABRAHAM RABINOVICH

Body

JERUSALEM

ISRAELI soldiers penetrating the edge of Gaza City have encountered hundreds of booby traps and a warren of tunnels that enable **Hamas** fighters to move from one house to another unseen.

Officers say the guerillas have emerged from tunnels to fire at close range before pulling back to lure the Israelis deeper into the built-up area.

In one case, a Palestinian dressed in an Israeli army uniform opened fire on a group of soldiers. He was killed before causing any casualties.

There have been several instances, the officers said, of would-be suicide bombers with explosive vests running towards soldiers. All were killed.

The troops have also been alerted to the possibility of **female** suicide bombers.

A **Hamas** spokesman said last week that hundreds of suicide bombers, including **women**, were waiting for the Israelis.

There have been attempts to capture Israeli soldiers, the officers said, and tunnels designated for this purpose have been identified.

Combat engineers have been leading the way for the Israeli forces, dismantling the booby traps that have been left in profusion, sometimes set to detonate upon entry into a building. There have been no reports of casualties from these devices.

The army has not yet pushed deep into the built-up areas, something the Government threatens to do if a ceasefire agreement is not quickly reached.

This stage would involve extensive house-to-house fighting and would almost certainly result in heavy casualties on both sides.

Network of tunnels and traps -- Israeli troops dodge ambushes and suicide bombers

Israeli officials say if this stage is embarked upon, the army would remain in Gaza ``weeks, if not longer".

Thousands of reservists mobilised early in the week have been refreshing their training in urban combat in a large army base near Gaza. They would reinforce the troops at present on the front if the fighting escalates.

The army has used heavy firepower, including artillery, to reduce its casualties and has pursued what it calls an ``aggressive" response to **Hamas** fire.

This policy has increased civilian casualties, as occurred when more than 40 Palestinians, including children, were killed in a UN school by a mortar shell said to have been fired in response to mortar shells fired by **Hamas** fighters in the school's vicinity.

The policy has also caused extensive damage to property.

``When we suspect that a Palestinian fighter is hiding in a house, we hit it with a missile and then two tank shells," said an officer. ``Then a bulldozer hits the wall. It causes damage but it prevents the loss of life among soldiers."

The aggression has also accounted for four of the six deaths suffered by the Israeli army to date, victims of friendly fire.

About 150 men, most of them suspected **Hamas** fighters, have been rounded up, Israeli officials said yesterday.

They were brought for questioning to a detention centre set up inside the Strip, where army intelligence officers attempted to glean information that could be of immediate use to the troops.

Some were then brought into Israel for further questioning by the Shin Bet security service.

Because of the numbers, police interrogators have been seconded to the Shin Bet to assist in the screening, officials said.

The security service is presumed to be making contact with some of its numerous informers inside the strip and perhaps recruiting more.

It is the first time since Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip three years ago that the service has direct access to large numbers of Gaza residents.

The army, which has prevented the entry of foreign correspondents into the Palestinian side of the Strip, has also been keeping Israeli reporters from direct access to the front and instead making officers available periodically for interviews.

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Load-Date: January 8, 2009

Network of tunnels and traps

The Australian

January 9, 2009 Friday

1 - All-round Country Edition

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Section: WORLD; Pg. 8

Length: 629 words

Byline: ABRAHAM RABINOVICH

Body

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Opinion -- Page 12

Editorial -- Page 13

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Load-Date: January 8, 2009

OPINION: Wouldn't it be great to have a simple solution?

Northeast Mississippi Daily Journal (Tupelo)

January 10, 2009 Saturday

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Section: COMMENTARY

Length: 556 words

Byline: M. Scott Morris, Northeast Mississippi Daily Journal, Tupelo, Miss.

Body

Jan. 10--My first response to the new hostilities in the Middle East was to blame **Hamas**, the party in charge of Gaza.

If someone were firing rockets at the United States, I'd expect the military to do something about it. Forget international condemnation. Punish the bombers.

That response remains valid. I'm not distancing myself from it, but maybe the situation is more complicated than tat.

In February 2006, Tupelo's chapter of Pax Christi, a Catholic peace organization, and North Mississippians for Peace brought Anna Baltzer to Tupelo. Baltzer is an American Jew who's traveled in the Middle East and spent considerable time in Israel and the occupied territories.

A couple of weeks ago, she sent me an e-mail saying that she'd planned to go back to the Middle East. Not long after, Israel began its offensive.

Now, Baltzer's in Jordan, and she agreed to answer some questions about what she's hearing.

"The underlying assumption here is that Palestinians' human rights depend on the actions of their leaders. This is false," she said. "Palestinians do not have to earn the human rights inalienable to every person on Earth. Human rights are non-negotiable."

In the U.S., I've seen some photos and news footage of dead men, **women** and children, but nothing compared to what's been shown in the Middle East, according to Baltzer.

"In every home or shop I enter in Jordan, people are huddled watching the stories unfold: a family killed in their home, a university destroyed, a pharmacy blown to pieces, countless babies screaming, or worse, silent," she said.

Concerning the causes of this conflict, Baltzer places some, but not all, of the blame on **Hamas**. She said that during the truce, the U.S. and Israel actively worked to overthrow **Hamas**, a democratically elected government.

She also said that before the truce ended, Israel was stingy with water, electricity, food and more. Gaza, Baltzer said, has been operated like a prison.

OPINION: Wouldn't it be great to have a simple solution?

"One example is medical supplies," she said. "Gaza had less than 20 percent of what it needed before the assault, so you can imagine how little there is now with the thousands of newly injured. Israel shutting of electricity also means hospital machines can't work."

I'm not trying to change anybody's mind, but Baltzer is. She would like for you to write letters to the editor, to contact your Congressmen and to picket in the streets.

All I want to do is remind myself and others that the horrors taking place in Israel and Gaza aren't simple matters.

Yeah, I'd want to fight back against Hamas rockets if I were an Israeli.

But what if I were a Palestinian who despised Hamas a few weeks ago but now had to bury my wife and children?

To learn more about the conflict from Baltzer's perspective, visit www.annainthemiddleeast.com.

M. Scott Morris is a Daily Journal entertainment writer. Contact him at (662) 678-1589 or scott.morris@djjournal.com

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FRANCE, EGYPT WORK ON GAZA TRUCE AS 30 PALESTINIANS DIE

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (Pennsylvania)

January 7, 2009 Wednesday

SOONER EDITION

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Section: WORLD; Pg. A-1

Length: 1012 words

Byline: Ibrahim Barzak and Jason Keyser, The Associated Press

Body

GAZA CITY, Gaza -- France and Egypt announced an initiative to stop the fighting in Gaza late yesterday, hours after Israeli mortar shells exploded near a U.N. school sheltering hundreds of people displaced by the onslaught on Hamas militants. At least 30 Palestinians died, staining streets with blood.

The Egyptian and French presidents didn't release details of their proposal, saying only that it involved an immediate cease-fire to permit humanitarian aid into Gaza and talks to settle the differences between Israel and the Islamic militants of Hamas who rule the small coastal territory.

They said they were awaiting a response from Israel. Israeli officials in Jerusalem declined immediate comment on the announcement, which came amid diplomatic efforts by the United States and other nations to resolve a conflict that has killed 600 people in 11 days.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice welcomed the initiative, but cautioned that no agreement would succeed unless it halted Hamas rocket attacks on Israel and arms smuggling into Gaza.

Earlier in the day, President-elect Barack Obama broke his silence on the crisis, saying, "The loss of civilian life in Gaza and in Israel is a source of deep concern for me." He declined to go further, reiterating his stance that the United States has only one president at a time.

Israel's military said its shelling at the school -- the deadliest single episode since Israeli ground forces invaded Gaza on Saturday after a week of air bombardment -- was a response to mortar fire from within the school and that Hamas militants were using civilians as cover.

Two residents of the area who spoke with The Associated Press by phone said they saw a small group of militants firing mortar rounds from a street near the school, where 350 people had gathered to get away from the shelling.

AP photographer Majed Hamdan rushed to the scene shortly after the attacks. At the hospital, he said, many children were among the dead.

"I saw women and men -- parents -- slapping their faces in grief, screaming, some of them collapsed to the floor. They knew their children were dead," he said. "In the morgue, most of the killed appeared to be children. In the hospital, there wasn't enough space for the wounded."

FRANCE , EGYPT WORK ON GAZA TRUCE AS 30 PALESTINIANS DIE

He said there appeared to be marks on the pavement of five explosions near the school.

An Israeli defense official said it appeared that the military had used 120-mm shells, among the largest mortar rounds.

U.N. officials demanded an investigation of the shelling. The carnage, which included 55 wounded, drew more international pressure to end Israel's offensive against Hamas.

At a news conference in Sharm-el-Sheik, Egypt, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak said the truce proposal he and French President Nicholas Sarkozy offered envisioned an immediate end to combat, so humanitarian supplies can safely enter Gaza.

Mr. Mubarak said the plan also calls for an urgent meeting between Israel and the Palestinians to discuss ways to resolve the conflict and provide necessary guarantees to ensure that fighting doesn't erupt again.

There was no indication of the plan's chances. Mr. Sarkozy said at the news conference that he saw it as a "small hope" for ending the Gaza violence.

Mr. Sarkozy said he had spoken to Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert to inform him of the initiative and was awaiting a response.

In Jerusalem, Olmert spokesman Mark Regev told AP: "We are holding off comments on that for the time being."

At U.N. headquarters, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas welcomed the proposal. "I express my support for the plan set in motion today by President Mubarak and President Sarkozy," said Mr. Abbas, who was in New York for a Security Council meeting on the crisis.

Israeli officials have said any cease-fire agreement must prevent further rocket attacks by Gaza militants and put in place measures to prevent smuggling of missiles and other weapons into the Palestinian territory.

Ms. Rice told the Security Council meeting that the United States understood the desire for a cease-fire. "In this regard, we are pleased by, and wish to commend, the statement of the president of Egypt and to follow up on that initiative," she said.

But Ms. Rice added that any solution must address Israel's security. "There must be a solution this time that does not allow Hamas to use Gaza as a launching pad against Israeli cities. It has to be a solution that does not allow the rearmament of Hamas, and it must be a solution that finds a way to open [border] crossings so that Palestinians in Gaza can have a normal life," she said.

In the wake of the criticism over civilian casualties, Israel agreed to set up a "humanitarian corridor" to ship vital supplies into the Gaza Strip, an idea raised by the Security Council. Under the plan, Israel would suspend attacks in certain areas to let people get supplies.

At U.N. headquarters, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called the Israeli bombardment of U.N. facilities in Gaza "totally unacceptable." Israel's shells have fallen near three schools, including the girls school hit yesterday, and a health center for Palestinian refugees. Mr. Ban added that it was "equally unacceptable" for militants to take actions that endanger Palestinian civilians, referring to militants' practice of attacking from residential areas.

Some 15,000 Palestinians have packed the United Nations' 23 Gaza schools because their homes were destroyed or to flee the violence. U.N. officials provided the Israeli military with GPS coordinates for all of them.

The three mortar shells that crashed down on the perimeter of the U.N. school struck at midafternoon, when many people in the densely populated camp were outside getting fresh air, thinking an area around a school was safe.

"There's nowhere safe in Gaza. Everyone here is terrorized and traumatized," said John Ging, head of Gaza operations for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency.

FRANCE , EGYPT WORK ON GAZA TRUCE AS 30 PALESTINIANS DIE

An Israeli military statement said it received intelligence that the dead at the girls school included **Hamas** operatives, among them members of a rocket-launching squad.

Graphic

PHOTO: Anja Niedringhaus/Associated Press: An Israeli Army soldier takes cover yesterday as a mobile artillery piece fires toward targets in the southern Gaza Strip, on the Israel side of the border with Gaza. Israel ignored mounting international calls for a cease-fire yesterday.\

PHOTO: Yasser Saymeh/Agence France-Presse/Getty Images: A Palestinian man carries a wounded girl into Gaza City's al-Shifa hospital yesterday.

Load-Date: January 7, 2009

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*Joy and despair: baby given life because of the shells that rained death on
Gaza*

The Times (London)

January 8, 2009 Thursday

Edition 1

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THE TIMES

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Length: 837 words

Byline: Martin Fletcher; Yonit Farago

Body

Fairuz Shahin is less than 2 days old, but she already embodies both the humanity and inhumanity of the war in Gaza, as well as its ironies and complexities.

She and her Palestinian mother were saved by Israeli doctors at a hospital that also treats wounded Israeli soldiers and which is directly threatened by Hamas rockets.

At the time of her birth, the Israeli military was relentlessly shelling Hamas targets in the Gaza Strip, killing or wounding hundreds of Palestinian children. Many of those injured children are treated by Fairuz's father, a paediatrician in Gaza.

"It's the absurdity of the Middle East," said Lobel Ron, deputy medical director of Barzilai hospital in Ashkelon, an Israeli town ten miles (16km) north of Gaza. As he spoke, his wife called to say a Hamas bomb had just landed near their house.

Fairuz's mother, Manal Shahin, 33, is caught between gratitude to the Israeli doctors and fury at Israel's destruction of her homeland, between the joy of giving birth and fear for her family back in Gaza. She has been told that they have fled to a safer district, but she has been unable to speak to them for the past four days - not even to tell her husband of their daughter's birth.

"I feel anger, fear and uncertainty," she told The Times as a siren warned of another incoming Hamas rocket. "May God finish this war as soon as possible so I can go home."

For all her anxiety Mrs Shahin and her family are exceedingly lucky. Forty-five per cent of Gaza's population is aged 14 or under and children account for between a quarter and a third of the 700 Palestinians killed since the Israeli offensive began.

Israel has accused Hamas of using women and children as human shields, but Western NGOs in Gaza have said that is disingenuous. "The bottom line is if you're operating heavy weaponry in a very densely populated area,

Joy and despair: baby given life because of the shells that rained death on Gaza

people who have nothing to do with the conflict will die. Sadly, this includes kids," said Benedict Dempsey, of Save the Children.

Mrs Shahin's odyssey began three weeks ago when she brought her fourth and youngest child to Barzilai hospital. She was heavily pregnant but her 18-month-old son was suffering neurological problems and needed an MRI scan. She went to Ashkelon because Israel, as the occupying power, is legally responsible for giving Palestinians medical care they cannot get in their own territories.

Operation Cast Lead began while she was in Ashkelon and the border was shut off and she could not go home. On Tuesday morning she went into labour. There were serious complications, and that night doctors performed a urgent Caesarean section. Had she given birth in Gaza, where the hospitals are desperately short of equipment, medicines and power, she and Fairuz would almost certainly have died.

Looking pale and tired, Mrs Shahin posed for photographs with her 7.7lb baby yesterday and begged The Times to send some to her husband, Ahmed, so he could see his daughter.

Far from joyful, she said that she could scarcely sleep because she was so worried about him and her three other children - a boy and two girls, aged 11, 10, and 8. They live in Jabaliya, an eastern district of Gaza City that has been pounded by the bombardment. Indeed, The Times saw plumes of white smoke rising from the area later after hearing Israeli shells firing.

"It's a massacre. It's genocide. It's beyond imagination what's happening there," Mrs Shahin said, adding that her husband was working around the clock at the Kamal Adwan hospital in Beitlahia, trying to save wounded children. "He doesn't stay at home. He's always in the emergency room."

Asked whether **Hamas** had invited the destruction by raining rockets into southern Israel, she would say only: "Mothers and children don't interfere in politics. We just want to live in peace."

More than 120 of those rockets have landed in Ashkelon since 2003. Earlier this week one killed a man and injured several others just outside the hospital. Last February another damaged the hospital's helipad.

Dr Ron recalled a Palestinian woman who had given birth to premature twins being evacuated to a bunker because of an incoming rocket. She told him that a few months earlier **Hamas** had fired rockets from her courtyard. "You can quite often see Palestinian patients lying side by side in the emergency room with people injured in Palestinian rocket attacks," he said.

Dr Ron said that he and his staff had no objection to treating Palestinians. He said of Fairuz: "There must be people who believe we have delivered the next terrorist. I like to think we have delivered a future prime minister of Palestine who will bring peace to the area."

Mrs Shahin said that Fairuz faced a bleak future in the impoverished, overcrowded Gaza Strip, with its rundown schools and desperate economy.

She said she did not want to raise another child in such dire conditions, but then she said: "Maybe, because she was born in Israel, she can become an ambassador of peace."

Online

Latest pictures from the conflict

timesonline.co.uk/mideast

Graphic

Joy and despair: baby given life because of the shells that rained death on Gaza

An Israeli mother protects her children during a rocket attack alert in the southern Israeli kibbutz of Kfar Aza, near the Gaza Strip. About 20 rockets landed in southern Israel yesterday

JACK GUEZ / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

Saved by Israeli doctors: Palestinian Manal Shahin and her daughter, Fairuz

MARTIN FLETCHER

Load-Date: January 8, 2009

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A diplomatic silence

Canberra Times (Australia)

January 10, 2009 Saturday

Final Edition

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Byline: The Canberra Times

Body

It's an old saying that words are bullets. Shortly before the beginning of the Second World War, the British diplomat, politician and author, Sir Harold Nicolson, published what remains a minor classic on the practice of foreign policy.

Sir Harold's *Diplomacy: A Basic Guide to the Conduct of Contemporary Foreign Affairs* included an entertaining chapter on diplomatic language, "the guarded understatement which enables diplomatist and ministers to say sharp things to each other without becoming provocative or impolite". By way of illustration Sir Harold set out a gradual escalation of words, from the most gentle of warnings to the brink of war.

"If a statesman or a diplomatist informs another government that his own government 'cannot remain indifferent to' some international controversy, he is clearly understood to imply that the controversy is one in which his government will certainly intervene. If in his communication or speech he uses some such phrases as 'His Majesty's Government view with concern' or 'view with grave concern', then it is evident to all that the matter is one in which the British Government intend to adopt a strong line. By cautious graduations such as these a statesman is enabled, without using threatening language, to convey a serious warning to a foreign government...

If he says 'In such an event His Majesty's Government would feel duty bound to reconsider their position', he is implying that friendship is about to turn into hostility." Sir Harold's diplomatic handbook was required reading for the first graduate recruits to Australia's diplomatic service more than 60 years ago. At the beginning of the 21st century, diplomatic exchanges are now a good deal more robust than they were in the narrow world of European diplomacy in the early 20th century and few if any of Australia's diplomats today would have read *Diplomacy* as part of their training.

But Sir Harold's spirit lives on in the practice of carefully crafted language, designed to convey meaning in the smallest nuance while avoiding open criticism or argument.

Indeed, it's often not what's said, but what is not said, that's important. This has certainly been the case in the past two weeks as the Rudd Labor Government has with much care responded to the dramatic escalation of conflict between Israel and the ***Hamas*** militants in the Gaza Strip. The latest Israeli-Palestinian conflict began on the morning of December 27, 2008, when the Israel Defence Forces launched Operation Cast Lead, with air strikes targeting ***Hamas*** militia members and infrastructure across the tiny and densely populated territory of Gaza. A six-month truce between ***Hamas*** and Israel ended on December 19.

A diplomatic silence

Hamas blamed Israel for breaching the truce and for not lifting its effective blockade of the Gaza. Israel blamed Hamas for rocket fire directed at southern Israeli towns and communities.

Last year six Israelis were killed by Hamas rocket attacks, bringing the total number of such deaths within Israel to 18 since June 2004. According to the Israeli press, planning for the Israeli attack had begun some six months before it was implemented. Indeed, no sooner had the ceasefire been agreed than Israel was preparing to strike immediately upon its expiry. The plan included a large intelligence-gathering operation to identify Hamas security targets, including militia bases, arsenals and training camps, the homes of senior officials and coordinates of other facilities.

Israeli diplomats worldwide have characterised the military strikes as defensive measures. "As the military action is intended to defend the residents of the State of Israel, its goal is to heavily strike the growing infrastructure of terror and the ability of Hamas and its allied organisations to launch missiles and mortar shells at Israeli citizens and execute terror attacks of various kinds, such as kidnapping Israeli civilians," the Israeli Embassy in Canberra said in a statement.

"If Hamas would renounce the path of terror, there would be no need for the action. As we have stated repeatedly quiet will be answered with quiet, but terror will elicit a response." Despite rapidly mounting casualties at least 225 people were killed and a thousand injured on the first day of the Israeli attack the Australian Government did not rush to comment.

Foreign Minister Stephen Smith was on leave and apparently saw no reason to make a statement. Indeed, three days passed before, at a press conference devoted to the prospects for the Australian tourism industry, Paris Hilton's shopping habits and topless sunbathing, Acting Prime Minister Julia Gillard made the Labor Government's first substantive observations on the Gaza crisis.

"Can I say very clearly, obviously the Australian Government is deeply disturbed by the resumption of violence and we are saddened and concerned by the loss of civilian life," she said. "We unreservedly condemn the shelling of southern Israel by Hamas and other militant groups, and whilst we recognise Israel's right to defend itself, we strongly support the United Nations Security Council resolution calling for an immediate halt to all violence."

Two days later, and as the death toll shot upwards, Gillard pledged on behalf of Australia an extra \$5million in aid for the people of the Gaza Strip (approximately \$3.50 for each of the territory's 1.4 million residents).

The additional assistance followed a doubling of Australian aid to the Palestinian territories to \$45 million last year (approximately \$12 for each of 3.7 million Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip).

In announcing the extra aid for Gaza, Gillard reiterated the Government's strong condemnation of Hamas's rocket attacks against Israel, but avoided any criticism of the Israeli airstrikes. "While recognising Israel's right to defend itself from such indiscriminate attacks, the Australian Government supports the United Nations Security Council's call for an immediate halt to all violence," she said. Then, on January 5, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd briefly broke his holidays to call a press conference to pay tribute to the Australian commando, Gregory Sher, who had the misfortune to become Australia's latest combat fatality in Afghanistan. Asked about the situation in Gaza, the Prime Minister said he was "deeply concerned" about the continued violence. He reiterated the Government's call for an immediate cessation of hostilities, while at the same time emphasising that "Australia recognises Israel's right to self-defence". Rudd also made it clear resolution of the conflict would have to involve more than just a ceasefire.

"Any solution, any diplomatic solution, must find a way of bringing a halt to rocket attacks against Israel by the terrorist organisation Hamas."

Any diplomatic solution must also bring about a halt of armed shipments into Gaza." Gillard and Rudd were both reading from the same script. Within the carefully constructed language of diplomacy, the message was clear. The Rudd Labor Government supports Israel's military offensive against Hamas.

A diplomatic silence

The Government won't say this directly because it doesn't want to damage relations with the Arab world and other predominantly Muslim countries, notably Indonesia. Nor does it want to fuel anti-Israel/pro- Palestinian protests in Australia.

But the Labor Government hasn't hesitated to condemn rocket attacks by Hamas and label the Islamist militants as terrorists. Israel's actions are unambiguously characterised as "self-defence". Moreover, according to Rudd, the conditions required for a solution to the conflict are Israel's declared military objectives an end to rocket attacks and the effective disarming of Hamas by cutting off the militia's access to arms. Little wonder that the Israeli Embassy in Canberra has expressed appreciation to the Australian Government for its "understanding" of Israel's actions. "The Australian response has been very favourable," deputy chief of mission Eli Yerushalmi told ABC Radio yesterday. "Australia understands the situation Israel is in right now." Significantly, the Australian Government has so far avoided any reference to the proportionality or otherwise of Israel's actions. Israel's critics have been quick to accuse the Israel Defence Forces of using disproportionate force. Israeli military spokesmen and women have been equally quick to reply that Israel's intention is always to avoid or minimise harm to civilians. Some defenders of Israel have gone further, arguing that the international legal requirement of proportionality in the exercise of self-defence does not mean that the force used must be equivalent to the force used in the initial attack. Thus the chief executive officer of the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies, Vic Alhadeff, argued this week that "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 Hamas rockets and prevent a recurrence of the attacks on its civilians."

A very different line was taken by another Australian Jewish group.

Independent Australian Jewish Voices slammed Israel's Gaza offensive as "inhuman", "superfluous" and "abominable". In a statement backed by more than 150 signatures, including NSW Greens Party politician Ian Cohen and Moss Cass, a former minister in the Labor government of Gough Whitlam, Independent Australian Jewish Voices argues that while Israel has the right to self- defence, "this cannot be used as a pretext for the grossly disproportionate military assault on Gaza". The statement claims that "the assault on the population of Gaza will only inflame hatred of Jews and of the State of Israel while doing nothing to protect the lives of Israelis.

Above all, it will undermine the prospects of joining with peace- seeking Palestinians to negotiate a lasting, just solution to the conflict."

The question of proportionality is certainly difficult to dismiss, as civilian casualties have grown rapidly in a fight between obviously unequal combatants. Moreover, in the past three days Israeli forces struck two United Nations-run schools and hit a UN food relief convoy, prompting condemnation from UN Secretary- General Ban Ki-moon and the suspension of UN humanitarian relief efforts. Despite this, the Australian Government has had nothing to add to its earlier blanket endorsement of Israel's right to self-defence. This stance may prove difficult to maintain if the conflict continues in spite of yesterday's United Nations Security Council resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire and the number of Palestinians killed and injured continues to rise.

As of January 8, the United Nations reported that at least 758 Palestinians had been killed since the Israeli military offensive began in Gaza: 257 (34 per cent) of the dead were children and a further 56 (7.4 per cent) were women. An additional 3100 people were wounded or otherwise injured as a consequence of the conflict: 34.8 per cent (1080) children and 452 (14.6 per cent) women.

Although the Rudd Government did shift Australia's votes on several UN General Assembly resolutions on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict earlier this year, its stance on the Gaza fighting is indistinguishable from the former Howard government's conspicuous support for Israel. Lest there be any doubt about where the Labor Government's sympathies lie, one need only go to the Prime Minister's decision in March to personally move a parliamentary motion celebrating the 60th anniversary of Israel's foundation.

Support for Israel is indeed a strong Labor foreign-policy tradition, going all the way back to prime minister Ben Chifley and external affairs minister Bert Evatt, and Australia's action as the first country to cast its vote in the United Nations in support of Israel's creation.

A diplomatic silence

Labor's left factions have historically been more sympathetic to the Palestinian cause, but that was always a minority view and in any case that support has largely faded away, as Gillard's comments in the past week demonstrate.

In recent years the "war on terror" has seen a marked strengthening of Australia-Israeli bilateral ties, especially in intelligence, security and defence cooperation. Australia's major political parties are also well aware that support for Israel pays domestic political dividends, including significant election campaign donations. Conversely criticism of Israel can elicit a strong response from a well-resourced and energetic domestic political lobby. There is nothing particularly special about this, other than the fact that Australia's Jewish community, by virtue of its resources, connections and influence, carries considerably more weight than other groups with an interest in specific foreign policy issues. By comparison Australia's Arab and Muslim communities remain politically fragmented and largely marginalised. Speaking in what was a tightly controlled parliamentary debate last March, Rudd congratulated Israel on its "robust parliamentary democracy and vibrant society and economy".

He went on to affirm the Government's commitment to a strong bilateral relationship with Israel. "Over the past 60 years governments from both sides of politics in Australia have supported our strong relationship with Israel.

That relationship is strong and it is deep and it will remain so. Because we are both democracies, as democracies sometimes we will agree and sometimes we will disagree.

That is in the nature of strong relationships. But the underlying friendship between us does not alter."

It would be very surprising if there were any major shift in the Rudd Government's approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its strong support for Israel.

At most the Government is prepared to increase humanitarian assistance for the Palestinians, but little if anything more than that. Overt criticism of Israel's military actions is unlikely. No doubt the Government has no desire to shoot itself in the foot in terms of its relations with the majority of Australia's Jewish community.

But if the fighting continues, and Israel persists with large-scale military operations with consequent Palestinian civilian casualties, then perhaps our political leaders could belatedly find the courage to question the application of massive firepower in what is a tiny, overcrowded urban slum. Maybe, just maybe, they could dust off a copy of Sir Harold Nicolson's *Diplomacy* and find some "guarded understatement" that would enable them to say some "sharp things ... without becoming provocative or impolite".

After all, if the relationship between Australia and Israel is as strong and secure as Prime Minister Kevin Rudd has suggested, then it should be able to accommodate some more robust language than has been the case to date. Philip Dorling is National Affairs Correspondent.

Load-Date: January 9, 2009

Canada contributing \$4M for humanitarian efforts, Cannon says

Ottawa Citizen

January 8, 2009 Thursday

Early Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A8

Length: 305 words

Byline: Meagan Fitzpatrick, Canwest News Service

Body

Canada wants to see an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and is contributing \$4 million to humanitarian efforts, Foreign Affairs Minister Lawrence Cannon announced yesterday.

"Canada is calling for an immediate and durable ceasefire," Mr. Cannon said following a Conservative caucus meeting.

Mr. Cannon has issued several statements on the conflict, but had not spoken publicly about the violence that broke out almost two weeks ago and has killed more than 600 people.

Mr. Cannon said Canada was concerned about the humanitarian situation developing because of the attacks between Israel and **Hamas** and that Canada was contributing \$3 million to the United Nations and \$1 million is going to the Red Cross.

He said he was "grateful" for the three-hour pause in the violence yesterday that allowed humanitarian aid shipments to be delivered to Gaza.

"Canada's position has been well known from the very beginning. **Hamas** is a terrorist group," the foreign affairs minister said. "Israel defended itself."

In previous written statements released earlier this week, Mr. Cannon said Canada blamed the rocket attacks that **Hamas** launched into Israel as the cause of the current crisis.

"War is cruel, it's gruesome. Once again, what I think is important here is to be able to help those people who need to be helped," Mr. Cannon said.

The Department of Foreign Affairs has issued official warnings for Canadians to avoid all travel to the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

In Toronto, eight **women** protesting Israel's military action in the Gaza Strip were arrested after occupying the Israeli Consulate yesterday.

"Eight **women** were arrested for breach of the peace and released," Const. Tony Vella said. "They were removed from the building and released with no charges."

Canada contributing \$4M for humanitarian efforts, Cannon says

Const. Vella said the women occupied the consulate for several hours, but were not violent.

Load-Date: January 8, 2009

End of Document

Israel's man has head and heart on two fronts; GAZA FALLOUT

The Age (Melbourne, Australia)

January 8, 2009 Thursday

First Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 6

Length: 379 words

Byline: BRENDAN NICHOLSON, FOREIGN AFFAIRS CORRESPONDENT

Body

THE most personal contact Israel's ambassador to Australia, Yuval Rotem, has with the fighting at home comes as an SMS or email from his son, Assaf.

The 19-year-old and eldest of Mr Rotem's three children is in the Israeli Army doing his three years of compulsory military service and his unit is involved in the operation against Hamas.

"When you send a child somewhere that means sometimes questions of life and death - it's not easy," Mr Rotem told The Age. "Every Australian who has a soldier in Afghanistan or Iraq knows the same feeling."

Five Israeli soldiers have been killed in the fighting so far.

Mr Rotem said only those who had been in that situation could understand the anxiety that all involved were going through. "It's an emotional issue for someone like myself who needs to lead this embassy in this campaign to gain public opinion in favour of Israel but also knowing that so many of our people are physically under threat for their lives. One of them happens to be my son."

Mr Rotem, a former Israeli spokesman at the United Nations, said he felt sadness over the civilian deaths in the UN school building.

He faces the tough task of explaining such tragedies to his hosts in Canberra. "It is heartbreaking to see women and children in the line of fire."

Mr Rotem said Israel had to deal with Hamas because a million Israelis were in the line of fire of its missiles.

"At the end of the day the world needs to be warned that the job needs to be done and it is very difficult for these 21-year-old commanders, or their 22-year-old superior, to find the balance between defending the lives of their own soldiers and trying to minimise the casualties on the other side."

Israel was a tiny country and, with the help of Iran and Syria, Hamas was increasing the range of its rockets from 20 kilometres to 40 or 50. "We need to make sure that next time it's not 70 or 80 kilometres," Mr Rotem said, because that would bring Tel Aviv within range.

"The country would cease to function completely," he said. "How can you function as a society if you have only 15 seconds from the time of the alert to run for your life to look for a wall or find cover."

Israel 's man has head and heart on two fronts GAZA FALLOUT

All **Hamas** had to do to stop the fighting and bring peace and prosperity was to stop firing rockets at Israel, Mr Rotem said.

Graphic

PHOTO: Israel's ambassador to Australia, Yuval Rotem, in his Canberra office, where he is leading a campaign to sway public opinion Israel's way. PICTURE: ANDREW MEARES

Load-Date: January 7, 2009

End of Document

Muslims gather to protest Gaza Strip violence Conflict condemned

Geelong Advertiser (Australia)

January 3, 2009 Saturday

1 - Main Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 6

Length: 308 words

Byline: STEPHANIE GARDINER

Body

AUSTRALIAN Muslims have gathered in Sydney to condemn Israeli bombing raids in the Gaza Strip, urging the Federal Government to take a strong stance against the conflict.

Many of the city's major mosques closed their doors for yesterday's prayers, with worshippers gathering in a Lakemba park in the city's southwest to pray for victims of the Israeli air strikes on the **Hamas**-controlled territory.

As a poignant reminder of the lives lost, a coffin was brought to the front of the crowd, followed by eight Muslim leaders including Sheik Taj Aldin Alhilali.

More than 400 Palestinians have died in six days of air strikes, which Israel began on Saturday in response to rocket fire from **Hamas**.

Israel killed a top **Hamas** commander on Thursday in the biggest blow yet to the Islamist's leadership as dozens more air strikes on Gaza took the death toll to at least 420.

As the service in Parry Park opened with Arabic hymns, crowd numbers swelled to more than 2000 men, **women** and children.

Dr Ibrahim Abu Mohammad gave a sermon, urging the Australian government and other western nations to publicly oppose the conflict.

"We request for them to stand against the crimes that are happening and the genocide that is happening in Palestine, and to punish those criminals of war," Dr Mohammad told the crowd through a translator.

The fighting in Gaza was not supported by the Muslim world, he said.

"The true followers of Moses know exactly that what's happening by the government of Israel today is something that is against what the Koran has taught," Dr Mohammad said.

Former Guantanamo Bay inmate Mamdouh Habib was in the crowd, handing out protest leaflets.

At the end of the formal service many speakers, including a small boy, addressed the crowd.

"Please protect the children of Palestine . . . please protect the children like me," he said.

Muslims gather to protest Gaza Strip violence Conflict condemned

WORLD Pages 22-25

Load-Date: January 5, 2009

End of Document

Gaza incursion to end soon says Israel

Northern Territory News (Australia)

January 13, 2009 Tuesday

1 - Edition

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Section: WORLD; Pg. 15

Length: 317 words

Body

GAZA CITY: Israel has poured reservist troops into Gaza as the death toll in its war on **Hamas** approached 900.

Officials say an end to the fighting might be in sight as more ceasefire talks are scheduled in Egypt.

Israeli troops had pushed deeper into Gaza's main city at the weekend, as planes carried out nearly 60 air strikes to combat Palestinian rocket fire, which has continued despite the offensive. An Israeli TV channel said the army had started sending in some of the thousands of reservists called up when the war began, and an army spokesman said they would be increasingly "integrated" into combat units.

Civilians again fell victim in the impoverished and isolated Palestinian enclave, one of the world's most crowded territories where half of the 1.5 million residents are less than 18 years old. Two **women** and four children were killed in a strike on a house in Beit Lahiya, medics and witnesses said.

Israeli officials suggested the offensive might be approaching its end despite the rejection of a UN Security Council resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire.

"The decision of the (UN) Security Council doesn't give us much leeway," Deputy Defence Minister Matan Vilnai said.

"Thus it would seem we are close to ending the ground operation, ending the operation altogether."

Earlier, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said Israel was nearing the goals it had set for its operation, but that fighting would continue for now.

"Israel is approaching these goals, but more patience and determination are required," Olmert told a Cabinet meeting.

Israeli forces have demolished some 200 smuggling tunnels beneath the Gaza-Egypt border -- **Hamas**'s main resupply route -- representing two-thirds of the total, military spokeswoman Avital Leibovich said.

Hamas, which also ignored the Security Council resolution, has vowed to keep on fighting. Yesterday 19 rockets were fired into Israel from Gaza.

Load-Date: January 12, 2009

Gaza incursion to end soon says Israel

End of Document

Israeli Shells Kill 40 At Gaza U.N. School

The New York Times

January 7, 2009 Wednesday

Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section A; Column 0; Foreign Desk; Pg. 12

Length: 1350 words

Byline: By TAGHREED EL-KHODARY and ISABEL KERSHNER; Taghreed El-Khodary reported from Gaza City, and Isabel Kershner from Jerusalem. Reporting was contributed by Ethan Bronner from the Israel-Gaza border; Rina Castelnovo from Ashdod, Israel; Mark Landler from Washington; Neil MacFarquhar from the United Nations; Alan Cowell from Paris; and Graham Bowley from New York.

Dateline: GAZA

Body

Israeli mortar shells killed as many as 40 Palestinians, among them women and children, outside a United Nations school in Gaza on Tuesday where they were taking refuge in the 11th day of the conflict. The Israeli military contended that Hamas fighters had fired mortars from the school compound, and United Nations officials called for an independent inquiry into the episode.

The rising civilian death toll in crowded Gaza heightened international urgency to end the combat. American and European diplomats said it was highly likely that Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel would travel to Egypt on Wednesday to discuss a cease-fire. Israel has said it will not end the operation until it has crushed Hamas's ability to fire rockets into its civilian areas.

Meanwhile, Hamas continued to fire 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 20 miles from Tel Aviv, and wounded an infant.

With another day of gory news reports inflaming the Arab world, Israel contended that the deaths at the school, at the Jabaliya refugee camp north of Gaza City, demonstrated Hamas's callousness toward the lives of Palestinian civilians.

The Israeli Defense Forces said that their troops had fired several mortar shells near the school in response to mortar fire from the school compound.

"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.

Israeli Shells Kill 40 At Gaza U.N. School

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 answered 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.

United Nations officials were unable to immediately determine the accuracy of the Israeli military's statements.

Christopher Gunness, a spokesman for the United Nations 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," Mr. Gunness said.

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

"These attacks by Israeli military forces which endanger U.N. facilities acting as places of refuge are totally unacceptable and must not be repeated," the United Nations secretary general, Ban Ki-moon, said in a statement. "Equally unacceptable are any actions by militants which endanger the Palestinian civilian population."

Speaking to reporters at Shifa Hospital in Gaza City on Tuesday, hours before the strike at the Jabaliya school compound, John Ging, the chief of operations for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, called the Gaza violence a "horrific tragedy" and a result of "political failure."

"There is no safe haven," he said.

United Nations officials initially put the Jabaliya death toll at 30 and said 55 were wounded, with several in critical condition. Palestinian hospital officials said 40 people had been killed, among them 10 children and 5 women.

The death toll in Gaza reached around 640 on Tuesday, 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 a higher gear.

At the United Nations, the Security Council held a high-level meeting attended by the Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, and many foreign ministers to discuss the situation in Gaza. Mr. Abbas and other senior Arab officials supported a resolution calling for an immediate cease-fire, which was introduced by Libya.

But some members of the Security Council, including the United States, withheld support for any resolution because of efforts in the Middle East to achieve a cease-fire.

President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt said at a news conference in Sharm el Sheik, Egypt, with President Nicolas Sarkozy of France that the Israelis and the Palestinians should accept a cease-fire to give Cairo time to continue its efforts toward a durable long-term solution.

Israeli and American officials insist that a cease-fire would have to await guarantees that no more weapons would be smuggled into Gaza through tunnels from Egypt; a possible mechanism for that is the stationing of international observers along the border with Egypt.

"We must find a way to prevent arms and explosives from entering Gaza," the American secretary of state, Condoleezza Rice, told the Security Council. "When this ends, there must be new arrangements in place, not a return to the status quo ante."

Israeli Shells Kill 40 At Gaza U.N. School

President-elect Barack Obama broke his silence about the Gaza fighting on Tuesday, telling reporters, "The loss of civilian life in Gaza and Israel is a source of deep concern for me."

Israeli losses have also risen since the ground invasion began on Saturday. The military said that three of its soldiers were killed late Monday night when an Israeli tank shell was mistakenly fired at a building they occupied.

A fourth soldier was also killed Monday night, very possibly also by an Israeli tank shell, the military said. Two soldiers, including one on Tuesday, have been killed in clashes with **Hamas**.

Before the Israeli ground campaign began, three Israeli civilians and a soldier were killed by rockets fired from Gaza at southern Israel.

Hamas's deepest rocket fire into Israel was a Katyusha-type rocket that on Tuesday slammed into the Israeli town of Gadera, more than 25 miles north of the Gaza border. The rocket landed between houses, and a baby was injured slightly, the Israeli authorities said.

The location was significant for Israelis, since Gadera is considered part of central Israel. The thousands of rockets fired out of Gaza in recent years have all landed in the south.

Israeli ground forces continued to fight **Hamas** operatives in northern Gaza.

The Israeli forces were surrounding Gaza City and, residents said, were east of Khan Yunis in the south.

In Al-Nasir, a district of Gaza City, families fleeing the fighting in the north poured into a United Nations boys' school. Thirty members of the extended al-Sultan family from Beit Lahiya, including more than 20 children, huddled in one small classroom.

Ayisha al-Sultan, 36, who is married to a heart surgeon, said she had left behind a comfortable villa where each of her five children has a separate room.

"Now look at us," she said. "At night we covered the floor tiles with paper for the kids to sleep on. We took off our jackets and covered them."

International relief agencies warned that the humanitarian situation in Gaza was becoming increasingly dire. Three-quarters of the 1.5 million residents are currently without power, and hundreds of thousands are without running water, international agencies have said.

Venezuela Expels Envoy

CARACAS, Venezuela -- President Hugo Chavez expelled the Israeli ambassador on Wednesday to protest Israel's military offensive in Gaza, bringing relations between Venezuela and Israel to their lowest point since 2006, when both nations withdrew their envoys in a dispute over Israel's military campaign in Lebanon against Hezbollah.

Mr. Chavez stopped short of breaking off diplomatic ties but described Israel's actions in Gaza as "genocide."

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

PHOTOS: A fellow Israeli soldier at the grave site in Jerusalem of Staff Sgt. Nitai Stern, who was killed Monday in Gaza by an Israeli tank. (PHOTOGRAPH BY MOISES SAMAN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES)

Israeli Shells Kill 40 At Gaza U.N. School

A wounded Palestinian being carried on Tuesday near the United Nations school at the Jabaliya refugee camp in Gaza. (PHOTOGRAPH BY ISMAIL ZAYDAH/REUTERS) MAP: Israeli shells hit Jabaliya. A **Hamas** rocket struck Gadera.

Load-Date: January 7, 2009

End of Document

Israel warning civilians to flee

The Australian

December 30, 2008 Tuesday

2 - All-round First Edition

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Section: WORLD; Pg. 7

Length: 480 words

Byline: Abraham Rabinovich

Body

Jerusalem

RESIDENTS at certain addresses in the Gaza Strip have been receiving unusual phone calls since the Israeli air assault began on Saturday -- a request that they and their families leave their homes as soon as possible for their own safety.

More unusual than the recorded message is the Arabic-speaking caller, who identifies himself as being from the Israeli defence forces.

Dipping into their bag of tricks for the updated Gaza telephone numbers, Israel's intelligence services are warning Palestinian civilians in Gaza living close to **Hamas** facilities that they may be hurt unless they distance themselves from those targets.

In some cases, the warning comes not by telephone but from leaflets dropped from aircraft on selected districts.

Such warnings clearly eliminate the element of surprise, but for Israel it is of cardinal importance to minimise civilian casualties, and not just for humanitarian reasons.

The principal calculation is fear that a stray bomb hitting a school or any collection of innocent civilians could bring down the wrath of the international community on Israel, as has happened more than once in the past, and force it to halt its campaign before it has achieved its objectives.

Israel Radio reported that leaflets had been dropped at the beginning of the operation in the Rafah area near the border with Egypt, warning residents that the tunnels to Egypt through which weapons and civilian products were smuggled would be bombed.

Many of the residents, mostly youths, are employed in the tunnels. Initial reports said two people were killed when the tunnels were bombed.

Gaza is one of the most densely built-up areas in the world, making it extremely difficult to pinpoint targets without collateral damage. Israeli officials say that the small percentage of civilians killed so far is due to precise intelligence regarding the location of **Hamas** targets and accurate bombing and rocketing.

But there are conflicting reports about how successful the air force has been in avoiding civilian casualties.

Israel warning civilians to flee

On Sunday, Israeli officials, citing Palestinian sources, said of the almost 300 fatalities reported until then in Gaza, all but 15 were members of **Hamas**. **Hamas** officials said yesterday that one-third of fatalities were civilian.

The UN agency for Palestinian refugees said at least 51 civilians were among the 312 killed, as of last night.

“We have been compiling a list of civilian casualties from medical and hospital sources,” said Christopher Gunness, spokesman for the UNRWA agency. “We have 51 confirmed civilian casualties including **women** and children.”

Among those killed in raids yesterday were four girls from the same family aged from one to 12 years old.

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

Load-Date: December 29, 2008

End of Document

Where's the Outrage Now?

The Chronicle of Higher Education

January 9, 2009 Friday

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Section: Vol. 55; No. 18

Length: 879 words

Byline: NEVE GORDON and JEFF HALPER

Body

Not one of the nearly 450 presidents of American colleges and universities who prominently denounced an effort by British academics to boycott Israeli universities in September 2007 have raised their voice in opposition to Israel's bombardment of the Islamic University of Gaza at the end of December. Lee C. Bollinger, president of Columbia University, who organized the petition, has been silent, as have his cosignatories from Princeton, Northwestern, and Cornell Universities, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Most others who signed similar petitions, like the 11,000 professors from nearly 1,000 universities around the world, have also refrained from expressing their outrage at Israel's attack on the leading university in Gaza. The artfully named Scholars for Peace in the Middle East, which organized the latter appeal, has said nothing about the assault.

While the extent of the damage to the university, which was hit in six separate airstrikes, is unknown at this moment, recent reports indicate that at least two major buildings were targeted, a science laboratory and the Ladies' Building, where female students attended classes. There were no casualties, as the university was evacuated when the Israeli assault began on Saturday.

Virtually all the commentators agree that the Islamic University was attacked, in part, because it is a cultural symbol of Hamas, the ruling party in the elected Palestinian government, which Israel has targeted in its continuing attacks in Gaza. Mysteriously, hardly any of the news coverage has emphasized the educational significance of the university, which far exceeds its cultural or political symbolism.

Established in 1978 by the founder of Hamas -- with the approval of Israeli authorities -- the Islamic University is the first and most important institution of higher education in Gaza, serving more than 20,000 students, 60 percent of whom are women. It comprises 10 faculties -- education, religion, art, commerce, Shariah law, science, engineering, information technology, medicine, and nursing -- and awards a variety of bachelor's and master's degrees. Taking into account that Palestinian universities have been regionalized because Palestinian students from Gaza are barred by Israel from studying either in the West Bank or abroad, the educational significance of the Islamic University becomes even more apparent.

Those restrictions garnered international headlines last summer when Israel refused to grant exit permits to seven carefully vetted students from Gaza who had been awarded Fulbright fellowships by the State Department to study in the United States. After top State Department officials intervened, the students' scholarships were restored -- though Israel allowed only four of the seven to leave, even after appeals by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. "It is a welcome victory -- for the students," opined The New York Times, ". . . for Israel, which should want to see more of Gaza's young people follow a path of hope and education rather than hopelessness and martyrdom; and for the United States, whose image in the Middle East badly needs burnishing."

Where's the Outrage Now?

Notwithstanding the importance of the Islamic University, Israel has tried to justify the bombing. An army spokeswoman told The Chronicle that the targeted buildings were used as "a research and development center for Hamas weapons, including Qassam rockets. One of the structures struck housed explosives laboratories that were an inseparable part of Hamas's research-and-development program, as well as places that served as storage facilities for the organization. The development of these weapons took place under the auspices of senior lecturers who are activists in Hamas."

Islamic University officials deny the Israeli allegations. Yet even if there is some merit in them, it is common knowledge that practically all major American and Israeli universities are engaged in research and development of military applications and receive money from the Pentagon and defense corporations. Weapon development and even manufacturing have, unfortunately, become major projects at universities worldwide -- a fact that does not justify bombing them.

By launching an attack on Gaza, the Israeli government has once again chosen to adopt strategies of violence that are tragically akin to the one's deployed by Hamas -- only the Israeli tactics are much more lethal. How should academics respond to this assault on an institution of higher education? Regardless of one's stand on the boycott of Israeli universities, anyone so concerned about academic freedom as to put one's name on a petition should be no less outraged when Israel bombs a Palestinian university. The question, then, is whether the university presidents and professors who signed the various petitions denouncing efforts to boycott Israel will speak out against the destruction of the Islamic University.

Neve Gordon is chair of the department of politics and government at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev and author of *Israel's Occupation* (University of California Press, 2008). Jeff Halper is director of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions. His latest book is *An Israeli in Palestine: Resisting Dispossession, Redeeming Israel* (Pluto Press, 2008).

Load-Date: January 6, 2009