

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

Job Number: 223445950

Documents (100)

1. [Home: Six children among 12 killed in mosque blast: Scenes of carnage as Israeli shells strike crowd of civilians who were leaving evening prayers](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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Narrowed by
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2. [Israel warning civilians to flee](#)

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

3. [From shell shock to bomb shelters As Israel and Hamas exchange bombs and rockets, both sides of the Palestinian - Israeli border are seized with fear and pain](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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4. [ENOUGH IS ENOUGH](#)

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

5. [Israel and Gaza: stop the carnage, end the lies](#)

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

6. [*Israeli forces close in on Gaza City*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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

7. [*Israeli strike near UN school kills at least 30*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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

8. [*Why the Israeli people have finally had enough*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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

9. [*Israel committing systematic mass murder*](#)

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

10. [*World leaders react to Gaza crisis*](#)

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

11. [Letters:](#)

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

12. [Israel says end in sight as fighting rages in Gaza](#)

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

13. [Gaza conflict comes to Cal Poly- San Luis Obispo](#)

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

14. [The Thursday Column - Christmas has ended - so should Gaza siege](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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15. [Israeli mortars kill 30 in Gaza](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

Narrowed by
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16. [Israel must fight its battles alone](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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17. [Outrage as Israelis kill young children More than 30 dead after UN school hit by bombardment](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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18. [ISRAEL IS NOT THE CAUSE OF TERROR](#)

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

19. [UN official seeks war crimes probe into Israeli actions; Both sides reject call for ceasefire as offensive continues](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

Narrowed by
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20. [Gillard backs call for Gaza ceasefire](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Narrowed by
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Jan 14, 2009

21. [West Bank is experiencing economic surge, Israel says](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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22. [Palestinian security gets a feminine touch](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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

23. [ISRAEL IS NOT THE CAUSE OF TERROR](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
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24. [Children of war Gaza air strikes claim 39 youngsters](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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

25. [TD calls for ambassador's expulsion as Evrony defends offensive](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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

26. [*Israel agrees to daily combat halt Aid supplies to be allowed into Gaza during 3-hour breaks*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
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27. [*Ball is in Israel 's court*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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

28. [*One-sided reality of combat in Israeli- Palestinian conflict*](#)

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

29. [*In Dense Gaza, Civilians Suffer*](#)

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

30. [*People are fleeing the north on donkey carts Gaza Diary*](#)

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

31. [*Your Say*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
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32. [*Lifeline tunnel economy collapses*](#)

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

33. [*Code Red: Count the seconds!; Time is measure of how far Israelis are from rocket strikes*](#)

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

34. [*Attack on Israel from Lebanon threatens to open new front*](#)

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

35. [*On Gaza, Sense and Centrism*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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

36. [*Israeli shelling kills dozens at UN school in Gaza*](#)

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

37. [*'There's nowhere safe in Gaza' 42 dead, dozens injured as Israeli mortar shells explode near UN school in teeming refugee camp*](#)

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

38. [*Gaza blitzkrieg follows Israeli tradition of pre-election muscle-flexing*](#)

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

39. [*In Focus: Why Do They Hate Us?*](#)

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

40. [*Time for Australia to speak out on brutality in Gaza*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by

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

41. [*LETTERS*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by

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

42. [*Israel pushes deep into Gaza City Palestinians say residents waving white flags shot dead as they flee their homes*](#)

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

43. [*Kasrils slams 'butchery' in Gaza 'It is cruel and merciless'*](#)

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

44. [*Demonising Israel is not fair reporting*](#)

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

45. [*Israel Hits Weapons Smuggling Tunnels*](#)

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

46. [*A PALESTINIAN VIEW: Third stage sees war and diplomacy proceed together*](#)

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

47. [*Israel prepares to send in the tanks*](#)

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

48. [*Gaza Under Attack - Children among 34 killed in Israeli airstrike at UN school*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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

49. [*France , Egypt calling for truce*](#)

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

50. [*A growing sense of unease*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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

51. [*In defence of Israel 's actions*](#)

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

52. [*Pushing for peace; Gaza*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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

53. [*Topple hate with hope*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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

54. [*UN says Israel deliberately targeting civilians*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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

55. [*Soldier turned politician who spent his life fighting Arabs*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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

56. [*DOOM & GLOOM*](#)

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

57. [*Gaza*](#)

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

58. [TODAY'S News](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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Narrowed by
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59. [Doom & gloom](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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60. [Gaza blockade causes food shortage and blackout; Israel keeps border closed, citing rocket attacks and security threats](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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

61. [Blood, tears and fury as a nation lies in ruins The death toll in Gaza is now said to exceed 800 people, more than a third of them children, and Israel yesterday warned that it plans to escalate its attacks](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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62. [Hamas or Hannas, they're not black and white Good and bad, victim and murderer, Jew or Palestinian or Nazi sympathiser ... we can't afford our simplistic arguments](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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

63. [*Hamas or Hannas, they're not black and white Good and bad, victim and murderer, Jew or Palestinian or Nazi sympathiser ... we can't afford our simplistic arguments*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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64. [*The same justification for slaughter is everywhere On both sides of the Atlantic the experience has been weirdly repetitive*](#)

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

65. [*The Gaza solution is in the hands of Palestinians*](#)

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

66. [*Might is not all right: Israel has gone too far COMMENTARY*](#)

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

67. [Gazans face 'humanitarian crisis' as Israeli raids intensify Aid agencies warn of looming disaster with supply shortage inflicting more suffering on families](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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68. [The 'Hill of Shame' where destruction is a spectator sport](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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69. [HAVE MORE MERCY CEASEFIRE PLEAS AS ISRAELI STRIKE ON UN SCHOOL KILLS 40](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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70. [Disgrace of child warfare](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

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71. [WHOS IN THE RIGHT?](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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72. [Nowhere to hide from bombs](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

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73. [chatroom](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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74. [Changing the Game, or More of the Same? THE Hour](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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75. [War is not the route to peace ANOTHER VOICE](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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76. [14 more children killed in the terror of Gaza](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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77. [Pity the little children War fodder](#)

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

78. [*Israel : Militants fired on its soldiers from bombed school*](#)

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

79. [*Front: 'As I ran I saw three of my children. All dead'*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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

80. [*Yes, Israel has a right to exist. But so did those blood-soaked Palestinian toddlers on the mortuary slab*](#)

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

81. [*Palestinians Work to Jolt West Bank Back to Life*](#)

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

82. [*Hostages to fear and systematic loathing in Israel*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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

83. [Charity convicted in terrorism trial](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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

84. [Israel sends more troops into Gaza](#)

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. [Peres visit to Cairo coordinated with Livni. Egyptian foreign official: Latest Schalit deal involves freeing 1,400 prisoners](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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

86. [IRISH DAILY MIRROR COMMENT: TIME TO END UNWINNABLE GAZA CONFLICT](#)

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

87. [Israelis send in reserves -- GAZA PUSH](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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

Jan 14, 2009

88. [*Israeli civilians suffer a lot too*](#)

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

89. [*Discrepancies over number of Palestinian civilian deaths*](#)

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

90. [*States of mind*](#)

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

91. [*Israeli shelling kills dozens at UN school in Gaza*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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

92. [*The woman who stands to gain from Gaza's misery Her bid to become Israel 's first female leader since Golda Meir foundered on her refusal to condone political blackmail, winning her a 'Ms Clean' image. Ironically, Tsipi Livni is now using the war to reinforce her credentials for the top job*](#)

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

93. [*Israelis shell near U.N. school in Gaza*](#)

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

94. [*Hundreds of Afghans protest Israeli attacks on Gaza Strip*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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

95. [*LETTERS FROM READERS*](#)

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. [*Rebuild Gush Katif*](#)

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. [*Israel deploys reserves*](#)

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. [*Our myopic view of Gaza conflict*](#)

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. [*West Bank keeps its cool in anti-war rallies Palestinians show unity, free of chaos*](#)

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. [*Letters to the Editor*](#)

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

Home: Six children among 12 killed in mosque blast: Scenes of carnage as Israeli shells strike crowd of civilians who were leaving evening prayers

The Observer (London) (England)

January 4, 2009

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TheObserver

Section: OBSERVER HOME PAGES; Pg. 2

Length: 757 words

Byline: Hazem Balousha and Rajeev Syal

Body

THE SHELLS could not have fallen at a worse time. Yesterday's afternoon prayers in the northern Gaza town of Beit Lahiya were unusually busy because worshippers had abandoned their evening prayers in the belief that if the Israelis planned to strike, they would do so at night.

But as the townspeople left the mosque at dusk, the explosions began, killing at least 12 people, six of whom were children. They came only hours before the Israeli ground offensive was launched into Gaza.

Fdil Sobih, 40, an ambulance driver who was one of the first people to arrive at the scene, told the Observer that the sight outside the Ibrahim al-Maqadna mosque was horrific, and was made worse by the desperation of locals trying to dig out those buried under the rubble with their hands. "I saw people cut to pieces," he said. "No one expected this here. The mosque is a few hundred metres from the hospital and it is heavily populated and is surrounded by houses.

"The shell had hit the entrance of the mosque, not the mosque itself, hitting people who were stood outside the mosque after their evening prayer, standing talking to one another, shaking hands. They did not deserve it," he said.

The number of people around the mosque was higher than usual, he said.

"People are now combining their evening and night prayers because of fear of Israeli strikes. It was as they were leaving the mosque when they were hit," he said.

Sobih, who has been an ambulance worker for more than a decade, said that he saw no evidence of any **Hamas** fighters among the injured.

"They were civilians, and some were children. Some neighbours of the mosque were helping the casualties, with blankets and bringing them to the hospital, some neighbouring houses were also damaged by the rockets. No one expected that Israel would fire here - it is very crowded and so close to the hospital."

Home: Six children among 12 killed in mosque blast: Scenes of carnage as Israeli shells strike crowd of civilians who were leaving evening prayers

Kamal Adwan Hospital, which is about 400 metres from the mosque, recorded that 12 people had been killed and 30 injured, 12 of them seriously. Six of the dead victims are believed to be under 18 years old.

The mosque is located in a densely built area of apartment blocks and low-level housing. Reports claimed that there were more than 200 people inside the mosque when the Israeli shells struck.

It was not clear whether any of the dead were Hamas fighters. The Israelis have claimed it was suspected that the mosque has been housing militants - it is named after a founder of Hamas who was killed by the Israelis in 2004. However, locals have claimed that radicals no longer control the mosque.

The attack will provoke further questions about the Israeli Defence Force's tactics as they search out Hamas's military hardware and hardline activists.

The Israeli military has destroyed several mosques during its week-long offensive in Gaza, claiming that Hamas uses them to store weapons. Artillery fire is less accurate than attacks from the air using precision-guided munitions, raising the possibility of a higher number of civilian casualties.

Ayman Mohyeldin, al-Jazeera's correspondent in Gaza, said that attacks on mosques could galvanise the Arab world into taking action against Israel. "This is proof that civilians are caught up in these attacks."

Mohyeldin said doctors in Gaza were being overwhelmed by the number of casualties as a result of the Israeli offensive and that hospitals were near a state of collapse due to a lack of medicines and blood stocks.

An artillery shell hit another building in Beit Lahiya, killing two people and wounding five, said members of the family living there. Ambulances could not immediately reach them because of the resulting fire, they said.

Before yesterday's offensive, Israel's bombing campaign had killed more than 430 Palestinians and left hundreds injured. The United Nations has said that at least a quarter of the dead were civilians. Much of Gaza's public infrastructure has been destroyed and the territory is in a state of emergency after eight days of bombing, averaging one blast every 20 minutes.

Israel's deputy chief of staff, Brigadier General Dan Harel, said that after Israel's operation was finished "no Hamas building will be left standing in Gaza". He added: "We are hitting government buildings, production factories, security wings and more."

Among the targets so far have been the Gaza Interior Ministry, police stations, television stations, prisons and a five-storey building in the women's wing of the Islamic University. Humanitarian organisations have criticised the Israelis for bombing a number of schools and a hospital.

Load-Date: January 5, 2009

Israel warning civilians to flee

The Australian

December 30, 2008 Tuesday

3 - All-round Metro Edition

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Section: WORLD; Pg. 7

Length: 484 words

Byline: Abraham Rabinovich, Jerusalem

Body

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 57 civilians were among the 318 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. He said the civilians killed included 21 children and at least seven **women**.

Among those killed in raids yesterday were five girls from the Balosha family, aged from one to 12 years old. The sisters include Dena, 4.

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

From shell shock to bomb shelters; As Israel and Hamas exchange bombs and rockets, both sides of the Palestinian-Israeli border are seized with fear and pain

The Sunday Independent (South Africa)

January 04, 2009

e1 Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 7

Length: 1296 words

Byline: Sudarsan Raghavan|and Reyham Abdel Kareem

Body

It was 10am on Thursday at Shifa Hospital in Gaza City, and Jabber Howez feared telling the truth.

Since Saturday, he had lied to his 23-year-old sister, Mirvat. Their father, brother and sister had not survived an Israeli airstrike. Now, coaxed by a psychiatrist, Jabber looked at his brown-haired sibling as she lay in bed with a bruised face.

"Where is father? Where is Fadiya? Where is Mohammed?" she asked.

"Listen, sister. Remember how we talked about fate, how we talked about heaven?" Jabber, 26, replied nervously. "I have good news for you." His hands shook.

"Their souls are with God now. You should be happy."

Mirvat began to weep.

In cities on both sides of the Israeli-Gaza border on Thursday, Israelis and Palestinians coped with the vicissitudes of war. In Beersheba, Israelis hunkered down as rockets that they never imagined would reach their desert oasis crashed around them. In Gaza City, amid continuing Israeli airstrikes, Palestinians struggled not just with a deepening humanitarian crisis, but also with the conflict's emerging psychological scars.

"We have tens of cases like this, but there are still many more out there," said Yayha Awad, one of the psychiatrists helping the Howez family. "We can't reach most of the families who were bombed because of the insecurity."

A day earlier, his team had treated a seven-year-old girl who became mute after an airstrike, he said.

Mirvat grabbed her brother's arm. "Where are you, Father? Who will play with Ahmed?" she screamed at no one in particular.

She was referring to their six-year-old brother Ahmed. He had Down's syndrome and had been transported to an Israeli hospital for surgery to remove shrapnel from his brain. Mirvat herself was recovering from abdominal wounds. On Saturday, the family had been inside their house when a missile struck nearby.

From shell shock to bomb shelters As Israel and Hamas exchange bombs and rockets, both sides of the Palestinian - Israeli border are seized with fear and pain

As he clutched his sister, Jabber also began to cry.

His ordeal was not over. Hassan al-Khawaja, another psychiatrist, told Jabber that he also needed to inform his mother of their loss. He was now the eldest male in the family. It was his responsibility. The trauma, Khawaja said, would only get worse if she didn't learn the truth. So they went to her side at another hospital. It was 11am.

"Why didn't you tell me?" Nadia Howez, 50, cried in anguish. "This was your responsibility." She struggled to breathe. A nurse plied her with oxygen and then gave her an injection. She calmed down and fell asleep.

Two hours later, she woke up screaming and blaming Jabber. At 2pm, he was driving back to see his sister. He broke down crying, shaking uncontrollably. Khawaja took him to his clinic, where his staff gave him orange juice and a sandwich. One staffer hugged him. "You should be strong," Khawaja said. "You are now the strongest member of the family."

Shortly before 3pm, Israeli jets bombed the house of Nizar Rayyan, a senior Hamas leader, killing him, his two wives and four of his 12 children. He had called for renewed suicide bombings inside Israel.

At the same time, about 40km away, workers at the Mekif Aleph secondary school in Beersheba were repairing a massive hole in a ninth-grade classroom, disfigured by a rocket attack the previous day.

At 3.10pm, air raid sirens began to wail, sending workers to a basement bomb shelter half the size of a tennis court.

"In another minute or a minute and a half, there will be a BOOM," predicted one of the workers hunched in the shelter.

At 3.12pm: a distant boom. It was a good time to end a day of work. As the workers left the school, Meir Chachashavili, an engineer with the city government, shook his head.

"I am surprised such a small organisation has such long-range missiles," he said, referring to Hamas.

"We have to get rid of this terrorist organisation, because it hurts not only the Jewish population, but also coexistence between Arab and Jews."

At 3.30pm, inside a Gaza store, television cameraman Mamdouh Sayed searched for nappies and milk. The father of twins found neither. "It's hard to find basic needs," he said. He bought some canned tuna, sugar, oil and rice.

"I didn't even remember that this was January 1 2009," he said. "It's a dismal day like any other. Only it's worse."

"My New Year's wish is to be able to return home safely each night, to wake up and see my children again. I'm always worried that I might not see them the next day."

At 4pm, in the basement of Beersheba's municipal government building, nearly two dozen young women were answering phone calls from concerned citizens: Where did the rockets land? Where is the nearest shelter? We need mattresses and bottled water in our bomb shelters.

Callers were told that three rockets had landed - all in open areas. There were no injuries. And callers were assured that any supplies they needed would be dispatched right away. "There are people who need help to find a safe area inside their house," said Shiri Solomon, one of the workers. "So we go to their house and explain to them."

This is Beersheba's war room - an illustration of how well equipped the Israelis are to ride out the conflict. Earlier in the week, a rocket had struck a kindergarten. Then came more rockets.

"This is the first time since 1948 that a real missile has hit Beersheba," said Heftsi Zohar, the city's deputy mayor. It was pure luck, she said, that no one in the city had been killed. Schools had been ordered closed in anticipation of possible attacks, but to most residents the rockets were a sign of their altered world.

From shell shock to bomb shelters As Israel and Hamas exchange bombs and rockets, both sides of the Palestinian - Israeli border are seized with fear and pain

"We woke up into a new reality," Zohar said.

At 4.20pm, the sirens wailed again. Zohar rushed into a room filled with computers and monitors. A television set displayed images of the attack on Nizzar Rayyan, the Hamas leader.

"The Islamic Jihad has launched 10 rockets," one man yelled after he ended a call on his cellphone, warning that they would hit Beersheba.

"It's because of the assassination of Rayyan," Zohar said. Another official said the rockets were fired at Beersheba because Prime Minister Ehud Olmert had visited the city on Wednesday.

"There are rockets landing in the old city," Zohar announced. Everyone dialled their cellphones.

Finally, Shimon Krief, another official, said the rockets had landed on the outskirts of the city, probably two of them. "But I am not sure," he added.

At 4.35pm, a voice on the radio blared: "Rocket landed in Beersheba."

Krief looked at the phone monitors. They had received only 18 calls from concerned citizens - an indication, he said, that Israelis approved of the tactics used by their government in the Gaza Strip.

"People are relaxed," Krief said. "Most of our population agree with what is happening in Gaza and see it as the right thing to do. They are ready to suffer the missiles."

At 5.15pm, Shlomo Codish, the deputy director of Beersheba's biggest hospital, proudly declared that the facility could withstand a biological or chemical attack. Since Saturday, the hospital had been placed on high alert.

Doctors and other vital staff had cut short their vacations. The hospital had increased its supply of blood and cancelled nonessential surgeries, freeing up specialists to respond to a catastrophic attack.

Since Saturday, the hospital has treated 164 patients, the vast majority for stress-related ailments. Only 10 were for bodily injuries, Codish said.

"People are very concerned," he said. "The mood is also surprisingly resilient. With each attack, we've received significantly less patients."

Nearby, the hospital's trauma unit gleamed with state-of-the-art equipment. There was not a single patient.

Mohammed al-Jabali, 34, a father of five, was waiting in line to buy bread in Gaza City. It was about 5.15pm. He had been waiting for six hours. "I am afraid for my children. I am afraid they are going to attack my neighbourhood or my house." - The Washington Post

Load-Date: January 4, 2009

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

Metro (UK)

January 9, 2009 Friday

Dublin Edition

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Section: Pg. 10

Length: 728 words

Body

To Anon, yes, it is the job of nurses to look after sick people, but dont get mad at them for being annoyed after looking after people who deliberately bring sickness on themselves by binge drinking. Kunle Jon, hope that someone will call to your workplace today, punch you in the face and then say: dont complain, no one forced you to work here! Idiot! German Crusader To the person that said how dare I, there is only a small % out of all in A&E that require help such as stomach pumped, what about the drunk people that have been beaten up by a drunk?

...or get hit by a drink driver? And as Jon said no one forced her to be a nurse Anon Have to agree with Squelch regarding The O2. Prices are outlandish! Almost €8 for popcorn! And the bar is over 21s! Ridiculous. Jonny Regarding the €6 pints at the O2, it is disgraceful but in some city centre pubs pints are up to €6.50, madness. Michael Why when it comes to child abuse allegations is the church and its clergy immune from the standard procedures that would be used when investigating a claim in a civilian case? This country has had enough control and influence from the Catholic Church in regard to the government and its law for long enough. It is time we as a nation of multi-religious and multi-nationalities demand that cases concerning child abuse be dealt with in a manner that no party involved can dictate and withhold the information needed to find the truth. Graham I found it interesting William Smith and Zohan both say the Palestinians started the current conflict. Israel broke the ceasefire first on November 4 when its aerial bombing killed six Palestinians in Gaza and again on November 17 when another bombing killed four more Palestinians. Correct me if Im wrong, but thats more Palestinians than Israelis have died to date since December 27. Id ask anyone who thinks it is wrong for Israeli civilians to spend each day and night in fear of their lives from Palestinian rockets do they think it is any less wrong for Israel, even during times of comparative peace, to patrol the skies above Gaza with Apache attack helicopters and Predator drones? Israel cannot expect peace with the Palestinians until it begins to respect their human rights. Brendan Cassidy Ronan: As expected, you got the issues all wrong! But I am not surprised, you have failed to answer the questions I asked but for your information, Israel did not end the cease fire, Hamas did, Israel did not fire the first shot, Hamas did, Israel was not targeting civilians, Hamas does and it was not Israel that was promising to make Gaza a cemetery, it was Hamas. Hamas got what they asked for. And in case you have forgotten, all through the six-month ceasefire, Hamas kept rocketing Israel, but intensified their rocketing after the end of the ceasefire. William Smith Dear Metro Mail, one of my New Years resolutions was to do something really sweet & special for my fiancée to show her how much I love her. Could you please post the below for me in Fridays Metro: Dear Boo, if I could have just one wish, I would wish to wake up everyday to the sound of your breath on my neck, the warmth of

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

your lips on my cheek, the touch of your fingers on my skin, and the feel of your heart beating with mine... Knowing that I could never find that feeling with anyone other than you. Happy Anniversary. Love always and forever. Johnny

Open your eyes: Rail users& I would just like to re-iterate that pregnant women cannot stand (or balance!) for long periods. It is literally like having a heavy sack of spuds strapped to your belly. After youve managed to stand for 20/30 mins, it is horrible having to walk 15 mins to work& So take your head out of the paper, open your eyes and stop pretending you dont see them! Lesley Arrest drunks: Ive been reading the argument about getting drunks to pay for being seen to in hospitals and wondering why theyre not just being arrested and thrown in a cell to sober up overnight? Surely the emergency services have enough to be worrying about without dealing with idiots who drink themselves into a stupor? ElaineBricking it: Anyone who thinks Tetris helps traumatic stress disorder (yesterdays Metro page 5) obviously was never 8 lines up only to shuffle a long brick wrong and land it pointing upwards and then an L shaped brick to suddenly appear and land a**eways on to it.Bren

Graphic

Church is not immune to law

Load-Date: January 9, 2009

End of Document

Israel and Gaza: stop the carnage, end the lies

New Straits Times (Malaysia)

January 12, 2009 Monday

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Section: Pg. 20; LOCAL

Length: 1347 words

Byline: Mohd Jawhar Hassan

Body

THE image that Israel has carefully constructed of itself, for its own people and for the world, is built on a grand lie. It is the corruption of truth on a colossal scale.

It reminds one of the words from the song Jerusalem Tomorrow:

I could tell a tale,

I could make it spin,

I could tell you black was white,

I could tell you day was night,

Not only that, I could tell you why.

Back then, I could really tell a lie.

Israel's pervasive influence on the power and media centres of the world; its cynical manipulation of words like democracy and terrorism which automatically evokes positive feelings towards it in the West, especially in the United States; the deep guilt that Christian Europe feels for the unspeakable horrors it visited on the Jews through the centuries and especially during the Holocaust; and Israel's projection as a small power under dire threat from larger Arab neighbours, all aid in the spinning of the myths and the lies.

A top-notch communications machinery with glib spokespersons is part of six decades of sustained deception.

These are some of the lies as they relate to the ongoing assault on Gaza:

Israel says ***Hamas*** broke the ceasefire late last month by resuming rocket attacks into its territory. The facts: the ceasefire was for a period of six months ending Dec 16. During the ceasefire rocket attacks were to end and humanitarian supplies resumed fully. The rocket attacks ceased, but Israel only allowed about 20 per cent of the humanitarian aid in. Israel also broke the ceasefire on Nov 4 when it entered Gaza and killed six Palestinians, all to stop a tunnel being built that would help inhabitants smuggle in scarce supplies. This provoked the rocket attacks. Israel's November incursion was timed to happen when all eyes were on the presidential elections in the US, just as its invasion now is timed to inflict maximum damage before president-elect Barack Obama assumes office.

Israel and Gaza: stop the carnage, end the lies

Israel says it is forced to attack Gaza in self-defence to stop the grave threat from rockets fired by Hamas. The fact: Hamas launched rockets into Israel as a sign of defiance and to dramatise the suffocating blockade of Gaza. According to the Carter Centre, Hamas rockets have killed only three Israeli civilians in the last seven years. According to the Israeli human rights organisation B'Tselem, Palestinian rockets took 13 Israeli lives in the last four years, compared with more than a thousand Palestinians killed by Israeli forces in just the past two years. This is the grave threat that is Israel's excuse to invade Gaza.

Israel says its goal is only to dismantle Hamas' ability to fire rockets into its territory, and that it does not target civilians and takes care to avoid civilian casualties. These statements are made by no less than their prime minister, foreign minister and defence minister. The facts: a merciless air and land assault that is now into its 16th day, killing and maiming over 4,000 Palestinians, mostly civilians including women and children. The destruction is complete, a la Lebanon - hospitals, schools, homes, buildings, and electricity and water supplies. Even international humanitarian convoys are bombed. Gaza is a killing field. It is literally a prison encircled by walls and land and sea blockades. No people on earth, including Israelis, Americans and Europeans, not to mention Malaysians, will want to live under these inhuman conditions and submit without a fight.

Israeli leaders and spokespersons never fail to use the dreaded word "terrorists" to describe the Hamas fighters. The word is repeated again and again for good effect. As the numbers above attest, the real terrorists are the Israeli armed forces. Israel is terrorism incarnate. The modern-day barbarism has little equal: it texts Gazans to evacuate buildings when they have nowhere to run, then it cold-bloodedly bombs the buildings.

Israel and its friends say they do not want to deal with Hamas because it does not recognise Israel and is not committed to a peaceful solution. The facts: one of the first acts of Ismail Haniyeh after being democratically elected prime minister in October 2006 was to send a message to United States President George W. Bush offering a long-term truce in return for an end to Israeli occupation. His offer was not even acknowledged. Hamas also agreed to any peaceful settlement worked out by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas if it was later approved by a majority in a public referendum.

Israel denies a humanitarian crisis of its making in Gaza. The facts: every humanitarian assistance body active in Gaza, including those under the United Nations, will vouch that a disaster of immense proportions exists in Gaza. The strangulation of Gaza began well before the invasion. The noose is being tightened beyond tolerable levels now. All the media images give lie to the Israeli denials.

Israel says the issue is smuggling of weapons, Hamas rockets and terrorism. The real issues are 40 years of illegal occupation, relentlessly expanding illegal settlements, suffocating blockades, closed border crossings, countless UN resolutions contemptuously ignored and violated, and disproportionate and indiscriminate use of overwhelming military force.

Israel and its friends urge the people it has evicted and dispossessed by force to follow the path of peace and not violence. They urge peaceful negotiations. But peaceful negotiations have got the Palestinian Authority and Fatah nowhere. Israel keeps playing for time, expanding settlements all the while in pursuit of its real objective: a Greater Israel. Any wonder then that those who lose hope throw stones, fire rockets and become suicide bombers?

Israel milks the Holocaust to the full to gain sympathy. It portrays itself as the victim, a weak state under constant threat from predatory Arab and Persian neighbours. It is civilised, a democracy that respects international law and human rights. It is only exercising its right of self-defence.

The facts: present day Israel is no longer a victim of the Holocaust. It is the perpetrator of one. This one is not as dramatic as the last, but it is just as real in the profound mass pain and suffering it inflicts.

Civilised countries with unfettered military power can unleash the most barbaric acts of war and destruction, and Israel is one. Israel is the fourth most potent military power on earth. It has breached international law many times, and it perpetrates humanitarian crimes in the name of justice, freedom and democracy without batting an eye.

Israel and Gaza: stop the carnage, end the lies

The world must end this gruesome charade and stop Israel from perpetuating this grave injustice. Israel cannot be persuaded. It must be forced to return to its 1967 borders and honour the relevant UN resolutions for a just settlement.

The major powers must stop abetting Israel. They cannot shield the aggressor from international law. They cannot arm the occupier and deny arms to the occupied. They cannot condone oppression and humanitarian disaster. They cannot resist mounting international outrage and growing domestic opposition.

Governments are constrained from speaking out. But those that have diplomatic relations with Israel can recall their ambassadors and, if necessary, suspend diplomatic relations until it complies with international law and respects the will of the international community.

Non-government organisations and the people have more freedom to act. The demonstrations around the world are just the beginning. Their capacity to make a difference can be compelling. Even the most hardline governments, those that tolerate the use of war and overwhelming force to bludgeon others into submission, must relent and heed the voice of the people.

When Israel finally agrees to a ceasefire after wreaking maximum carnage, the chapter is not closed. The people must not quickly forget the slaughter. The perpetrators must be brought to justice in an international court.

The issue of Gaza and Palestine is not about race, religion or nation. It is about decency, dignity and humanity.

Tan Sri Jawhar is chairman and CEO of ISIS Malaysia. The views are his own

Load-Date: January 11, 2009

Israeli forces close in on Gaza City

Guardian.com

January 13, 2009

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theguardian

Length: 678 words

Highlight: Latest: 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 yet in Israel's 18-day offensive.

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 were mistakenly hit by their own troops.

The death toll on the Palestinian side now 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, in 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 which have been closed for months.

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".

Israeli forces close in on Gaza City

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.

Ban Ki-moon, the UN secretary general, was due to leave today for the Middle East for talks in several countries to end the fighting. "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."

Yesterday, Olmert warned a refusal by Hamas to stop its rocket fire into southern Israel would be met "with the Israeli people's iron fist".

"We will continue to strike with full strength, with full force until there is quiet and rearmament stops," he said. But 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

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Israeli strike near UN school kills at least 30

The Telegraph-Journal (New Brunswick)

January 7, 2009 Wednesday

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Section: NEWS;NEWS; Pg. A6

Length: 1328 words

Byline: Ibrahim Barzak and Steve Weizman THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Body

An Israeli bombardment struck outside a UN school where hundreds of Palestinians had sought refuge on Tuesday, the U.S. and Palestinian medics said, killing at least 30 people - many of them children whose parents wailed in grief at a hospital filled with dead and wounded.

An Israeli official said its soldiers came under fire from militants hiding in the school and that the building stored Palestinian munitions.

Despite international criticism over civilian deaths and calls for a ceasefire, Israeli soldiers edged closer to two major Gaza towns. A total of 58 Palestinians were killed Tuesday - with just two confirmed as militants, health officials in Gaza said.

The explosions marked the second time in hours a U.S. school came under attack. It was the deadliest assault since Israel sent ground forces into Gaza last weekend as part of a larger offensive against the ruling Hamas militant group that has killed nearly 600 Palestinians.

Nearly half of the dead are civilians, according to U.S. and Palestinian officials.

"There's nowhere safe in Gaza. Everyone here is terrorized and traumatized," John Ging, the top U.S. official in Gaza, said after the first strike on the compound of a U.S. school killed three people in a courtyard. The school has served as a shelter for Gaza City refugees fleeing the blistering 11-day offensive.

A Palestinian rocket - one of two dozen fired from Gaza on Tuesday - wounded an Israeli infant.

Dr. Bassam Abu Warda, director of Kamal Radwan Hospital, said 34 people were killed in an Israeli strike outside a second U.S. school in the northern Gaza town of Jebaliya. The United Nations confirmed 30 were killed and 55 injured by tank shells.

But an Israeli official said "hostile fire" was directed at the soldiers from within the school. He said soldiers returned fire and multiple explosions went off, presumably emanating from munitions stored there. The official spoke on condition of anonymity pending a formal army announcement.

The attack occurred at mid-afternoon, at a time when many people in the densely populated Jebaliya refugee camp were out and about. Many of the refugees apparently had stepped outside the shelter to get some air, thinking an area around a school was safe.

Israeli strike near UN school kills at least 30

Palestinian militants frequently fire from residential areas. However, Mohammed Nassar, a medic who treated the wounded, said he did not see any gunmen among the casualties.

Footage broadcast on Hamas Al Aqsa TV showed gruesome scenes at the hospital. At first, medics carried in at least five younger boys who were laid out on the hospital floor. It was not clear whether they were still alive.

Other medics then started unloading bodies of older men who had been stacked up in the back of an ambulance, three high, and were dragged without stretchers. One man's legs had been turned into bloody stumps that dragged on the ground as he was pulled from the ambulance.

In later scenes, the emergency room was packed, with all beds occupied and barely a patch of ground where there was not a body or a doctor standing. In other rooms, there were blood stains on the floor and other bodies lying there, with medics running to each of them to take their pulses.

"I saw a lot of women and children wheeled in," said Fares Ghanem, another hospital official. "A lot of the wounded were missing limbs and a lot of the dead were in pieces."

Majed Hamdan, an AP photographer, said he 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 were marks of five separate explosions, all in the same area near the school as the refugees were outside at midday to escape the confines of the crowded building.

U.S. officials say they provided their location co-ordinates to Israel's army to ensure that their buildings in Gaza are not targeted.

Speaking shortly after the first attack, Maxwell Gaylard, the U.S. humanitarian co-ordinator for the Palestinian territories, demanded an investigation.

"As one of the most densely populated places in the world, it is clear that more civilians will be killed," he said. "These tragic incidents need to be investigated, and if international humanitarian law has been contravened, those responsible must held accountable."

The international Red Cross said an ambulance post was hit as well on Tuesday, injuring one medical worker.

Israel launched its offensive on Dec. 27 to halt repeated Palestinian rocket attacks on its southern towns. After a weeklong air campaign, Israeli ground forces invaded Gaza over the weekend.

Nearly 600 Palestinians have been killed. Ten Israelis have died since the operation began, including a soldier who was shot on Tuesday.

United Nations staff estimate around 15,000 people have fled to 23 U.S.-run schools they have turned into makeshift refuges. U.S. food aid has halted in the northern Gaza Strip because officials fear residents would risk their lives to reach distribution centres.

The rising civilian death toll has drawn international condemnations and raised concerns of a looming humanitarian disaster. Many Gazans are without electricity or running water, thousands have been displaced from their homes and residents say that without distribution disrupted, food supplies are running thin.

"This is not a crisis, it's a disaster," said water utility official Munzir Shiblak. "We are not even able to respond to the cry of the people." He said about 800,000 residents in Gaza City and northern parts of the territory had no access to running water from Tuesday. Gaza's overall population is 1.4 million people.

Israeli strike near UN school kills at least 30

Israel says it won't stop the assault until its southern towns are freed of the threat of Palestinian rocket fire and it receives international guarantees that Hamas, a militant group backed by Iran and Syria, will not restock its weapons stockpile. It blames Hamas for the civilian casualties, saying the group intentionally seeks cover in crowded residential areas.

Visiting southern Israel, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said he hoped to stop the offensive soon, but said it would depend on Hamas' willingness to stop attacks and stop its smuggling of weapons into Gaza from neighbouring Egypt.

"We have no interest in endlessly continuing the campaign. It will stop when the conditions that are essential for Israel's security are met," he said in the rocket-scarred town of Sderot.

The army says it has dealt a harsh blow to Hamas, killing 130 militants in the past two days and greatly reducing the rocket fire. Hamas is believed to have 20,000 fighters.

Late Monday, a paratroop officer and three Israeli infantrymen were killed in two separate friendly fire incidents, the military said. Heavy Israeli casualties could threaten to undermine what so far has been wide public support for the operation.

A high-level European Union delegation met with President Shimon Peres on Tuesday in a futile bid to end the violence. Commissioner Benita Ferraro-Waldner acknowledged Israel's right to self-defence, but said its response was disproportionate.

In Geneva, the international Red Cross said Gaza was in a "full-blown" humanitarian crisis. Its head of operations, Pierre Kraehenbuehl, said the few remaining power supplies could collapse at any moment.

Israeli leaders say there is no humanitarian crisis and that they have allowed the delivery of vital supplies.

International Mideast envoy Tony Blair said ensuring weapons smuggling to Hamas is halted would be a key step to restoring calm.

Speaking to reporters in Jerusalem, Blair said that stopping Hamas' rocket supply would be a "very significant advance in terms of Israel's security," which would allow Israel to halt its offensive and relieve the suffering of Gaza's civilians.

Load-Date: January 7, 2009

Why the Israeli people have finally had enough

Irish Independent

January 5, 2009 Monday

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Independent.ie 

Section: FEATURES

Length: 951 words

Body

So, it's genocide now, is it? Or is it actually another holocaust, something which one typically restrained Palestinian analyst described as "worse than Hitler's war against the Jews"? Are we watching the ethnic cleansing of an entire people? Are we witnessing the deliberate eradication of a race'

Well, no actually, we're not.

Yet the conventional dinner party wisdom which we've had to put up with in the media, both here in Ireland and generally across Britain, is that somehow Israel is the aggressor in the rapidly worsening situation in Gaza.

Footage of air strikes with the ensuing photogenic explosions and dramatic plumes of smoke, quickly followed by clips of collapsed buildings and enraged mourners, makes far better copy than actually looking at the reasons why Israel has done what it's done.

Anyone who devotes only a cursory glance at the news, both print and television, would be forgiven for thinking that, out of spite, might and malice, Israel has decided to destroy the Palestinian people.

The problem with that conclusion -- and it's not something you're going to learn from the BBC and most other outlets -- is that, contrary to the currently popular belief, Israel is actually acting with a ridiculous degree of restraint.

Over the last couple of years, thousands of rockets have been landing on Israeli soil and, finally, they have had enough.

But behind that statistic there is a human dimension which tends to be rather ignored.

I know many people in the southern Israeli town of Sderot and what is remarkable about their stories is not the number or make of rockets which have fallen on them on a daily basis for years, but the psychological carnage this wreaked upon them.

One woman freely admitted to me that she hasn't had a proper night's sleep in more than two years as she and her family now basically live in their bomb shelter and it's hard to tell who she hates more -- the Muslim terrorists of **Hamas** or the Israeli government which she thinks has abandoned them.

Why the Israeli people have finally had enough

It's a common feeling amongst residents of southern Israeli towns who have been the silent victims of a long campaign of violence, intimidation and murder carried out by Hamas. And now, finally, that the Israelis have said that enough is enough, they are somehow meant to be the aggressors?

There are people of good conscience on both sides of this argument, but one of the main problems in this debate lies in the cowardly tendency of the Western media to apply equivalence to both sides.

Thus, Hamas is seen to be as legitimate a government as the Israelis, and its rocket attacks across the border from Gaza are seen as being part of a yet another, intractable, interminable Middle Eastern dispute.

There's just one problem with that approach -- it's completely wrong.

Hamas is a fundamentalist Islamic organisation intent on the eradication of the state of Israel and all its citizens; a violent fascist regime that allows honour killings and the execution of homosexuals to continue in its sphere of influence. Bankrolled by Iran, it manages to make even Hezbollah look like a moderate organisation.

But Hamas is clever.

As a friend of mine from Sderot pointed out, one of its favourite tactics is to launch Qassams from Palestinian schoolyards -- while the schools are still in session.

Hamas does this, you see, knowing that the IDF can't immediately strike back (they can vector a rocket launch site within 90 seconds) because the last thing the Israelis need is footage of a devastated Palestinian school with dead kids.

And, over the last week, we have seen carefully manipulated footage of dead civilians, with the fact that they were effectively used as human shields conveniently ignored. When Israel pulled out of Gaza -- ironically, the last battalion of IDF troops to leave Gaza contained some people from Sderot -- they were acceding to international and internal pressure. The doves on the Left said it was to prove to Palestinians that they wanted to give Palestinians independence, the hawks on the Right -- and there are some truly scary right-wingers in Israel, even as ardent a supporter of the country as I am will freely admit that -- prophesied that it would lead to carnage.

And, lo and behold, virtually as soon as the last jeep left Gaza the rockets started. And then the blockade began, and the whole damn mess started all over again.

But there's a bigger picture here, something which Israelis have been trying to broadcast to the world, but which, thanks to their spectacular inability to accurately and sympathetically portray their point of view, has not been properly transmitted. It's this -- Israel is the front line of the war between democracy and Islamic fascism.

Would you rather live in a society with a free press, equal rights for women -- and anyone who knows an Israeli woman will know that they're not easily suppressed, anyway -- equal rights for gay people and a proud and stubborn belief in the right of the individual to lead their life in the way that they see fit or would you rather exist in a society where women who dare to speak their mind are executed, where gay people are not just shunned but murdered and where having a dissenting thought marks you out for death?

The civilian deaths in Gaza are to be mourned, and anyone who says otherwise is reprehensible. But in a sick and twisted irony, they are mourned more by Israelis than by Hamas, who know that every dead Palestinian kid is worth another piece of propaganda.

Here in the West, where we share the same values as Israel, we need to start standing shoulder with this tiny oasis of democracy in a vast desert of savagery.

To do otherwise is moral cowardice of the most repugnant kind.

Why the Israeli people have finally had enough

End of Document

Israel committing systematic mass murder

Daily News (South Africa)

January 14, 2009 Wednesday

e1 Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 11

Length: 995 words

Byline: YUSUF ISMAIL

Body

Despite the ongoing genocide in Gaza being perpetrated by the Israelis, very few people are aware of the dialectics of the conflict. Clichéd slogans and empty rhetoric in the mass media accentuate the misinformation writ large on a mass scale.

The "sickness, lurking in the collective mass subconscious of many" as your recent correspondent Larry Lachman put it, is in reality not the intolerance directed against the Jewish state, but rather the failure of the world to stand up against the monstrosity that the state of Israel has metamorphosed into. A cursory glance at the New York Times, The Washington Post, or the popular wire news services of Associated Press, Reuters or Agence France-Presse, indicate that people are still being fed with the same diet of propaganda that Israel is the unfortunate "victim" in this conflict.

Make no mistake. What we are witnessing is no conflict or sanguinary warfare; rather it is systematic mass murder on a grotesque scale perpetrated by one of the most tyrannical regimes on Earth. A recent delegation of ultra-orthodox Jewish rabbis in Durban described the unfolding events as a "perpetual holocaust". With the advent of the internet, alternative news forums and outlets such as youtube, people can now witness first-hand babies being shot point blank by the brutal Israeli Defence Force (IDF), women being systematically raped by Jewish soldiers and schools and villages being blown up.

Enforced starvation, denial of resources, such as fuel and water, destruction of infrastructure have only one purpose - to decimate a population.

Photographic evidence has now also emerged that Israel has been using controversial phosphorous shells in its offensive on Gaza, despite official denials by the IDF. This causes the skin to melt away and the victim's internal organs are burnt while he is alive. Cluster bombs are being dropped from the air. All of this is prohibited under international law.

Those causing the untold horror in Gaza are aware that the events do not relate to Israel's right to exist or even Hamas's involvement. Every massacre that Israel has engaged in over the past 60 years has nothing to do with Israeli security and more to do with the increased appropriation of land and the expulsion and eviction of the indigenous Palestinian population. We are repeatedly told that the invasion of Gaza has to do with the rockets fired by Hamas who had allegedly broken the ceasefire in place since July. But what is the reality to the present impasse? And how indeed was it sparked? In an excellent debate held on Democracy Now between academic

Israel committing systematic mass murder

Norman Finkelstein and former US Ambassador to Israel Martin Indyk, Finkelstein illustrates how Israel had deliberately broken the ceasefire between Hamas and Israel on November 4 by venturing into Gaza and killing 10 people, which it deemed militants after which Hamas retaliated by rocket launches.

Muscle

According to the Israeli newspaper Ha'aretz, defence minister Ehud Barak began plans for this invasion as early as March 2008. After their defeat in Lebanon in 2006, Israel wished to flex its military muscle and illustrate it was still a force to be reckoned with. Over and above this, Hamas was signalling to the international community that it wanted a diplomatic settlement of the conflict along the June 1967 borders. It had gained and entered international consensus. And in order to destroy this peace initiative by Hamas, Israel decided to attack and wage a killing spree. In fact,, Israel had enforced a blockade preventing all economic activity of the Palestinians long before Hamas was democratically elected into power. In describing the catastrophe, former High Commissioner for human rights, Mary Robinson, described the blockade as a destruction of civilisation.

The Dagan Plan, named after General Meir Dagan, who was with Ariel Sharon in the 1982 Lebanon invasion, involves the imprisonment of Palestinians in a ghetto wall, running right through the West Bank and Gaza, leaving Palestinians enslaved in a virtual concentration camp.

On the eve of the creation of Israel in 1948, history documents how the Stern and Irgun Gang, Jewish terrorist groups, slaughtered thousands of women and children in Deir Yassin. In one event, survivors of the attack were paraded around like cattle before they were taken to the quarry, beheaded, with their torsos dumped in rivers. Leading members of this group were people like Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Shamir who later became prime ministers of Israel. One of the most powerful Israeli historians in the world today, Ilan Pappé in The Making of the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1947-1951, shows how the massacres of Palestinians were not randomly committed, but part of a master plan, to rid the Jewish state of as many Palestinians as possible. This is ethnic cleansing. Israel's creation, according to Pappé, was thus built by military force, ethnic cleansing and additionally the forced expulsion of close to a million people - the original inhabitants of Palestine.

The expulsion was a direct authorisation by the first prime minister and warlord, David Ben Gurion, when he made a dismissive gesture with his hand, stating, "Expel them". The events in Gaza unfolding by the minute give us a clue.

Descendants

The very people of Gaza are direct descendants of the million refugees who were expelled from what is now the Jewish state. Any realisation of the refugees' internationally recognised right to return would be the death-knell to the brutal Zionist project.

Richard Falk, the newly appointed UN Special Rapporteur for human rights in the occupied territories, recently asked: "Is it irresponsible to associate the treatment of Palestinians by Israelis with this criminalised Nazi record of collective atrocity? I think not."

And that is the moral dilemma of our times. The once oppressed have transmogrified into the modern version of the Third Reich.

p Yusuf Ismail is an attorney and commentator on political issues

Load-Date: January 14, 2009

World leaders react to Gaza crisis

Ottawa Citizen

December 29, 2008 Monday

Final Edition

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Byline: Reuters; with files from Agence France-Presse

Body

"The members of the Security Council expressed serious concern at the escalation of the situation in Gaza and called for an immediate halt to all violence."

Croatia's Neven Jurica,

UN Security Council president

"We talked to them (**Hamas**) and we told them 'please, we ask you, do not end the truce. Let the truce continue and not stop' so that we could have avoided what happened."

Mahmoud Abbas

Palestinian president

"Canada is deeply concerned by the escalation of violence in Southern Israel and the Gaza Strip and by the loss of life and the suffering sustained by all sides. Israel has a clear right to defend itself against the continued rocket attacks by Palestinian militant groups. ... First and foremost, those rocket attacks must stop. At the same time, we urge both sides to use all efforts to avoid civilian casualties and to create the conditions to allow safe and unhindered humanitarian access to those in need in Gaza. In addition to calling for immediate calm, we urge renewed efforts to reach a ceasefire between **Hamas** and Israel and for Israeli and Palestinian leaders to remain committed to finding a comprehensive peace settlement."

Lawrence Cannon

Canada's foreign affairs minister

"All Palestinian combatants and all the Islamic world's pious people are obliged to defend the defenceless **women**, children and people in Gaza in any way possible. Whoever is killed in this legitimate defence is considered a martyr."

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei,

Iran's supreme leader

World leaders react to Gaza crisis

"This is a tragic episode. It takes place at a time when there is a power vacuum in Israel and the United States. ... France and Europe must work to obtain rapidly an end to the firing of rockets, an end to the bombings of retaliation and the opening of doors in Gaza. ... Europeans have a role to play."

Bernard Kouchner

France's foreign minister

"The rise in rocket attacks on Israel since Dec. 19, and yesterday's massive loss of life, make this a dangerous moment which should be of concern to the whole of the international community. ... The U.K. supports an urgent ceasefire and immediate halt to all violence."

David Miliband

Britain's foreign secretary

"The native land of Jesus cannot continue to be witness to so much bloodshed, repeating itself without end. I implore an end to that violence, which must be condemned in every manifestation and for a renewal of the truce in the Gaza Strip."

Pope Benedict

"China expresses serious concern about the escalation of the tense situation in Gaza, denounces actions that cause injuries and deaths to ordinary people, opposes the use of military force in resolving disputes, appeals to related parties to exercise maximum restraint and to settle differences through dialogue."

Qin Gang,

China's foreign ministry spokesman

"The Indonesian government condemns the attack and calls for Israel to end the use of violence ..."

Teuku Faizasyah

Indonesia's foreign affairs spokesman

"While India is aware of the immediate cross-border provocations resulting from rocket attacks particularly against targets in southern Israel, it urges an immediate end to the use of force against Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip that has resulted in large numbers of casualties."

India's foreign ministry

"Clearly, we are calling on **Hamas** and other militants to cease shelling southern Israel. Obviously, they have broken the ceasefire and engaged in an act of aggression against Israel. Israel has responded. We are echoing the calls from around the world for parties to move back to a ceasefire."

Julia Gillard

Australia's deputy prime minister

"Japan will continue to support ... efforts toward the promotion of the Middle East peace process, and will continue its assistance to the Palestinian people, including Gaza residents."

Japan's foreign ministry

"It will be more difficult to carry out Israel-Palestine peace talks healthily in 2009 under these circumstances. (Israel) might aim to weaken **Hamas** with the operation in Gaza. We do not share this view. Many people, some groups in

World leaders react to Gaza crisis

the Muslim world, who see this tragedy in Gaza will feel more sympathy for **Hamas** because they are the victims now."

Ali Babacan

Turkish foreign minister

Load-Date: December 29, 2008

End of Document

Letters:

The Philadelphia Inquirer

January 11, 2009 Sunday

CITY-D Edition

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Section: CURRENTS; Inq Currents; Pg. C04

Length: 671 words

Body

Hamas threat Israel is doing the whole region a favor with its air and ground campaign against **Hamas**, a primary barrier to any progress toward peace between Israel and the Palestinians.

As a proxy of Iran and an offspring of the extremist Muslim Brotherhood, **Hamas** represents a threat to the stability of the whole region. While publicly condemning Israel for its actions, many Arab leaders are secretly wishing it success. **Hamas**, which is no more than a death cult that has no regard for the lives of those it claims to be fighting for, has no interest in peaceful coexistence.

The region will owe Israel a debt of gratitude for its sacrifices.

David Stein Philadelphia David0857@verizon.net U.S. policy flawed Israel, one of the most powerful military forces in the world, thanks to billions of U.S. taxpayer dollars and a powerful lobby in Congress, invades Gaza, which has no army, navy or air force. This is in response to **Hamas** rocket attacks, which have killed 13 Israelis in seven years.

Gaza already was nothing more than a 25-mile-long open-aided prison whose ports, airspace, electricity, water, medical supplies, and other basic necessities were controlled by Israel. Americans, in the meantime, become targets of retaliation and hatred when the Arab world sees pictures of the Palestinians killed and wounded, often by U.S.-made weapons.

But U.S. officials express solidarity with Israel when real leadership is needed to tackle the issues of land, security and refugees. As long as we have a Mideast policy that appears to be made in Tel Aviv, the United States cannot function as an honest broker, and the cycle of violence becomes self-perpetuating.

Elaine Hughes Maple Glen And the schools? There are two glaring omissions in Gov. Rendell's op-ed last Sunday about all of the wonderful benefits from gaming revenue in Pennsylvania ("Pa. gaming brought wide tax cuts").

First is the horse-racing industry, which gets 12 percent of gross terminal revenue at all gaming sites. The other is public education, which gets none of the gaming revenue even though it is arguably the state's most urgent obligation.

Will Richan Chester Regroup, Mayor You really had to reach in your editorial last Sunday ("Nutter's rough year") to list any accomplishments by Mayor Nutter in the last year. True, he was blindsided by the financial crisis that beset the economy. However, he has not been able to restabilize vital services and is floundering like a fish out of water.

Letters:

You credit him with opening the 311 center, but it was not needed at a time when the administration wants to close libraries for lack of money.

The mayor does not have a clear direction on what needs to be done. He scares the citizenry. He needs to retreat and regroup if he wants to save the city and his administration.

Sideris BastasPhiladelphiasbastas224@hotmail.comShedding lightLast Sunday's Inquirer brought overdue transparency in a city that is in need of some organized opposition to a top-down government that runs mostly everything in the dark.

Beginning on the front page with Jeff Shields' expose of the slimy DROP program deals, and followed up with Allison Steele's report on Mayor Nutter's payback for a court decision that offends him, we learn of political chutzpah that would easily match Jimmy Walker's or Huey Long's.

The Currents section offered insights on the budget from eight credible sources who brought forward a discussion that had been kept in the dark. The best was from Al Schmidt, executive director of the Republican City Committee, who exposed the city's unique health-care benefit program as a slush fund for the unions.

Jim FosterPhiladelphiaHelp fight hunger! applaud publisher Brian Tierney's plans to raise 180,000 pounds of food in 2009 for needy families. It is difficult to comprehend that there are still men, women and children who go to bed at night without a decent meal. Many of us purchase our morning coffee without thinking twice. Maybe once a week we can do without the coffee.

Carol A. PasquarelloPhiladelphia

Load-Date: January 11, 2009

Israel says end in sight as fighting rages in Gaza

Irish Examiner

January 12, 2009 Monday

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Section: WORLD

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Body

Israeli troops pushed deeper into Gaza's main city, sparking some of the fiercest battles yet of the 16-day-old war that Israel launched in response to rocket fire, but that has failed completely to 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, said 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 yesterday some 17 rockets were fired into Israel from Gaza by mid-afternoon, without wounding anyone.

Both Israel and Hamas last week brushed off the UN Security Council resolution that called on both sides to stop fighting, and yesterday saw Israeli troops push deep into the territory's main population centre.

Troops crept into the southern Tal al-Hawa neighbourhood of Gaza City, encountering roadside bombs, mortar and gunfire from Palestinian fighters, witnesses said.

Israel says end in sight as fighting rages in Gaza

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 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 on Saturday 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 were killed in clashes yesterday.

With the body count spiralling, the exiled political chief of Hamas, Khaled Meshaal, remained defiant, vowing in an address televised on Saturday the Islamists would not strike a deal on a permanent truce with Israel, a country they are pledged to destroying.

"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 offensive began on December 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, with Palestinian militants firing more than 600 rockets, some of them penetrating deeper than ever inside Israel.

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, with major cities holding fresh protests yesterday.

Load-Date: January 12, 2009

Gaza conflict comes to Cal Poly-San Luis Obispo

University Wire

January 9, 2009 Friday

Copyright 2009 Mustang Daily via U-Wire

Length: 602 words

Byline: By Matt Fountain, Mustang Daily; **SOURCE:** Cal Poly

Dateline: SAN LUIS OBISPO, Calif.

Body

Students gathered Thursday morning at the University Union Plaza to voice their opinions about the ongoing conflict in the Middle East between Israel and **Hamas** militants in Gaza.

The late morning rally, which was organized by the Students for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (SJPME), was in response to Israel's air and ground offensive against **Hamas** dubbed "Operation Cast Lead" by the Israeli military.

The operation was launched Dec. 27 in response to **Hamas** rocket attacks that have hit Israeli targets as much as 24 miles away from the Israel-Gaza border.

The Israeli military has since shut down the Gazan border, and up until a brief ceasefire Wednesday, effectively blocked U.N. aid and foreign journalists from entering.

SJPME president Ara Kim said prior to the demonstration, "We want to bring attention to the giant humanitarian crisis that's going on in Gaza right now."

"They're running out of food," she said. "They have no water, the hospitals are really limited in terms of supplies and space and everything. It's just terrible what's going on right now."

"The U.S. has given Israel a lot of money and weapons, and I feel that that's partially my tax money and I don't believe it should be used to go against (Gaza)...people think that they can't do anything about it, but we want to give them a forum."

To counter the roughly 40 SJPME demonstrators at the rally was a group of about 30 members and supporters of the Israel Alliance, a Cal Poly organization led by President Jacob Kory.

"We're here to denounce **Hamas** terrorism," Kory said shortly before the rally began. "I don't think enough people realize **Hamas** is a terrorist organization. We're really here to show our support for Israel and the actions they've taken."

Although the two-party protest was peaceful and ended without incident, dialogue often became heated from members of the SLO chapter of Code Pink, a national group for **women** whose stated mission is to protest the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan-- as well as the formation of all new wars who joined the Palistinean demonstrators.

Gaza conflict comes to Cal Poly- San Luis Obispo

"I was a little concerned to see the Code Pink ladies start to come within our ranks and yell at us," Kory said after the protest. "This was supposed to be a peaceful rally and we didn't want anyone to get into a verbal confrontation. I'm not sure they were representative of SJPME, though," he said.

Despite minor unpleasant encounters, members of both organizations expressed their satisfaction at the outcome of the rally.

SJPME member Grace Kirschner briefly addressed the crowd to thank everyone for attending.

"It went well," Kirschner said afterwards. "It was a good turnout and a great discussion of opinions...I was glad to see the passion."

"It was really good," Kory agreed. "For the most part, I think that both groups truly want to see a peaceful solution to this situation and I think that's the key point of the rally today."

"I'm really honored to have people come and ask questions and really try to understand the situation," he said.

Regardless of which side students took on the issue, most were happy to see a healthy debate take place and thought it was reflective of the tolerant atmosphere of the Cal Poly campus.

"I think it's good to have things like this because it gets people interested," said Cal Poly statistics junior Michelle Shaffer, who came to the rally in support of Israel.

"I feel like a lot of people just don't know (about the situation) or are looking at just one side of it," she said. "So now I think people will go and research more what's going on and why the United States cares."

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Load-Date: January 9, 2009

The Thursday Column - Christmas has ended - so should Gaza siege

Irish News

January 8, 2009 Thursday

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Section: Pg. 2

Length: 660 words

Byline: Jim Gibney

Body

The reoccupation by Israel of the Gaza Strip and the slaughter of its Palestinian inhabitants form one of the most shameful episodes, among a long list of others, for the international community since the state of Israel was set up in 1948.

For the past three weeks the United Nations and the European Union watched with indifference as Israeli bombs rained down on Palestinians and Palestinians fired rockets into Israel.

As I write more than 600 Palestinians and five Israelis have been killed. Entire families are being wiped out in Gaza. In the bombing of a mosque near the town of Jabaliya, five sisters were killed and in the rubble of a home in the town of Zeitoun 14 members of the same family were found dead.

In the early days of the invasion an estimated 70 Palestinian children were killed. The reoccupation of Gaza, which the Israelis were forced to evacuate more than two years ago, follows almost two years of a siege by the Israelis of the territory which has reduced it to a wasteland with more than a million people being denied food, water, electricity, medication and other essentials.

The two-year punitive siege of Gaza and its people, which Hamas claims provoked reprisal rocket attacks on Israel, the aerial bombardment and the reoccupation of Gaza by the Israelis, however short or long, are an indictment of the international community for refusing to resolve this conflict and do justice to the Palestinians.

It is also an indictment of a feeble foreign policy by western powers, including the EU, who permit the US and Israel to set the terms under which a permanent solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict are to be brokered.

This invasion by Israel is all the more appalling because it is believed that the invasion is being driven by internal politics in advance of Israel's general election in February.

In other words, bombs are raining down on Gaza killing hundreds of people as part of a pre-election macho popularity contest between the leaders of Israeli political parties seeking to form the next government.

One such contestant in the election is Israel's foreign minister Tzipi Livni. She told the world's media last week: "There is no humanitarian crisis and therefore no need for a humanitarian truce."

In another interview she said that Israel was upholding the democratic values of the western world.

The Thursday Column - Christmas has ended - so should Gaza siege

What perverted logic is at work here? Dropping bombs, denying children, women and men the basic needs to live as human beings are considered to be 'democratic values' by a possible prime minister.

Other reasons are offered up for Israel's invasion - collective punishment of Palestinians for daring to elect Hamas as their government in 2006; revenge for the defeat of Israeli forces by Hezbollah when they were forced out of Lebanon the same year; a warning to Iran over its support for Hamas and its regional ambitions; a test for the incoming US president Barack Obama; and of course the rocket attacks on Israel from Gaza.

Whichever reason is the correct one the people of Palestine and Israel are once again plunged into a cycle of war with all the human misery accompanying it.

The central issue in this war and all wars for more than 60 years between the Palestinians and Israelis is the failure to agree a settlement that would secure and protect a state for the Palestinians and a state for the Israelis.

Hamas, Fatah and the Israelis are all part of the problem - they have to be part of the solution.

Isolating Hamas and treating them as if they are a Palestinian version of al-Qaida is wrong and should cease.

President-elect Barack Obama will be in office this month.

A durable settlement to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict should receive his undivided attention until it has been achieved.

Belfast's international wall has a new message from renowned painter Danny Devenney: 'Happy war, Christmas is over' - a play on John Lennon's peace song Happy Christmas (War is Over).

Christmas is over and so should the war be.

Load-Date: January 8, 2009

Israeli mortars kill 30 in Gaza

Deseret Morning News (Salt Lake City)

January 7, 2009 Wednesday

Copyright 2009 The Deseret News Publishing Co.

Length: 666 words

Byline: Ibrahim Barzak and Jason Keyser Associated Press

Body

GAZA CITY -- 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 insisted on 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 the area of the school.

Israeli mortars kill 30 in Gaza

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 initiative 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."

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.

Load-Date: January 7, 2009

Israel must fight its battles alone

The Toronto Star

January 7, 2009 Wednesday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A02

Length: 664 words

Byline: Rosie DiManno, Toronto Star

Body

In defending its existence, Israel needs no advice from anybody.

It does not require the world's approval.

That will never be granted and, in any event, wouldn't minimize even an iota the intransigence of Israel's many enemies - those who lob rockets indiscriminately at civilians, delete the vilified nation from school textbooks, screech venom during public protests and demand boycotts against Israeli professors in Canadian universities.

For all the political support Israel still enjoys in Washington - where President-elect Barack Obama has declined to speak a condemnatory word about the now 12-day-old offensive against Gaza, perhaps hoping the crisis will be diffused before he takes office - the tiny state well understands it will always have to fight its own wars, alone, with no purported ally making any common cause on the ground.

There is clearly, also, some doubt in the Knesset that an Obama administration would be so steadfast a friend to Israel as all its predecessors. That might have prompted Israel to act now, muscularly, with both aerial and ground assaults.

But just as Israel is never allowed to participate in a multinational military coalition against the likes of Afghanistan and Serbia - as if inclusion would bring disrepute on the exercise - so too is the country unilaterally and singularly responsible for its own security.

Aim rockets at towns inside Israel from Gaza - because moral equivalency apparently justifies such attacks on innocents as a response to economic blockade - and, at some point, the target will start firing back, if only out of exasperation.

What's astonishing - maddening to its opponents - is that this speck of an entity so rarely loses these battles, and even then only by virtue of a revisionist scorecard that racks up demerit points for failing to achieve all objectives. By this reckoning, Israel lost the 2006 war with Hezbollah in Lebanon because the foe wasn't remotely routed. And Israel, wracked with self-reproach over what it failed to do in that engagement, accepted the assessment. For the first time, its vaunted security forces looked weakened, blunted by Hezbollah's sheer refusal to recoil. Of course, the truth is that Hezbollah was more than willing to accept the death of civilians, made this expendability of human life part of its martial tactics, and then exploited those losses to secure greater revulsion for Israel.

Israel must fight its battles alone

Having made the difficult decision, too long deferred, to take the conflict to **Hamas** by sending ground troops into Gaza, Israel needs to finish what it started; to control the battlefield for today and for however many tomorrows can be secured by this tragic but unavoidable campaign.

That means no ceasefire yet and maybe house-to-house combat before it's over, **Hamas** relishing the prospect of urban warfare on turf its fighters know intimately. That won't change the outcome but it will cause more suffering for Palestinians.

The optics of war are poor for Israel as helpless civilians flee from the barrage, bloodied children carried in their parents' arms, grown men weeping over the destruction of their homes. But it is **Hamas** that established the non-boundaries of this conflict by inserting fighters and munitions into mosques, schools and teeming residential neighbourhoods. They hide behind the skirts of **women** and promote martyrdom.

While neither side is yet in the mood to accept a truce, **Hamas** has more to gain by a cessation of hostilities, despite all the defiant rhetoric. **Hamas** knows as little about fighting a conventional war as they do about governing with even a vestige of competence.

Since Palestinians made the fatal error of electing a radical Islamist organization over the corrupt devil that they knew, they doomed themselves to lives of crushing wretchedness. These are the consequences.

But in the court of public opinion, Israel can't win for trying. Every Israeli knows that. Every Jew knows it.

Rosie DiManno usually appears Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday.

Load-Date: January 7, 2009

Outrage as Israelis kill young children; More than 30 dead after UN school hit by bombardment

Daily Post (North Wales)

January 7, 2009 Wednesday

North Wales Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 17

Length: 639 words

Byline: ED JAMES

Body

INTERNATIONAL outrage grew over civilian deaths in Gaza last night after an Israeli bombardment killed at least 34 people, many of them children, near a UN school.

Hundreds of Palestinians had sought safety at the school after fleeing from a refugee camp in the face of Israeli advances.

It was the second deadly attack near a UN school in hours, and the worst since Israel sent ground forces into Gaza last weekend.

Nearly 600 Palestinians, including dozens of civilians, have now died.

Ignoring international calls for a ceasefire, Israeli soldiers edged closer to Gaza's major population centres. A total of 58 Palestinians were killed in fighting yesterday with just two confirmed as militants.

The rising civilian death toll has drawn international condemnation and raised concerns of a looming humanitarian disaster.

Many Gazans are without electricity or running water, thousands have been displaced from their homes and residents say that with distribution disrupted, food supplies are running thin.

"There's nowhere safe in Gaza. Everyone here is terrorised and traumatised," said John Ging, the top UN official in Gaza, after the first strike on the compound of a UN school killed three people.

The United Nations said three civilians were killed in the first air strike.

The second landed about 10 yards outside the school in the northern Gaza town of Jebaliya.

Dr Bassam Abu Warda, director of Kamal Radwan Hospital, said 34 people were killed.

Majed Hamdan, a news photographer, said he reached the scene shortly after the attacks. He said many children were among the dead.

Outrage as Israelis kill young children More than 30 dead after UN school hit by bombardment

"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 was not enough space for the wounded."

UN officials say they provided their location co-ordinates to Israel's army to ensure their buildings in Gaza were not targeted.

The army declined to comment, but said Hamas often used schools, mosques and civilian areas for cover.

The international Red Cross said an ambulance post was hit yesterday, injuring one medical worker.

Ten Israelis have died since the operation began, including a soldier who was shot yesterday.

"I am appealing to political leaders here and in the region and the world to get their act together and stop this," Mr Ging said, speaking at Gaza's largest hospital.

"They are responsible for these deaths."

United Nations staff estimate around 15,000 people have fled to 23 UN-run schools turned into makeshift refuges.

UN food aid has halted in the northern Gaza Strip because officials fear residents would risk their lives to reach distribution centres.

Israel says it will not stop the assault until its southern towns are freed of the threat of Palestinian rocket fire and it receives international guarantees that Hamas, a militant group backed by Iran and Syria, will not re-arm.

It blames Hamas for the civilian casualties, saying the group intentionally seeks cover in residential areas.

"The battle is bitter but unavoidable.

We set out on this operation in order to deal Hamas a heavy blow and to alter living conditions in the south of the country and to block smuggling into the Gaza Strip," said Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak.

The army says it has dealt a harsh blow to Hamas, killing 130 militants in the past two days and greatly reducing the rocket fire. At least 15 rockets were fired yesterday, and one landed in the town of Gadera, about 25 miles from the Gaza border, lightly wounding a three-month-old baby, police said. At the outset of the fighting, militants launched dozens of rockets each day.

In Geneva, the international Red Cross said Gaza was in a "full-blown" humanitarian crisis.

Graphic

Israeli soldiers take cover as a mobile artillery piece fires towards targets in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday in defiance of international calls for a ceasefire

Load-Date: January 7, 2009

ISRAEL IS NOT THE CAUSE OF TERROR

Weekend Australian

January 3, 2009 Saturday

2 - All-round First Edition

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 14

Length: 1161 words

Body

Islamist terrorists hate all democracies as much as Israel's

THE new year dawned with excellent news from Iraq. For the first time since Saddam Hussein created a compound that protected him from the people he oppressed, his Republican Palace is in the hands of representatives of Iraq's citizens. During the terrorist attacks that followed the US occupation of Iraq in 2003 it was the heavily fortified coalition headquarters, but now it is under the control of an Iraqi government that relies on the voters, not soldiers and secret police, for its power. This outcome offers hope that the horror Iraqis have long endured is coming to an end. Just as important, it shows that change is possible in the Middle East, that the cynics who suggest that the US invasion was misplaced idealism at best and more likely an imperialist assault on Islam that was doomed to fail, were wrong. Whether the people of Iraq will ultimately decide that the blood and treasure spent in pursuit of a democratic state was justified cannot be known now, but this morning there is light at the end of a long tunnel and cause for hope that Iraq could actually become a stable democracy.

The news from Israel is far darker. Israeli air power is hitting Gaza hard, making it clear to the **Hamas** regime there that Israel will retaliate for every rocket fired across the frontier. And the Israeli army is ready to roll into Gaza to destroy whatever elements of the **Hamas** command structure and armoury the air force has missed. Like every Israeli exercise in self-defence in the past 60 years, this campaign has generated understandable anguish all over the world at the loss of civilian life. Of the 400 or so fatalities in Gaza over the past week the UN estimates 25 per cent were civilians, as ordinary people were caught in a futile fight that **Hamas** started but has no hope of finishing. The terrorist movement dreams of Israel's end, of a new holocaust where the Jewish state ceases to exist. This is something that Israel will obviously never allow and if **Hamas** wants to end the suffering of the people of Gaza in the short term it will renew the ceasefire it ended on December 19. And in the long term it will accept Israel's right to exist as a starting point for negotiations for a permanent peace. And a permanent peace is what is required to end the appalling privations of the 1.4 million people of Gaza, subsisting in what is effectively a 360sqkm open prison, where Israel ruthlessly regulates what is allowed in at one end and Egypt does the same at the other. It does not have to be this way. The people of the West Bank are no friends to Israel but, under the secular Fatah regime that rules there, a peace of sorts exists and while its people are hardly prosperous they are not deprived of medicine and meals because their government is more interested in pointlessly sniping at Israel than in the wellbeing of its people. It is more than passing strange that **Hamas**, which was fairly elected in 2006 on a platform of improving living standards in Gaza, is now making things much worse through violence that serves no purpose.

But in addition to anguish, there is international anger at Israel, as its enemies blame it not just for the constant crisis in the Middle East but for the most ominous threat to the peace of the planet -- Islamic terrorism. There is an

ISRAEL IS NOT THE CAUSE OF TERROR

obvious argument: the existence of the Jewish state has caused the poverty of the Palestinian people. And the way in which Britain, Europe, Australia and especially the US -- Osama bin Laden calls them the ``crusader states" -- support Israel is part of the plot against Islam that is responsible for the US invasion of Iraq, the war against the Taliban in Afghanistan and opposition to Iran developing nuclear power, and weapons, if it wishes. According to this argument, if the US abandoned its imperialist plan to impose democracy on Islamic nations and if it stopped supporting Israel the world would be at peace. According to opponents of Israel, while the Jewish state exists in its present form and within its existing boundaries, Muslims will rage at the oppression of the Palestinians and they will protest against their treatment by any means they can. According to this argument, the underlying cause of terror attacks, from September 11 to the murders in Mumbai last November, where the attackers made a point of targeting a Jewish centre, is the existence of Israel, which in its present form puts people everywhere at risk.

It is all dangerous nonsense. There is no doubting the rage of millions of Muslims over the condition of the Palestinians. It is equally assured that anti-Semitism runs deep in much of the Muslim world, just as it was endemic in Europe 70 years ago. But the real reason for Islamic terrorism has less to do with Israel than the fact that around the world small groups of men, and they are almost invariably men, feel powerless in cultures where women have the same rights they do, where people can say and wear what they like and where democracy, not theocracy, is the universally supported form of government. For all their invocations of the Koran, Islamists who believe in mass murder have no real connection with the honoured Muslim faith as practised by billions of people on all continents. The Muslim people of democracies such as Indonesia and Turkey have no truck with terror and are accordingly a target for Islamic extremists. Certainly, religious conservatives won the last election in Iran, but only because a council of clerics decides who is allowed to run for office. And the people of Afghanistan, in the October 2004 presidential poll, and Iraq, in the 2005 general election, demonstrated they preferred democracy to dictatorships.

Islamist terrorists see these many millions of Muslims as enemies, just as they hate the Americans and Europeans, the Africans and Australians, the people of every and no faith who they murder whenever they are able. And they will use any explanation they can come up with to excuse the gratification they take in ideologically driven killing. Bin Laden used to explain that US bases in Saudi Arabia were an affront to his faith, but he did not call off al-Qa'ida when the US pulled out of the kingdom. And, short of every Jew leaving the country, there is nothing Israel, or any other nation can do to placate the Hamas ideologues and their allies. Last week, the Taliban banned girls attending school in a frontier province of Pakistan. To show people they meant it, a few days later a suicide bomber murdered 13 schoolchildren just across the Afghan border. It is the same sort of strategy that Hamas suicide bombers have used to kill people in Israel, Jews and Muslims alike. Such savage nihilism serves no rational purpose in the world of practical politics. But the men who design doctrine for Hamas and the Taliban, and the many terror cells who follow their lead, are not much interested in the world the rest of us live in.

Load-Date: January 3, 2009

UN official seeks war crimes probe into Israeli actions; Both sides reject call for ceasefire as offensive continues

Edmonton Journal (Alberta)

January 10, 2009 Saturday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A9

Length: 606 words

Byline: Ahmed Abu Hamda and Dion Nissenbaum, McClatchy Newspapers

Dateline: GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip

Body

The UN high commissioner for human rights called Friday for an investigation of possible Israeli war crimes in Gaza as local residents told more gruesome tales about Israeli troops neglecting wounded civilians and the killing of unarmed Palestinians.

High Commissioner Navi Pillav noted the case of four boys who were rescued Wednesday by the International Committee of the Red Cross from the side of their dead mother in a dwelling 100 yards from an Israeli military post. The Red Cross called the incident "shocking," and Pillav told the BBC that it "had all the elements of what constitutes a war crime."

Eyewitnesses interviewed by McClatchy correspondents, along with Israeli and Palestinian human rights groups, described gruesome scenes in and near Gaza City.

Among them: the charred remains of a toddler that had been partially devoured by wild animals, reported by the Red Cross; and an infant bleeding to death in his mother's arms, reported to a McClatchy special correspondent; and an unarmed man allegedly shot to death by an Israeli soldier in front of his family, reported by a relative who spoke to a McClatchy special correspondent and a witness who was interviewed by an Israeli human rights group.

McClatchy staff reporters couldn't independently verify the alleged violations of international law because Israel has blocked foreign correspondents from entering Gaza.

The Israeli military says it's investigating the reports, but it defended its soldiers.

"Israeli forces aim for military targets," said Maj. Avital Leibovich, the chief Israeli military spokeswoman for the international media. "We aim for Hamas targets. We don't just kill innocent people for no reason."

Israel and Hamas ignored a unanimous UN Security Council resolution calling for an immediate cease-fire. The Bush administration abstained from voting on the resolution, and the Israeli government dismissed it as ineffective and impractical, while Gaza militants launched more rockets Friday into southern Israel, causing no serious injuries.

NO END IN SIGHT TO CONFLICT

UN official seeks war crimes probe into Israeli actions; Both sides reject call for ceasefire as offensive continues

There was no sign that the conflict would end soon. Instead, Israeli leaders directed the military to intensify operations in Gaza, where about 800 Palestinians -- nearly half of them women and children -- have been killed in the past two weeks, according to Palestinian medical officials.

In what the UN Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs called "one of the gravest incidents" of the military operation, 30 Palestinians were reported killed when Israeli shells hit a home south of Gaza City that was filled with more than 100 residents who were trying to avoid the fighting.

Leibovich said the Israeli military so far hasn't been able to confirm that its forces hit the house and questioned reports that soldiers had rounded up family members in the neighbourhood and escorted them to the home that was later hit.

Survivors interviewed by a McClatchy special correspondent at a Gaza City hospital, however, described being trapped for days inside their homes while Israeli forces moved through the neighbourhood trying to root out Hamas militants.

Rescue workers and survivors who were allowed late this week to escape Israeli-controlled areas described stark scenes.

A humanitarian aid worker said he came across the bodies in the northern Gaza Strip and that they appeared to have been hit by an Israeli shell while they were trying to run for safety.

The UN World Food Program, which feeds 265,000 Palestinians in Gaza -- some 18 per cent of the population -- said it was able to deliver food within Gaza but that it risked running out of stocks within several days.

Graphic

Colour Photo: Reuters; A Palestinian boy holds a toy gun during a protest on Friday, in the West Bank city of Ramallah against Israel's offensive in Gaza. Both Hamas and Israel have rejected a UN resolution calling for a ceasefire. Jets and tanks again pounded the Palestinian enclave, as Israeli ministers debated whether to step up their two-week-old campaign against Hamas guerrillas. ;

Load-Date: January 10, 2009

Gillard backs call for Gaza ceasefire

Australian Financial Review

January 12, 2009 Monday

First Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 4

Length: 362 words

Byline: Tracy Sutherland with wires

Body

The federal government has supported a United Nations call for an immediate ceasefire in the Middle East after the death toll in Israel's 16-day assault on **Hamas** in Gaza spiralled past 850 people.

As international outrage escalated over the conflict, Acting Prime Minister Julia Gillard yesterday expressed deep concern about the civilian casualties, which have grown to at least 854 since Israel's offensive began on December 27 - the dead include 270 children, 93 **women** and 12 paramedics, according to Palestinian doctors.

Another 3490 people have been wounded.

"Australia welcomes the UN Security Council's resolution on the current conflict in the Gaza Strip, specifically its call for an immediate, durable and fully respected ceasefire," Ms Gillard said in a statement.

Both **Hamas** and Israel have already brushed aside the resolution calling for an immediate truce in the territory.

Ms Gillard said: "The Australian government is deeply concerned at the ongoing impact on civilians of the continuing conflict in the Gaza Strip and southern Israel."

She supported the resolution's call for unimpeded access for humanitarian assistance to the Gaza Strip, intensified efforts to prevent illicit arms trafficking, and the sustained reopening of crossing points.

Australia supported the UN's call for a two-state solution, she said.

"We support the resolution's call for renewed efforts towards to achieve a comprehensive peace based on the vision of Israel and a Palestinian state living side by side in peace," Ms Gillard said.

"Any such solution must bring a halt to rocket attacks against Israel by the terrorist organisation **Hamas** and a halt in arms shipments into the Gaza Strip."

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd broke into his summer holiday last week to express similar sentiments, saying Israel should meet its humanitarian obligations towards the people of Gaza, although the Australian government recognised Israel's right to self-defence.

Opposition Leader Malcolm Turnbull welcomed the UN Security Council resolution.

Gillard backs call for Gaza ceasefire

Meanwhile, hundreds of people gathered outside South Australia's Parliament House in Adelaide yesterday to support a rally to protest against the Israeli attacks.

Load-Date: April 7, 2012

End of Document

West Bank is experiencing economic surge, Israel says

The Jerusalem Post

December 2, 2008 Tuesday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 2

Length: 473 words

Byline: YAAKOV KATZ

Body

Unprecedented military coordination and a sincere effort by the Palestinian Authority to crack down on Hamas has led to a unique economic surge in the West Bank in the past year, according to an internal Defense Ministry report obtained on Monday by The Jerusalem Post.

Prepared by the IDF's Civil Administration, the report cites a three percent drop to 16% in Palestinian unemployment since the beginning of the year. In addition, the report cites a 24% increase in Palestinian average daily wages, up from NIS 70 in 2007 to NIS 86.9.

The stats were collected in recent months from a variety of sources, including the PA and the United Nations International Labor Organization. Since the beginning of the year, the IDF has also removed 113 roadblocks and dirt mounds throughout the West Bank, enabling easier travel between Palestinian cities.

Officers in the Civil Administration said the economic surge was the result of a number of parallel factors but was mainly due to improved coordination between Israel and the PA, as well as a decision by PA President Mahmoud Abbas to make a concerted effort to stop Hamas' build-up in the West Bank.

"On the one hand, there is the Israeli policy to separate Gaza from the West Bank and improve the reality on the ground in the West Bank," one officer noted. "There is also the PA, which is fighting for its survival and understands that it needs to fight against elements that could undermine its regime like Hamas and Islamic Jihad."

The officer noted the deployment of newly trained PA forces in Jenin, Hebron, Nablus and soon in Bethlehem as a demonstration of that effort.

In addition to the increase in wages, the recently ended olive harvest also saw a major boom, jumping from NIS 200 million in revenue in 2007 to NIS 517.5m. in 2008. Military sources said that the IDF-PA coordination was not the only factor - traditionally every other year is a bad harvest - but had contributed to the dramatic increase.

There was also a 10% increase in the number of workers employed in settlements - up from 23,000 in 2007 to 26,000 in 2008, as well as a 10% increase in the permits issued for Palestinians working in Israel - 23,000 compared to 21,000 in 2007.

Security coordination with the PA had also reached new heights, the report claimed, noting that 247 meetings had been held between IDF and Palestinian officers since the beginning of the year.

West Bank is experiencing economic surge, Israel says

In addition, the IDF has permitted the opening of 20 Palestinian Police stations throughout the West Bank that facilitate activities both in the rural areas and towns.

Also, at the request of the PA, Israel facilitated the deployment of Palestinian Police Forces in Hebron in a successful attempt to challenge **Hamas** terrorist infrastructure and is currently in talks to allow the PA to reinforce forces in Bethlehem ahead of Christmas later this month.

Graphic

Photo: **WOMEN** GATHER at a souvenir stand outside the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. (Credit: Bloomberg)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

End of Document

Palestinian security gets a feminine touch

Christian Science Monitor

November 21, 2008, Friday

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Section: WORLD; Pg. 1

Length: 921 words

Byline: Ilene R. Prusher Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

Dateline: Hebron, West Bank

Body

Palestinian police surround the house of suspected militants and knock, demanding to be let in. Normally, they'd kick in the door if it didn't open immediately, but today they have the thing that every home is said to need: a woman's touch.

As part of a new Palestinian Authority (PA) security initiative, this unit, like every Hebron unit that searches houses, has two **female** officers to bring a gentler side to long-stigmatized house raids.

Using **female** police officers in the field is part of the latest PA effort to help President Mahmoud Abbas better control the West Bank and **Hamas**. Although there's also been an overall expansion of the police force, security officials see **women** as key to a new, hearts-and-minds strategy.

"In the past, we never had **women** in the police [force], except maybe some working in the office," says Brig. Gen. Samae'h el-Safy, who is the head of the new security campaign in the Hebron area.

He says that having **women** play a pivotal role in security is just one of many changes in approach since forces have received training in the past half-year by international experts, both in the West Bank and in Jordan.

Since **Hamas** took over the Gaza Strip in a coup nearly a year and a half ago, PA officials have begun strengthening the security forces to ensure that they will not manage to achieve a similar feat in West Bank cities.

While the PA is expanding the ranks of its security forces, the biggest changes may be taking place in the mentality of the forces.

Whether they've been conducted by Israelis or Palestinians, surprise house raids have become a commonplace occurrence here, but they have been known to do more harm than good. They can damage relations between security forces and the local population, particularly in conservative Muslim countries where the sudden arrival of strange men in the home - where **women** aren't covered in their outdoorwear - is considered deeply shameful.

"When our forces used to enter houses in the past, before this campaign, the **women** would hide the weapons in their underclothes, and then they were automatically off limits," says Khitam Farraj, a **female** police officer with a PhD in psychology. "Before, **women** were part of the security apparatus, but we didn't have the capability or the training we needed, and we weren't well organized."

Palestinian security gets a feminine touch

But now women are taking a leading role in many security operations in the West Bank. When police enter a house, the female officers immediately take the women aside, usually to a separate room, and search them in a respectful way, while the men go to work on the men.

"We talk to them gently," says Ms. Farraj, a lean, muscular woman who wears an Islamic head scarf that matches her camouflage suit of green and brown. "We address them with the same terminology you would use for your mother, your sister, or your aunt."

Or, in the words of Capt. Mohammed Il-Jabari, who runs such raids several times a week: "As soon as we walk in, the women are in charge."

By using female police officers on housing searches, "we have preserved our customs and morals," says General Safy. "Every time we arrest, we take some policewomen with us."

Yet only so much can be done to camouflage the ultimate message. This is a surprise raid, and everyone - and everywhere - in the house is about to be searched.

"The security campaign has given our troops an opportunity to practice their training.

The most important change is the way our officers are respecting human rights," says Safy. "Today, when we take our men on house searches, we see how well behaved they are."

To be sure, not everybody agrees with this rosy review of the security campaign. A random survey of people in the street suggest that while some people think the law-and-order surge is a good thing, others are skeptical and say detainees are regularly mistreated and beaten.

"They haven't been treating those they arrest in the right way," says Rana Nasser, a university student here. "You hear stories of people who come out of their arrest and they hardly look like the same human being."

But Sali Radwan, her friend, adds that the crackdown is meant to keep the West Bank in the hands of Fatah, the secular and pro-Western offshoot of the Palestinian Liberation Organization that publicly entered into a peace process with Israel in 1993. "Their most important objective is to halt any situation here that would be similar to what happened in Gaza," Ms. Radwan says.

Meanwhile, Hamas boycotted an Egyptian-sponsored "national reconciliation" conference in Cairo earlier this month, saying that the PA's large-scale security crackdown was simply a campaign against Hamas supporters in the West Bank.

At a downtown luncheonette, most of the men are dismissive of the campaign and its supposed success.

That the troops are newly trained and especially sensitive to not trampling through a man's castle - his home - are lost on them. "It's unclear to me what the security campaign is," says Mohammed Salameh, who has a grocery store.

"Does it let me go to my shop in a safer way? There are still lots of thieves and criminals around. I see that they're just after men from one faction," he says, indicating Hamas. "And I saw them behaving like the Israelis do - breaking down the doors of houses with their feet."

Safy is perturbed at such criticism and says the reports of torture are just Hamas-generated rumors aimed at weakening the security campaign. "When it come to Hamas," he acknowledges, exasperated, "I'm intolerant."

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Load-Date: November 20, 2008

Palestinian security gets a feminine touch

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ISRAEL IS NOT THE CAUSE OF TERROR

Weekend Australian

January 3, 2009 Saturday

1 - All-round Country Edition

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 14

Length: 1163 words

Body

Islamist terrorists hate all democracies as much as Israel's

THE new year dawned with excellent news from Iraq. For the first time since Saddam Hussein created a compound that protected him from the people he oppressed, his Republican Palace is in the hands of representatives of Iraq's citizens. During the terrorist attacks that followed the US occupation of Iraq in 2003 it was the heavily fortified coalition headquarters, but now it is under the control of an Iraqi government that relies on the voters, not soldiers and secret police, for its power. This outcome offers hope that the horror Iraqis have long endured is coming to an end. Just as important, it shows that change is possible in the Middle East, that the cynics who suggest that the US invasion was misplaced idealism at best and more likely an imperialist assault on Islam that was doomed to fail, were wrong. Whether the people of Iraq will ultimately decide that the blood and treasure spent in pursuit of a democratic state was justified cannot be known now, but this morning there is light at the end of a long tunnel and cause for hope that Iraq could actually become a stable democracy.

The news from Israel is far darker. Israeli air power is hitting Gaza hard, making it clear to the **Hamas** regime there that Israel will retaliate for every rocket fired across the frontier. And the Israeli army is ready to roll into Gaza to destroy whatever elements of the **Hamas** command structure and armoury the air force has missed. Like every Israeli exercise in self defence in the last 60 years, this campaign has generated understandable anguish all over the world at the loss of civilian life. Of the 400 or so fatalities in Gaza over the past week the UN estimates 25 per cent were civilians, as ordinary people were caught in a futile fight that **Hamas** started but has no hope of finishing. The terrorist movement dreams of Israel's end, of a new holocaust where the Jewish state ceases to exist. This is something that Israel will obviously never allow and if **Hamas** wants to end the suffering of the people of Gaza in the short term it will renew the ceasefire it ended on December 19. And in the long term it will accept Israel's right to exist as a starting point for negotiations for a permanent peace. And a permanent peace is what is required to end the appalling privations of the 1.4 million people of Gaza, subsisting in what is effectively a 360sq km open prison, where Israel ruthlessly regulates what is allowed in at one end and Egypt does the same at the other. It does not have to be this way. The people of the West Bank are no friends to Israel but, under the secular Fatah regime that rules there, a peace of sorts exists and while its people are hardly prosperous they are not deprived of medicine and meals because their government is more interested in pointlessly sniping at Israel than in the wellbeing of its people. It is more than passing strange that **Hamas**, which was fairly elected in 2006 on a platform of improving living standards in Gaza, is now making things much worse through violence that serves no purpose.

But in addition to anguish, there is international anger at Israel, as its enemies blame it not just for the constant crisis in the Middle East but for the most ominous threat to the peace of the planet -- Islamic terrorism. There is an

ISRAEL IS NOT THE CAUSE OF TERROR

obvious argument: the existence of the Jewish state has caused the poverty of the Palestinian people. And the way in which nations that Osama bin Laden calls the ``crusader states'', Britain, Europe, Australia and especially the US, support Israel is part of the plot against Islam that is responsible for the US invasion of Iraq, the war against the Taliban in Afghanistan and opposition to Iran developing nuclear power, and weapons, if it wishes. According to this argument, if the US abandoned its imperialist plan to impose democracy on Islamic nations and if it stopped supporting Israel the world would be at peace. According to opponents of Israel, while the Jewish state exists in its present form and within its existing boundaries, Muslims will rage at the oppression of the Palestinians and they will protest against their treatment by any means they can. According to this argument, the underlying cause of terror attacks, from September 11 to the murders in Mumbai last November, where the attackers made a point of targeting a Jewish centre, is the existence of Israel, which in its present form puts people everywhere at risk.

It is all dangerous nonsense. There is no doubting the rage of millions of Muslims over the condition of the Palestinians. It is equally assured that anti-Semitism runs deep in much of the Muslim world, just as it was endemic in Europe 70 years ago. But the real reason for Islamic terrorism has less to do with Israel than the fact that around the world small groups of men, and they are almost invariably men, feel powerless in cultures where women have the same rights they do, where people can say and wear what they like and where democracy, not theocracy, is the universally supported form of government. For all their invocations of the Koran, Islamists who believe in mass murder have no real connection with the honoured Muslim faith as practised by billions of people on all continents. The Muslim people of democracies such as Indonesia and Turkey have no truck with terror and are accordingly a target for Islamic extremists. Certainly, religious conservatives won the last election in Iran, but only because a council of clerics decides who is allowed to run for office. And the people of Afghanistan, in the October 2004 presidential poll, and Iraq, in the 2005 general election, demonstrated they preferred democracy to dictatorships.

Islamist terrorists see these many millions of Muslims as enemies, just as they hate the Americans and Europeans, the Africans and Australians, the people of every and no faith who they murder whenever they are able. And they will use any explanation they can come up with to excuse the gratification they take in ideologically driven killing. Osama bin Laden used to explain that US bases in Saudi Arabia were an affront to his faith, but he did not call off al-Qa'ida when the US pulled out of the kingdom. And, short of every Jew leaving the country, there is nothing Israel, or any other nation can do to placate the Hamas ideologues and their allies. Last week, the Taliban banned girls attending school in a frontier province of Pakistan. To show people they meant it, a few days later a suicide bomber murdered 13 schoolchildren just across the Afghan border. It is the same sort of strategy that Hamas suicide bombers have used to kill people in Israel, Jews and Muslims alike. Such savage nihilism serves no rational purpose in the world of practical politics. But the men who design doctrine for Hamas and the Taliban, and the many terror cells who follow their lead, are not much interested in the world the rest of us live in.

Load-Date: January 2, 2009

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Children of war Gaza air strikes claim 39 youngsters

The Advertiser (Australia)

January 1, 2009 Thursday

1 - State Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 3

Length: 485 words

Byline: ADEL ZAANOUN, GAZA CITY

Body

THE disturbing images of young children throwing rocks, running through flames and being strip-searched are bringing home the tragic realities of the Middle East conflict to the rest of the world.

But the war is also failing the other child victims - those who are living in terror after the latest massive Israeli bombardment of Hamas buildings in Gaza.

The plight of innocent children emerged as Israel considered a proposed 48-hour truce and world leaders stepped up calls for an end to the violence, which has killed nearly 400 people so far.

"We are scared . . . that we can die at any moment," said Mohammed Ayyad, 11.

Like the rest of Gaza's children, he has been traumatised by the four-day assault on Hamas which has transformed many areas of the overcrowded territory into piles of rubble. His six-year-old brother Ahmad had "peed his pants".

Gaza medics say at least 39 children under the age of 16 had died in the Israeli strikes.

Among the latest victims were two sisters, aged four and 11. They were killed when a missile struck their donkey cart. On Sunday night, five sisters died when masonry from a mosque hit by an Israeli strike crushed their house.

Another boy, Mohammed Bassal, said he and his brothers were shaken awake by explosions in the night. "Debris from the broken windows fell on our heads, the electricity was cut off and we started screaming," he said. "My mother came and hugged us."

Iyad al-Sayagh, a mother who lives in the area, called the bombardment "a night of horror".

The overnight raids had "turned the night in Gaza into hell," said Sarah Radi, 29, a teacher.

"They say that they want to destroy Hamas, but it's not true. They want to annihilate the Palestinian people. What did the women and children do that they destroy their houses?" she said.

A spokesman for Israel's Defence Minister Ehud Barak said yesterday Israel was looking favourably at a proposal for a brief ceasefire, but he stressed this would not stop it from preparing for a possible ground offensive.

Children of war Gaza air strikes claim 39 youngsters

Israeli officials warned that the onslaught could continue for weeks, while **Hamas** militants fired more rockets and threatened to step up their attacks on Israel.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert discussed with his foreign and defence ministers a French proposal for a 48-hour truce, but his office said the Premier had imposed a strict blackout on the details of the meeting.

With tanks and troops massed on the Gaza border, the Israeli military said ground forces were ready to join what politicians have warned would be a prolonged offensive. Mr Olmert said the bombardment so far was ``the first of several stages approved by the security cabinet".

The European Union called for a ``permanent" ceasefire in and around the Gaza Strip, while the Middle East Quartet - the EU, Russia, the United Nations and the United States - called for ``an immediate ceasefire that would be fully respected".

Load-Date: December 31, 2008

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TD calls for ambassador's expulsion as Evrony defends offensive

Irish Examiner

January 14, 2009 Wednesday

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Section: IRELAND

Length: 332 words

Body

Chris Andrews declared that international sanctions be instigated against Israel.

The Israeli ambassador, Zion Evrony, defended Israel's offensive in Gaza, declaring that **Hamas** militants were unlike the IRA and not open to change.

Tensions flared during the appearance of Israeli and Palestinian representatives at an Oireachtas Foreign Affairs Committee.

Ambassadors from Bulgaria, Cyprus, Malaysia, the Czech Republic, India and Chile and diplomats from Britain, Finland, Spain and Morocco were present.

Mr Andrews said he had witnessed Israel's blockade of Gaza during a visit six weeks ago: "Israel has descended to a level of such brutality that it can only be classified as a terrorist state."

Israel had ignored the UN and was "acting as a rogue state", the TD said.

Evrony claimed for eight years a quarter of a million Israelis had suffered the trauma of regular **Hamas** rocket and mortar attacks.

"Try to imagine Dublin with 8,000 missile attacks day after day, night after night. What would you do? What would you expect the Taoiseach to do?" he said.

Evrony argues that **Hamas** were unlike the IRA and wanted to solely live by religious terms and were not open to change.

The ambassador admitted Israeli forces were using phosphorous munitions but said these were legal.

The head of the General Delegation of Palestine in Ireland, Hikmat Ajjuri, said Israel had failed to implement 30 Security Council resolutions.

He said half of the hundreds of people killed and thousands injured in Gaza were **women** and children and this had transformed the region from "a big prison into an abattoir".

TD calls for ambassador's expulsion as Evrony defends offensive

Attacks against Gaza, the most densely populated area on earth and half the size of Louth, had also seen support grow for Israeli ministers ahead of an election next month, Ajjuri said.

Labour's Michael D Higgins called for an immediate cease-fire in the region.

The committee agreed to summon the Iranian ambassador to appear over allegations Iranian rockets were being smuggled into Gaza and fired into Israel.

Load-Date: January 14, 2009

End of Document

Israel agrees to daily combat halt; Aid supplies to be allowed into Gaza during 3-hour breaks

The International Herald Tribune

January 8, 2009 Thursday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 4

Length: 1198 words

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

Dateline: GAZA

Body

Isabel Kershner reported from Jerusalem. Steven Erlanger contributed reporting from Jerusalem; Neil MacFarquhar from the United Nations, New York; Alan Cowell from Paris; and Graham Bowley from New York.

*

Under international pressure to ease its 12-day bombardment of the Gaza Strip, Israel agreed Wednesday to suspend the fighting for three hours a day and to permit humanitarian relief goods to reach the beleaguered population.

It was not immediately clear whether Hamas, which governs Gaza, had agreed to the plan, though senior Hamas officials were quoted as saying that it would not fire any rockets while Israel paused its bombing.

The announcement by officials in Jerusalem came a day after Israeli mortar shells killed as many as 40 Palestinians, including women and children, outside a United Nations school in Gaza.

Mark Regev, spokesman for Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel, said the idea behind opening relief corridors was to let a flow of food and other aid reach a population said by UN officials to be facing a humanitarian crisis.

A statement late Tuesday from Olmert's office said the pause would "entail opening geographic areas for certain periods of time during which the population would be able to equip itself and receive the assistance."

The Associated Press quoted the Israeli human rights group B'Tselem saying that the military had informed it of a planned lull between 1 p.m. and 4 p.m.

International relief agencies have warned that the humanitarian situation in Gaza is dire. Three-quarters of the 1.5 million residents are without power and hundreds of thousands are without running water, international agencies have said.

With the death toll mounting, President Shimon Peres of Israel said in an interview with Sky News on Wednesday that Israel would also study cease-fire proposals put forward by Egypt.

Israel agrees to daily combat halt Aid supplies to be allowed into Gaza during 3-hour breaks

In Gaza City, many still reeled from events Tuesday, when Israeli mortar fire struck near the UN school where many people were taking refuge. The Israelis contended that Hamas fighters had fired mortars from the school compound and UN officials called for an independent inquiry.

The civilian death toll in Gaza has heightened international demands to end the combat. U.S. and European diplomats said it was highly likely that Olmert would travel to Egypt on Wednesday to discuss a cease-fire. But officials in Cairo said it was not definite that Olmert would make the trip. Israel has said it would not end its operation until it had crushed Hamas's ability to fire rockets into Israel.

That has not yet happened. The Israeli military reported that a rocket fired from Gaza landed in the southern Israeli city of Ashkelon on Wednesday and that nine people were treated for shock. Three other rockets landed elsewhere.

On Tuesday, a rocket reached farther into Israel, about 30 kilometers, or 20 miles, from Tel Aviv, and wounded an infant.

Israel contended that the deaths at the school, at the Jabaliya refugee camp north of Gaza City, demonstrated Hamas's callousness about 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 said two Hamas operatives, Imad Abu Asker and Hassan Abu Asker, had been killed.

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

Ibrahim said he saw the militant after he had 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 wounded by the Israeli mortar fire.

UN officials were unable to confirm the Israeli 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 had called for an independent inquiry.

"Anyone on either side of the confrontation lines found to have violated international humanitarian law must be brought to justice," Gunness said.

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

"These attacks by Israeli military forces which endanger UN facilities acting as places of refuge are totally unacceptable and must not be repeated," the UN secretary general, Ban Ki Moon, said in a statement. "Equally unacceptable are any actions by militants which endanger the Palestinian civilian population."

Speaking at Shifa Hospital in Gaza City on Tuesday, hours before the strike at the Jabaliya school compound, John Ging, chief of operations for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, called the Gaza violence a "horrific tragedy." "There is no safe haven," he said.

UN officials initially put the Jabaliya death toll at 30 and said that 55 had been 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 Tuesday, according to Palestinian health officials. The United Nations has estimated that about one-fourth of those killed were civilians.

Israel agrees to daily combat halt Aid supplies to be allowed into Gaza during 3-hour breaks

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. 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 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 long-term solution.

Israeli and U.S. officials insist that a cease-fire would have to await guarantees that no more weapons would be smuggled into Gaza through Egypt.

President-elect Barack Obama broke his silence about the Gaza fighting on Tuesday, saying: "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 Saturday. The military said that three of its soldiers were killed Monday night when an Israeli tank shell was mistakenly fired at a building they occupied.

A fourth soldier was killed Monday night, probably by an Israeli tank shell, the military said. Two soldiers have been killed in clashes with Hamas. Before the ground campaign began, three Israeli civilians and a soldier were killed by rockets fired from Gaza at southern Israel.

Load-Date: January 13, 2009

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Ball is in Israel's court

The Star (South Africa)
January 14, 2009 Wednesday
e1 Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 18

Length: 342 words

Body

The innocent Palestinians, particularly women and children, being blown away in Gaza by indiscriminate Israeli bombing cry out for mercy. So do the Israelis hit by rockets fired by Hamas.

It was inevitable that Israel would respond to the constant rain of rockets which has been creating persistent terror in its population for eight years. No state can take that lying down.

But it is the disproportionate scale of Israel's assault that is appalling; compared to about 60 Israelis killed by rockets over those years, and 13 Israelis killed since the offensive began on December 27, more than 900 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza, many of them women and children.

We understand that warfare is not conducted according to sporting rules; protagonists try to overpower their enemies to minimise their own casualties, especially when responding to an attack. And we understand that, as the tiny state of a people who have nearly suffered extermination, Israel feels a peculiar existential anxiety; it has to retaliate hard to any provocation to deter its many surrounding enemies from further and possibly terminal attack.

It is also true that Palestinians in Gaza have been confined to the most highly populated ghetto in the world, living under the most inhumane conditions imaginable. A revolt was inevitable.

Israel must also realise that in the end, life is about individuals, and that it is exterminating many of them and causing untold grief to many more, not to mention fuelling hatred and future aggression against itself.

This war must end now, but when it does, the world must apply itself to resolving the causes. It cannot continue, as it has done for the past eight years, to ignore the Hamas rocket assault on Israel; nor can it ignore the plight of the Palestinians, not only in Gaza but in the West Bank and in refugee camps elsewhere.

Ultimately, Israel can't destroy Hamas, militarily or politically. It's only chance of peaceful coexistence is an all-inclusive settlement with Palestinians based on the principle of a two-state solution.

Load-Date: January 13, 2009

One-sided reality of combat in Israeli-Palestinian conflict

The Irish Times

January 7, 2009 Wednesday

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Section: OPINION; Opinion; Pg. 12

Length: 1281 words

Body

Despite reports of intense combat, Hamas weapons pose little threat to Israeli forces, writes **Ed O'Loughlin**

YOU COULD be forgiven for thinking that there was a major ground battle going on in the Gaza Strip right now.

"Fierce fighting" vies for headline space with "intense combat", while Israeli troops and Palestinian fighters swap "heavy exchanges of fire" in "house-to-house clashes". But experience of Israel's many previous raids into Gaza in recent years - the Israeli government is blocking independent foreign journalists from witnessing this one - suggests a more one-sided reality.

Unlike the Hizbullah men who fought the Israeli army to a standstill in Lebanon two years ago, Hamas's gunmen have no modern anti-tank missiles. Their mainly home-made rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs) are useless against the heavy armour of the Israeli defence force's tanks and armoured personnel carriers. The Palestinians have no artillery or precision heavy weapons, and no air defences to counter Israel's US-supplied fighter bombers and attack helicopters, or the armed robot aircraft which circle constantly overhead. Their automatic rifles would be lethal against unprotected soldiers encountered at short range, but the tactics which Israel has perfected for the Gaza Strip ensure that its soldiers are seldom exposed to effective enemy fire.

In fact, only about a dozen troops have died while participating in numerous deep raids inside Gaza since the IDF's last major loss in May 2004. Then, 11 troops were killed in two separate incidents involving poorly armoured vehicles since withdrawn from service.

Of the five Israeli soldiers killed so far in the current massive invasion, one was reportedly hit by mortar fire. Three others were killed and 20 wounded when one of their own tanks blasted the Palestinian house in which they were hiding. The fifth was also killed by so-called friendly fire, ie accidental fire from his own side.

The Palestinian death toll from such incursions has been vastly higher: Operation Rainbow, May 2004, killed at least 53 Palestinian militants and civilians; Operation Days of Penitence, October 2004, killed between 104 and 133; Operation Summer Rains, June 2006, 400 plus; Operation Autumn Clouds, November 2006, at least 70; last year an unnamed raid on Jabaliya killed over 100. All these raids and numerous smaller ones were duly reported in the foreign media, condemned as disproportionate by much of the international community and then quietly forgotten. The present Operation Cast Lead (some 630 Palestinians killed, as of last evening, and rapidly rising), is well on course to dwarf them all combined - as evidenced by yesterday's single incident toll of 42 civilians, killed when an Israeli artillery shell landed near a UN-run school.

In a typical Israeli invasion, small teams of undercover soldiers use the cover of darkness to seize control of civilian homes selected for their fields of fire, taking the residents hostage and building snipers nests to cover the tanks that

One-sided reality of combat in Israeli- Palestinian conflict

rapidly join them. In ensuing operations, the tanks and snipers sit back and take a heavy toll of the young Palestinian gunmen who invariably rush to the scene - one of the most under-reported aspects of the Israeli-Palestine conflict is the ineptitude of the martyrdom-loving Palestinians when it comes to basic guerrilla tactics.

While their comrades keep the neighbourhood pinned down, infantrymen typically use civilian hostages as human shields - this is known in the IDF as the "neighbour procedure" - as they go door to door rounding up the menfolk, most of whom are then marched off to Israel to be interrogated and, if suspected of militant links, convicted and jailed. (Torture of suspected terrorists is tolerated by the legal authorities and courts in Israel, and torturers are allowed to defend themselves by asserting that the torture was "necessary".)

Although greater in extent and in its massive death toll, the present Israeli ground invasion of Gaza seems to have followed the same broad pattern so far, penetrating only the fringes of teeming Gaza City. And just like its smaller predecessors, Operation Cast Lead's massive Palestinian death toll has proved immensely popular with an Israeli press and public demanding further retaliation for missile fire from Gaza which has killed 20 people in eight years (in the same period Israel has already killed more than 3,500 Gazans, at least 1,500 of them civilians, according to Israeli rights group B'Tselem). On Monday Israeli newspaper Haaretz reported that public support for defence minister and former prime minister Ehud Barak was "rising with each missile that pounds Gaza". Barak and his coalition partner/rival, foreign minister Tzipi Livni, both have hopes of winning the premiership in elections on February 10th.

Unfortunately for the besieged, blockaded, bomb-shocked people of Gaza, February is still a long way off. Meanwhile, Operation Cast Lead shows signs of escalating into something even worse.

Most Israeli government spokesmen and women have so far denied that the aim of the current operation is to eliminate Hamas militarily in the Gaza Strip. But the underlying logic of Israel's internal political and military intrigues, and of both sides' stated aims, suggests otherwise. Hamas says it will not renew its previous six-month ceasefire with Israel, which unravelled last month following mutual violations, unless the Jewish state agrees to end its crippling three-year-old economic blockade of the Strip's desperate population - a demand echoed by human rights groups and local UN agencies.

But Israel says this would legitimise the rule of an Islamic fundamentalist movement which refuses to renounce terrorism and violent resistance, and which itself does not recognise Israel's legitimacy.

Instead, Israeli leaders said this week that they intend to pound Gaza until Hamas is forced to accept an imposed and unconditional ceasefire, with no requirement on Israel to end the blockade and no international mechanism to ensure that all sides, including Israel, behave in future.

Also on Israel's wish list is the return to Gaza of its compliant Palestinian client, Mahmoud Abbas's Fatah movement, which remains nominally in charge of the West Bank, where Jewish settlement activity continues unabated, despite having lost Palestine-wide elections in 2006. It was routed from Gaza following its failed US- and Israeli-backed putsch against the elected Hamas government last year.

In company with Egypt, the EU and perhaps the US and allied Arab states, Fatah will then mop up whatever is left of Hamas and police Gaza's borders and crossings to prevent further smuggling of weapons.

But the chances of Hamas agreeing to what amounts to an unconditional surrender are nil. Instead, its militants have stepped up their own rocket fire into Israel, using new long-range rockets to strike for the first time the major cities of Ashdod and Beersheba. Three Israeli civilians have been killed so far.

The European Union has so far quietly joined with Israel and the US in the diplomatic and economic siege of Gaza. But there is no way it, or anyone else, will take on the job of policing Gaza on Israel's behalf, a task the mighty Israel defence force failed to carry out. Any Israeli attempt to subdue its entire area, whether by slow starvation, gradual bombardment or rapid ground assault, would cause civilian deaths on a scale never before seen in the lopsided Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

One-sided reality of combat in Israeli- Palestinian conflict

The world may not yet be cynical enough to keep looking the other way.

Ed O'Loughlin reported on Gaza for more than five years as Middle East correspondent for the *Sydney Morning Herald* and the *Age*

Load-Date: January 7, 2009

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In Dense Gaza, Civilians Suffer

The New York Times

January 1, 2009 Thursday

Late Edition - Final

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

Length: 1211 words

Byline: By TAGHREED EL-KHODARY; Marc Santora contributed reporting from the United Nations.

Dateline: GAZA

Body

A dentist stood at the bed of a doctor, his good friend Ehab Madhoun, 32, who had just died, his shrapnel-pitted body wrapped in a white shroud.

The day before, Dr. Madhoun, a general practitioner, was in an ambulance responding to an Israeli strike at the Jabalya refugee camp in northern Gaza. Another missile hit the ambulance. The driver, Muhammad Abu Hasira, died instantly. Dr. Madhoun lingered for a day, dying of his wounds on Wednesday in the intensive care unit of Shifa Hospital, where hundreds of people have been brought since Israel began its heaviest assault on Gaza in three decades.

The dentist cried.

"He was just doing his work," said the dentist, who would not give his name. "He's a doctor, and I can't understand why Israel would hit an ambulance. They can tell from the cameras it's an ambulance."

It has always been this way, over years of conflict here, that civilians are killed in the densely populated Gaza Strip when Israel stages military operations it says are essential for its security. But five days of Israeli airstrikes have surpassed past operations in scale and intensity; the long-distance bombardment of the *Hamas*-controlled territory has, however well aimed at those suspected of being militants, splintered families and shattered homes in one of the most densely populated places on Earth.

Among the total dead -- between 320 and 390, according to the United Nations -- Palestinian medical officials say that 38 were children and 25 were *women*. The United Nations agency that helps Palestinian refugees said 25 percent of those killed had been civilians. Israel said it knew of 40 civilian deaths but that it was still checking.

Israeli officials are coming under increasing pressure to ease conditions for civilians, with tight supplies of electricity, water, food and medicine worsening shortages in an area already largely sealed off from the outside world. While Israel on Wednesday refused a 48-hour cease-fire suggested by the French to allow critical supplies into Gaza, it has been sensitive enough to the ever-louder complaints to say it will do all it can to allow in supplies.

In Dense Gaza, Civilians Suffer

On the issue of civilian casualties, Israeli officials maintain that they do not take aim at civilians and do everything possible -- like using precision-guidance systems, up-to-the minute intelligence, leaflets and phone calls to targeted areas -- to avoid hitting them.

They say killing and wounding civilians only undermines their primary mission: to stop Hamas from firing rockets into civilian areas of Israel.

"I haven't seen too many tears shed in Paris, London or Berlin over the fact that we have hit Hamas targets," said Mark Regev, a spokesman for Israel's prime minister, Ehud Olmert. "So we have many reasons, both moral and political, for doing the utmost to make sure that our strikes are as surgical as possible."

Further complicating matters is that fact that Gaza is the size of Detroit, with one and a half times as many people. The military and government facilities of Hamas are intertwined with buildings where Gaza's civilian population lives and works. Israelis say Hamas fires rockets at Israel from civilian neighborhoods.

The United States military has also faced much criticism for killing civilians in Iraq and Afghanistan, despite what officials say is the utmost precaution against doing so.

In Gaza, human rights groups say that the new scale of Israel's operation puts the area's civilians, even those accustomed to conflict, under particular stress. Some of the wounded are afraid to seek treatment at the already overwhelmed hospitals, fearful of heading into a rocket attack while driving through streets of pummeled buildings and concrete shards.

Large, multigenerational families huddle in their houses, hoarding the shrinking supplies of water, food and gasoline. Despite the cold, many have kept their windows open to prevent them from shattering when bombs explode nearby. Shops are closed except for grocery stores, bakeries and pharmacies.

"Conditions for parents and children in Gaza are dangerous and frightening," Maxwell Gaylard, United Nations humanitarian coordinator for the Palestinian territories, said in a statement.

"It is absolutely crucial that there is an end to the fighting," he said. "Without it, more civilians will continue to be killed. Without the violence stopping, it is extremely difficult to get food to people who need it, we cannot assess where the most urgent needs are."

In the debate over civilian casualties, there is no clear understanding of what constitutes a military target. Palestinians argue that because Hamas is also the government in Gaza, many of the police officers who have been killed were civil servants, not hard-core militants. Israel disagrees, asserting also that a university chemistry laboratory, which it claims was used for making rockets, was a fair target in an attack this week, even if it could not show conclusively that those inside the laboratory at the time were engaged in making weapons.

The ambiguity was evident at the intensive care ward in Shifa Hospital, where Dr. Madhoun's body lay. There were 11 patients. One was a pharmacist, Rawya Awad, 32, who had a shrapnel wound to the head. Several were police officers. It was impossible to know the identities of many of the others.

But there were several children in another intensive care unit on Tuesday. Among them was Ismael Hamdan, 8, who had severe brain damage as well as two broken legs, according to a doctor there. Earlier that day, two of his sisters, Lama, 5, and Hayya, 12, were killed.

"I prepared them breakfast that day in the garden," said their mother, Ayda, 36. "They had the tea, bread and thyme. Lama wanted a second pita, but we all teased her saying, 'Keep it for lunch.' She told us, 'Don't worry, God will provide us with bread.'"

"She made all of us laugh," the mother said. "I cleaned after them and collected the garbage. Ismael volunteered to dump the garbage, but Hayya and Lama joined him. The garbage can is in front of the house, a five-minute walk away. All of a sudden I heard the news from a neighbor, and I ran barefoot to the hospital. A relative collected the bodies of Lama and Hayya on a donkey cart."

In Dense Gaza, Civilians Suffer

"The neighbors ran trying to save Ismael, who was the only one breathing," she said. "They say my kids flew 40 meters before hitting the ground."

Ismael died Wednesday night.

At Kamal Edwan Hospital in Beit Lahiya, in northern Gaza, Mahmoud al-Sheik, 11, was recovering from wounds he received two days before -- he thinks from a rocket fired by an Israeli warplane. Even at his age, he is aware of how fighters and civilians are mixed together in Gaza, saying that the bomb was aimed at the house of his neighbor, Salim Zaqout, whom he identified as a member of **Hamas**.

"But Zaqout and his family evacuated the house a few days ago," Mahmoud said. "Can't Israel see all these houses that are adjacent to Zaqout's? Now Zaqout's house is completely destroyed, but so are other houses that have nothing to do with **Hamas**."

"I have a big hole in my left hand. The doctor told me I'm fine. He filled the hole," Mahmoud said, "but it's hurting. It feels like fire inside it."

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

PHOTO: A Palestinian boy, Ismael Hamdan, 8, was wounded in an Israeli airstrike, in which his two sisters died. He died Wednesday. (PHOTOGRAPH BY MAHMUD HAMS/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE -- GETTY IMAGES) (pg.A12)

Load-Date: January 1, 2009

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People are fleeing the north on donkey carts; Gaza Diary

The Independent (London)

January 6, 2009 Tuesday

First Edition

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The  INDEPENDENT

Section: NEWS; Pg. 8

Length: 462 words

Byline: Fares Akram

Body

When we woke up yesterday morning there were people on the streets for the first time in days. Whole families, girls, women, fathers, children. They appeared to be coming from the north of the Gaza Strip, fleeing their homes. The majority were walking, some were on donkey carts. There were a few cars and trucks but each had up to 10 people crushed inside. They were carrying their belongings, such things as mattresses and bed covers. My grandfather who lives with us, watched for a while and said: "This is exactly like the immigration of Palestinians into Gaza in 1948".

Overnight there were more air strikes, heavy-artillery shelling and the tanks have been coming deeper into Gaza. So you can't blame people for seeking safety.

Alaa, my wife, nine months pregnant, is nervously hanging on and I'm thanking God she hasn't gone into labour yet. Medical check-ups are out of the question as most of the clinics are closed. When she's born, we'll call my daughter Somaya. But, the later the better. I don't want our first baby arriving in these conditions. The thing is I'm afraid this will be a long conflict and every day will be worse than the last.

We're still coming to terms with the death of my father, killed by an Israeli air strike on Saturday as the ground war began. When you're in shock you don't really feel much pain. But when you stay in the house, looking at your father's things, recalling the last conversations you had with him, it is sad beyond belief. I know I'm in the same situation as many, many families in Gaza.

I at least can take some comfort from all the emails I've been sent. Everyone who wrote after reading the report on the front page of Monday's Independent said that they were very moved. I'm happy about that. Telling the story is much better than any revenge.

When the Israelis take complete control of Gaza I think they will launch a large scale detention campaign and arrest the men aged between 15 to 50 to interrogate them for information. Of course all the wanted men have gone underground.

People are fleeing the north on donkey carts Gaza Diary

Because we're a family in mourning, neighbours and friends have been coming to the house to offer condolences. They have nothing to talk about other than the crisis. And the overwhelming feeling I get is that ordinary people who find themselves locked in this conflict are angry with **Hamas**. **Hamas** is supposed to be the government; they have been provoking the Israelis with their rockets and putting people at risk, yet now their leaders have vanished from sight leaving no plans to provide food, medicines or any kind of security for us. Of course **Hamas** still has its supporters whose minds will never be changed. But more and more, that is what I'm hearing. The senior commanders of **Hamas** have gone underground and left their people behind.

Load-Date: January 5, 2009

End of Document

Your Say

Herald Sun (Australia)

January 5, 2009 Monday

1 - FIRST Edition

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Section: LETTERS; Pg. 22

Length: 530 words

Body

Sad day for national parks

MYLES Dunphy, the father of Australia's national parks, will be turning in his grave at the news more public land is to be prepared for incineration.

He wished to preserve public land in a natural condition.

The lack of government funding from 1982 to the present has resulted in a most unnatural biodiversity.

When there was little known about Australia's environment, it was wise to stop human predation.

Now, with what we know (and with which our Government agrees ``in principle"), more of our public land is to be subjected to the management that resulted in the series of bushfires from 1998 to 2007.

The loss of habitat is bad enough, but research by Melbourne Water shows that over a 64-year period after the bushfires, there will be a stream-flow loss of 188 megalitres a hectare.

With 2,200,000ha already incinerated at a cost of 4,136,000 gicalitres, can we afford to lose more of the water that would otherwise have been used by our grandchildren?

Happy New Year? Not for the Murray River, for sure.

John Cribbes, Sale

We can learn from Perth

I HAVE just come back from a holiday in Perth. Two things were very obvious.

First, its public transport already has a myki ticketing system up and running, so one has to ask why is John Brumby reinventing the wheel at a diabolical cost to the taxpayer.

Second, everywhere I went Christmas was being promoted primarily as a Christian festival. No politically correct cringe to wipe out any reference to Jesus and his birth to satisfy a handful of unelected social reformers.

All the thought police must have moved to Melbourne, or is it that we are very insecure here?

Your Say

Roger Marks, Drouin

Pair sympathise with terrorists

ENZO Balbinot (Your Say, December 31) and Joan Coxsedg (January 1) are so concerned about human rights, they are oblivious to the past decade.

Israel has been bombarded by Hamas terrorist rockets and suicide bomb attacks and had its soldiers abducted, as well as the crimes Hamas has committed against its own people, murdering female relatives of Fatah members in its bloody takeover of Gaza 18 months ago.

Hamas has rejected Israel's existence and advocates genocide against its sovereign state.

It has wickedly diverted humanitarian aid from its own Palestinian people to manufacture rockets and bombs.

That Balbinot and Coxsedg are indifferent to these atrocities suggests their sympathies are not with Israeli or Palestinian civilians, but with the Hamas Palestinian terrorists who are the unfettered cause of the latest bout of Middle East violence.

Ian Bradley Cohen, Caulfield East

Many backers for bridge plan

RE ``Name bridge after many heroes" (Your Say, January 1).

Hear, hear! What a fantastic idea. Now if we can only get the powers that be to recognise such a good idea.

Maybe the Herald Sun and its readers could push this truly warming idea before it becomes enmeshed in government tape.

The suggestion ticks all the right boxes.

Lynda, Deniliquin

Let's stick men in clubs

WHY don't we have lots more men's clubs and make attendance compulsory.

This way there are fewer men in circulation.

Men can sit in their clubs and continue to feel superior, and women can feel safe.

Nicole, Daylesford

Load-Date: January 4, 2009

Lifeline tunnel economy collapses

Asian Image

January 1, 2009

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Section: WORLD NEWS (WORLD)

Length: 834 words

Body

The Gaza Strip has lost its last lifeline after five days of Israeli bombing raids that destroyed dozens of smuggling tunnels under the sandy border with Egypt.

The passages did not just supply Hamas with arms, but brought in flour, fuel and baby milk. For Gazans, already used to blackouts and shortages from an 18-month border blockade, the daily hunt for basics is ever more desperate - although there are no reports of outright hunger.

"I fed the children cooked tomatoes today, I can't find bread," Nima Burdeini, a mother of 11, said at the Rafah refugee camp on the Gaza-Egypt border.

Israeli warplanes pounded the illicit tunnels as part of the heavy bombardment of Hamas targets in Gaza that began on Saturday. The hundreds of tunnels were seen as key to keeping Hamas in power.

Most of Gaza's 3,900 factories have closed, unable to import raw materials or export products. Construction stopped and thousands of people were thrown out of work, deepening poverty in an area where most of the 1.4 million residents rely on UN food aid.

At times, Israel tightened the closure, restricting the inflow of fuel, cash and other key supplies. The blockade caused frequent power cuts and interruptions in the water supply.

In the two months leading up to Israel's offensive, Gaza was kept tightly sealed in an attempt to force occupants to stop firing rockets at southern Israeli towns.

The tunnels became a lifesaver for Hamas - and for Gaza. Most of the underground passages were used to haul in consumer goods, from motor bikes to goats, refrigerators, flour and chocolates.

The tunnel area that residents once jokingly referred to as Gaza's "duty-free zone" is now a wasteland of smashed concrete and deep craters, churned up by Israeli bombs.

Tonight, the tunnel area was struck 19 times within a half hour, residents said. Gaza health official Moawiya Hassanain said two people were killed and 16 injured, including six women and four children.

Before that report, Israeli air force officials said the bombing campaign had demolished more than 80 tunnels. Egyptian officials said the number was at least 120.

Residents say there are several hundred tunnels under the nine-mile border. Owners said they believe many tunnels are badly damaged, but tunnel workers fear going near the area to check because of the attacks.

Lifeline tunnel economy collapses

The tunnels are not visible from the air, but their locations are well known and brazen owners put up colourful tents over tunnel entrances.

Economist Omar Shaban estimated some two-thirds of goods sold in Gaza came through the tunnels.

From diggers to drivers and hauliers, the passages employed around 12,000 Gazans, Shaban said.

"It was Gaza's new economy, even if it was just importing commercial goods," he said.

Tunnel owner Abu Sufian said he and his colleagues lost millions of dollars in merchandise that they had paid for, but that cannot be delivered now from the Egyptian side.

Shaban said destroying the tunnels would bruise, but not bloody Hamas's Gaza rule.

Hamas also funds itself through local taxes and a network of businesses controlled by loyalists, he said.

But demolishing the tunnels has deepened civilian suffering.

Throughout Gaza, Israel's bombings have brought Gaza's dwindling economic activity to a halt. For fear of getting caught in an airstrike, wholesalers are not distributing their goods and many shopkeepers stay home.

Shelves are emptying at grocery stores. In most areas, the few shops open are those whose owners live nearby. People do not venture beyond their own streets, leaving them hostage to shortages and rising prices. Flour for baking is in short supply, and there is little cash to buy goods because banks are closed.

Burdeni, 45, the mother of 11, relies on UN aid to feed her children, but officials halted food distribution on December 18, citing shortages caused by the border closure.

"People are doing pretty badly. Everyone we know is sharing whatever they have, not just with their families but with their neighbours," said Karen Abu Zayd, commissioner of the UN Relief and Works Agency, which helps needy Palestinians.

"We haven't seen widespread hunger. We do see for the very first time - I've been here for eight years and seeing new things nowadays - people going through the rubbish dumps looking for things, people begging, which is quite a new phenomenon as well," she said by video link to reporters at UN headquarters in New York.

Chris Gunness, a UN spokesman, said aid distribution should resume tomorrow as Israel allows humanitarian aid into Gaza. The United Nations issued a new emergency appeal today to deal with the new crisis.

Burdeni's brother gives her small amounts of cash, but the search for food is becoming tougher. Burdeni found tomatoes today, cooking them when electricity flickered on in her area. "My children ate it with spoons," she said bitterly.

Meanwhile, tunnel owners watch and wait.

"Even as they bomb us, we are thinking of how to make new tunnels. Maybe we'll try go under the sea," said tunnel owner Abu Sufian.

Load-Date: January 1, 2009

Code Red: Count the seconds!; Time is measure of how far Israelis are from rocket strikes

The Gazette (Montreal)

December 31, 2008 Wednesday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A9

Length: 473 words

Byline: Ari Rabinovitch, REUTERS

Dateline: ASHDOD, Israel

Body

For many residents of southern Israel, the fighting in the nearby Gaza Strip is measured not in days or hours, but in the number of seconds they have to take cover when Hamas rockets rain down.

In coastal Ashdod, where a woman was killed by a rocket on Monday, about 40 seconds elapse between the "Code Red" warning sounded over loudspeakers and the blast of impact.

The city is 35 kilometres from north Gaza and, before Israel launched an air assault on Hamas on Saturday, had been untouched by the Palestinian Islamists' salvoes. Many of its 230,000 residents still cannot believe they are now under fire.

"We're still in shock. Never in my life had I heard a Code Red in Ashdod," said Eli, a 40-year-old taxi driver.

The rockets, some homemade and others factory-produced and smuggled into Gaza, have killed four Israelis since the fighting began. Hamas has been deploying more powerful rockets by the day as part of a strategy it has dubbed the "Burning Oil Slick."

Israel has killed more than 380 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip barrage since Saturday and demands that any new truce in Gaza guarantee that the rocket fire end.

Eli, who gave only his first name, was one of the first to reach the slain woman. She had bolted from her car to seek shelter after a siren sounded, but tripped and fell in the street, where she was shredded by the shrapnel of a rocket.

"It was like a nightmare. And you can still feel the tension," he said.

Haim Rosen, 13, said he was constantly thinking about places where he could take cover if sirens sounded again.

"It looks like any other day, but it feels different," Rosen said during a break from riding his bicycle on sidewalks still crowded with pedestrians. "Until now, we thought the alarms would only be heard in Ashkelon or farther south."

Code Red: Count the seconds!; Time is measure of how far Israelis are from rocket strikes

In Ashkelon, 20 kilometres closer to Gaza, the Code Red gives people about 30 seconds to find shelter. Though residents are more familiar with the sirens, having experienced rocket salvos in the past, their routine has changed.

Shopping malls are often closed and the municipality and other government offices work out of fortified rooms or in underground shelters.

But the impact is perhaps most felt in small Israeli border communities where residents can see Gaza from their back yards.

There, they have only a 10-second warning of incoming rockets. Should the Palestinians fire low-flying mortar bombs instead, these can be missed by Israel's radars entirely.

Many towns are empty, with women and children preferring to stay with friends and family who are out of Hamas's range.

Nitzan Shay, 42, a farm hand who lives in Kibbutz Nirim, about two kilometres from Gaza, stayed back to work the fields while his family moved north.

"It's mostly just the men who stayed here," he said. "And the older folks, who have seen wars before and are not scared of anything."

Graphic

Colour Photo: NIKOLA SOLIC, REUTERS; Israelis run toward a bomb shelter as a siren sounds before a rocket lands in the southern town of Sderot yesterday. ;

Load-Date: December 31, 2008

Attack on Israel from Lebanon threatens to open new front

Daily News Egypt

January 8, 2009 Thursday

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Length: 1600 words

Body

JERUSALEM: Insurgents in Lebanon fired at least three rockets into northern Israel on Thursday, ripping through a crowded nursing home and threatening to open a new front for the Jewish state as it pushed forward with a bloody offensive in the Gaza Strip that has killed over 700 people.

Lebanon's government, wary of conflict, quickly condemned the rocket fire and said it was trying to determine who was behind the attack. Israel fired mortar shells into southern Lebanon in response.

According to a BBC report, analysts concluded Hezbollah were unlikely culprits, despite recent fiery rhetoric from the group's leader Hassan Nasrallah about the possibility of renewed conflict with Israel.

Reports from Beirut said Hezbollah had made it known to the Lebanese government that it was not involved.

And the group has a reputation, even among Israelis, for being a credible conveyor of information about its activities.

The scale of the attack, much smaller in the first instance than the July 2006 ambushes, argued against Hezbollah involvement.

The group would be capable of a much heavier blow if it had wanted a confrontation with the Israelis, the report said.

The rockets seem to have been short-range, and were fired from south of the Litani river, which is controlled by the Unifil peacekeeping force and the Lebanese regular army.

In new Gaza violence, Israel killed at least 11 people, including three who were fleeing their homes, raising the death toll from its 13-day offensive to 699 people, according to Palestinian medical officials.

Also, UN spokesman Adnan Abu Hasna said Israeli forces fired on a truck on a UN aid mission and killed the Palestinian driver. He said the UN coordinated the delivery with Israel, and the attacked vehicle was marked with a UN flag and insignia.

Attack on Israel from Lebanon threatens to open new front

Earlier this week, an Israeli attack near a UN school killed up to 40 people. At the time, Israel said it opened fire after insurgents hiding in the crowd fired mortar shells at Israeli troops.

Israel's offensive is meant to halt years of Palestinian rocket attacks on southern Israel. With roughly half the dead believed to be civilians, international efforts to broker a cease-fire have been gaining steam.

For a second straight day, Israel suspended the operation for three hours to allow humanitarian supplies into Gaza.

One rocket from Lebanon went through the roof of a nursing home in the northern town of Nahariya, about 8 km from the border, and exploded in the kitchen as about 25 elderly residents were eating breakfast in the adjacent dining hall. One resident suffered a broken leg, another bruises, apparently from slipping on the floor after emergency sprinklers came on.

"The rocket entered through the roof, hurling the water heaters into the air. It went through bedrooms upstairs and then into the kitchen. There was a serious blast," said Henry Carmelli, the home's manager.

About three hours later, air-raid sirens went off again. But authorities said it was a false alarm.

Israel has repeatedly said it was prepared for a possible attack on the north since it launched its bruising campaign against Hamas insurgents in Gaza on Dec. 27. 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 following what is happening in the north. We are prepared and will respond as necessary," Defense Minister Ehud Barak told reporters.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility. Hezbollah, which did not comment, has said it does not want to draw Lebanon into a new war. Small Palestinian groups have rocketed Israel twice since the 2006 war.

Israeli officials suggested radical splinter groups in Lebanon, not Hezbollah, were responsible and said Israel has no interest in escalating the conflict.

Cabinet Minister Isaac Herzog welcomed the Lebanese government's condemnation of the attack.

"We look at it as a local event, something that was predictable," he said.

Herzog said Israel welcomes the Egyptian-French diplomatic activity, but said the government was prepared to "deepen" its offensive if the peace efforts fail.

In Beirut, Prime Minister Fuad Saniora condemned the rocket fire, and Israel's response. The government stressed it was committed to peace.

Shortly after the first rockets fell around Nahariya, Lebanese TV stations reported Israeli mortar fire on open areas in southern Lebanon. The Israeli military confirmed it carried out "pinpoint fire" in response.

Israeli defense commentators said they expected the incident to be a one-time show of solidarity with the Palestinians. Still, police said public bomb shelters throughout the north were opened.

Palestinians reported some two dozen airstrikes in Gaza on Thursday. One insurgent was killed and 10 wounded in Gaza City, while an air strike in northern Gaza killed three members of a rocket-launching cell. The attack took place about 150 meters from a hospital and wounded 12 bystanders. The Israeli army has repeatedly said insurgents use civilian areas for cover.

Seven other Palestinians were killed in separate incidents, including three civilians - an elderly man and two women - who were fleeing their homes, officials said.

In Geneva, the international Red Cross said it found four small children alive next to their mothers' bodies in the rubble of a Gaza home hit by Israeli shelling.

Attack on Israel from Lebanon threatens to open new front

A Red Cross spokesman said rescuers had been refused permission by Israeli forces to reach the site for four days.

The Israeli offensive has reduced Palestinian rocket fire, but not stopped it altogether.

Several barrages were reported on Thursday, including a strike that damaged a school and sports center in the southern Israeli city of Ashkelon and another attack that wounded four soldiers near the Gaza border, police said.

For a second day, Israel quieted its guns to allow in desperately needed food, medicine and fuel into Gaza. Defense Ministry spokesman Peter Lerner also said some 300 Palestinian holders of foreign passports would be allowed to leave.

UN spokesman Chris Gunness said three hours was "wholly inadequate" and would not be enough to relieve widespread food and water shortages.

After Wednesday's lull, Israel bombed suspected smuggling tunnels near the border with Egypt. The tunnels are Hamas lifeline, used to bring in arms, money and basic goods. Israel says local homes are used to conceal the tunnels.

The latest casualties brought the total Palestinian death toll during Israel's 13-day assault to 699, according to Palestinian health officials, and drove home the complexities of finding a diplomatic solution for Israel's Gaza invasion.

Some 350 civilians, including about 130 children, are among the dead, according to Palestinian medical officials. Since the offensive began, 11 Israelis have been killed, including three civilians and an infantry officer killed Thursday by an anti-tank missile.

Growing international outrage over the toll of Israel's offensive, which includes 3,000 Palestinians wounded, could work against continued fighting. So could President George W. Bush's departure from office this month and a Feb. 10 election in Israel.

But Israel has a big interest in inflicting as much damage as possible on Hamas, both to stop rocket fire on southern Israeli towns and to diminish the group's ability to play a spoiler role in peace talks with Palestinian moderates.

New strides were being made on the diplomatic front with the US throwing its weight behind a deal being brokered by France and Egypt.

While the UN Security Council failed to reach agreement on a cease-fire resolution, Egypt's UN Ambassador Maged Abdelaziz said representatives of Israel, Hamas and the Palestinian Authority agreed to meet separately with Egyptian officials in Cairo.

Israeli envoys arrived in Egypt on Thursday.

In Turkey, a Mideast diplomat who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak publicly said Wednesday that his country would be asked to put together an international force that could help keep the peace. And diplomats in New York worked on a UN Security Council statement backing the cease-fire initiative but failed to reach agreement on action to end the violence.

"We are very much applauding the efforts of a number of states, particularly the effort that President (Hosni) Mubarak has undertaken on behalf of Egypt," Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said. "We're supporting that initiative."

French President Nicolas Sarkozy said that both Israel and the Palestinian Authority had accepted the cease-fire deal, but he made no mention of Hamas, without which no truce could work.

Attack on Israel from Lebanon threatens to open new front

The Palestinian Authority controls only 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.

Later, Israeli officials made it clear Sarkozy's statement was not exactly accurate.

For Israel to accept the proposal, "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.

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 Israeli Cabinet decided on Wednesday to push ahead with the offensive while at the same time pursuing the cease-fire. -Agencies

Load-Date: January 9, 2009

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On Gaza, Sense and Centrism

The Forward

January 9, 2009

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Section: News; Pg. 9

Length: 1056 words

Byline:

Rabbi Eric Yoffie is president of the Union for Reform Judaism.

Body

Wars sicken me, even wars that I support. I support Israel's offensive in Gaza, but watching it on TV the images of bombed-out buildings, crying women and, inevitably, the bodies of innocent bystanders is a painful experience.

I suspect that most American Jews feel the same discomfort that I feel. They support the military offensive too, but they are well aware of the risks that it entails, and they expect Israel to be both politically wise and morally sensitive in how it fights. It is especially important to us that Israel do everything humanly possible to avoid the death of innocents and to prevent a humanitarian crisis in Gaza. There is much evidence that Israel has worked hard to limit the carnage, and the credibility of Israel's leaders in providing assurances on these points is an important factor in assuring the continued support of American Jews and, indeed, of all Americans for the Gaza campaign.

Of course, there are those in the Jewish community who champion the Gaza offensive with slogans of crude triumphalism. Martin Peretz, editor-in-chief of The New Republic, wrote on his blog that the message of this operation is do not f--k with the Jews. It is interesting to compare the somber statements of Israel's leaders, who are fighting to protect their children, with the obscene, cowboy-like delight that Peretz seems to take in the damage Israel's army is able to inflict.

At the same time, if some Jewish hawks are devoid of sympathy for Palestinian suffering, not a few Jewish doves have demonstrated an utter lack of empathy for Israel's predicament. J Street, a new Washington lobbying group and a major voice of the dovish pro-Israel community, has spoken out sharply against Israel's actions in Gaza. While it claims to represent the moderate American Jewish majority, in this case it has misread the issues and misjudged the views of American Jews.

It is not easy for me to write these words. I welcomed the founding of J Street and know many of those involved in its leadership. Furthermore, I am a dove myself. I support a two-state solution, believe that military action by Israel should be a last resort and welcome an active American role in promoting peace between Israel and her neighbors. But I know a mistake when I see one, and this time J Street got it very wrong.

J Street's first statement expressed understanding for Israel's motivations, and called as I do for a political rather than a military solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Nonetheless, its conclusion was that Israel made a mistake in attacking Hamas and that the United States and others must press for an immediate cease-fire.

On Gaza, Sense and Centrist

A second J Street statement was worse by far. It could find no moral difference between the actions of **Hamas** and other Palestinian militants, who have launched more than 5,000 rockets and mortar shells at Israeli civilians in the past three years, and the long-delayed response of Israel, which finally lost patience and responded to the pleas of its battered citizens in the south. Neither Israelis nor Palestinians have a monopoly on right or wrong, it said, and it suggested that there was no reason and no way to judge between them: While there is nothing 'right' in raining rockets on Israeli families or dispatching suicide bombers, there is nothing 'right' in punishing a million and a half already-suffering Gazans for the actions of the extremists among them.

These words are deeply distressing because they are morally deficient, profoundly out of touch with Jewish sentiment and also appallingly naïve. A cease-fire instituted by **Hamas** would be welcome, and Israel would be quick to respond. A cease-fire imposed on Israel would allow **Hamas** to escape the consequences of its actions yet again and would lead in short order to the renewal of its campaign of terror. **Hamas**, it should be noted, is not a government; it is a terrorist gang. And as long as the thugs of **Hamas** can act with impunity, no Israeli government of the right or the left will agree to a two-state solution or any other kind of peace. Doves take note: To be a dove of influence, you must be a realist, firm in your principles but shorn of all illusions.

As a reality check for my views, I did what I normally do in these circumstances: I checked with my closest Israeli friends, who are all left of center, haters of war and ferocious opponents of the West Bank settlement movement. In virtually every case, they saw the action in

getty

Gaza as tragic but necessary and were astounded by the opposition of American doves. What did they think, one of them asked me in bewilderment, that we would just sit there forever while **Hamas** fired rockets into our cities? And they pointed out that most politicians on the left support the offensive, as do more than 80% of all Israelis, according to polling data.

I have not seen any polls on the reactions of American Jews, but my own sense, supported by anecdotal evidence from the Reform movement, is that there is strong backing for Israel's government. American Jews have a commonsense approach to these matters.

We are aware that American forces have gone halfway around the globe to engage in a war in Afghanistan against terrorists who once carried out an attack on American soil. We know that civilians have frequently died in that war because terrorists make a point of operating in civilian areas. We know too that this war has the support of our liberal president-elect.

So why, we ask, should Israel's center-left government, after long periods of restraint and desperate efforts to renew the cease-fire, be expected to refrain from fighting terrorists that are regularly attacking from right across the border? And we are certain that if rockets were being launched from Canada into our own homes in Michigan or Maine, we would demand immediate action, and our government would quickly oblige.

American Jews see Israel's Gaza offensive as a tragic necessity, unwelcome but inevitable, carried out by a reluctant Israeli government doing what it must to end rocket attacks against its citizenry. In short, American Jews are, as usual, sensible and centrist, and supporting Israel in her hour of need.

Graphic

IMAGE; images

Load-Date: January 13, 2009

End of Document

Israeli shelling kills dozens at UN school in Gaza

Guardian.com

January 6, 2009

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theguardian

Length: 1139 words

Highlight: * Reports of more than 40 killed in and around UN shelter* 12 members of family killed in Gaza City air strike

Body

The civilian death toll in Gaza increased dramatically today, with reports of more than 40 Palestinians killed after missiles exploded outside a UN school where hundreds of people were sheltering from the continuing Israeli offensive.

Two Israeli tank shells struck the school in Jabaliya refugee camp, spraying shrapnel on people inside and outside the building, according to news agency reports.

The medical director of the hospital in Jabaliya told the Guardian 41 bodies had been brought in so far and more could be on the way. Reuters journalists filmed bodies scattered on the ground amid pools of blood and torn shoes and clothes. A donkey lay on the ground in its own blood.

In addition to the dead, several dozen people were wounded, hospital officials said. The Israeli military said it was looking into the reports.

Elsewhere at least 12 members of an extended family, including seven young children, were killed in an air strike on their house in Gaza City. The bodies of the Daya family were pulled from the rubble of a house in Gaza city's Zeitoun district after it was hit by two Israeli missiles. The dead included seven children aged from one to 12 years, three women and two men. Nine other people were believed to be trapped in the rubble.

Hours earlier, three young men - all cousins - died when the Israelis bombed another UN school, the Asma primary school in Gaza City. They were among about 400 people who sought shelter there after fleeing their homes in Beit Lahiya in northern Gaza.

The UN, which said the school was clearly marked, said it was "strongly protesting these killings to the Israeli authorities and is calling for an immediate and impartial investigation".

"Where it is found that international humanitarian law has been violated, those responsible must be held to account. Under international law, installations such as schools, health centres and UN facilities should be protected from attack. Well before the current fighting, the UN had given to the Israeli authorities the GPS co-ordinates of all its installations in Gaza, including Asma elementary school."

Israeli shelling kills dozens at UN school in Gaza

The killings take the total toll in Palestinian lives since the Israelis launched their assault on the Gaza Strip 11 days ago to above 600. Doctors at Gaza hospitals say that at least one-fifth of the victims are children and a large number of women are among the dead.

Israel continues to insist that the bulk of those killed are Hamas and Islamic Jihad fighters, although its claim to be going to extraordinary lengths to target only "terrorists" has been undermined by one of its own tanks firing on a building being used by Israeli troops, killing four.

The sharp spike in the number of civilian casualties came as Israeli troops and tanks moved into Gaza's second largest city, Khan Younis, for the first time today, supported by intensive artillery strikes as the military pledged to press on with its attack. The heaviest fighting has been in northern Gaza, with witnesses reporting wave after wave of bombing strikes across the north of the territory accompanied by gunfire from helicopters and artillery from land and sea. Thousands of Palestinians have been ordered to leave their homes or forced to flee the fighting.

In Shajaiyeh, east of Gaza City, Israeli troops seized control of three apartment blocks and set up gun positions on the rooftops. Residents were locked in their homes and soldiers confiscated their mobile phones, neighbours said.

Three of the four Israeli soldiers killed by friendly fire died when a tank mistakenly fired on a building where the soldiers had taken up positions. There was heavy artillery fire to cover the evacuation of 24 soldiers who were injured, including the commander of the Golani infantry brigade, one of Israel's key fighting forces.

Israel's defence minister, Ehud Barak, said his country's troops would continue their operation despite mounting Palestinian casualties and growing international calls for a ceasefire.

"Hamas has so far sustained a very heavy blow from us, but we have yet to achieve our objective, and therefore the operation continues," Barak said.

The Israeli foreign minister, Tzipi Livni, said the offensive was intended to change permanently the shape of Israel's conflict with Hamas. "When Israel is targeted, Israel is going to retaliate," she said. Israel has rejected calls for a ceasefire.

The military said it had bombed more smuggling tunnels across the border with Egypt, in the south, and hit more than 40 other sites across Gaza including buildings storing weapons and rocket launching areas.

In Gaza, Mahmoud Zahar, the most senior leader of Hamas in the strip and a hardliner in the movement, appeared on the party's al-Aqsa television station and gave a defiant speech threatening attacks not only in Gaza but elsewhere.

"The Zionists have legitimised the killing of their children by killing our children. They have legitimised the killing of their people all over the world by killing our people," Zahar said. He urged Hamas fighters to "crush your enemy".

Another Hamas figure, a recognised military spokesman called Abu Ubaida, said thousands of Hamas fighters were waiting in Gaza to take on the Israeli military, and that rocket attacks would increase. More than 40 were fired into southern Israel yesterday, including one that landed in an empty kindergarten, which, like all schools near the Gaza border, has been closed since the conflict began.. Israeli police said a total of 520 rockets had been fired in the past 11 days of fighting.

Israeli troops are now deployed in and around the major urban areas of Gaza, particularly to the north, in Beit Hanoun, Beit Lahiya and Jabaliya. Using leaflets, telephone calls and radio announcements, they have ordered residents in many areas to leave their homes, forcing at least 15,000 Palestinians to flee to safety elsewhere. At least 5,000 are staying in 11 different UN schools and shelters.

The UN said more than 1 million Gazans were still without electricity or water and that it was increasingly difficult for staff to distribute aid or reach the injured. It said more industrial diesel was needed to reopen the strip's sole power plant, which has been shut for a week. Ten transformers have been damaged in the fighting.

Israeli shelling kills dozens at UN school in Gaza

More wheat grain is needed for food handouts, and the UN said Karni, the main commercial crossing, should be reopened to allow it in. Four ambulances and three mobile clinics were destroyed when bombs hit the headquarters of the Union of Health Care Committees in Gaza City.

John Holmes, the UN emergency relief coordinator, said Gaza represented an "increasingly alarming" humanitarian crisis, and that the territory was running low on clean water, power, food, medicine and other supplies since Israel began its offensive. Israeli leaders claim there is no humanitarian crisis.

Load-Date: January 6, 2009

End of Document

'There's nowhere safe in Gaza'; 42 dead, dozens injured as Israeli mortar shells explode near UN school in teeming refugee camp

The Toronto Star

January 7, 2009 Wednesday

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Section: WORLD AND COMMENT; Pg. AA02

Length: 491 words

Byline: Ibrahim Barzak and Jason Keyser, ASSOCIATED PRESS

Dateline: GAZA CITY

Body

Israeli mortar shells exploded yesterday near a UN school in Gaza that was sheltering hundreds of people displaced by Israel's onslaught against Hamas militants, killing at least 42 Palestinians, tearing bodies apart and staining streets with blood.

Israel's military said its shelling - the deadliest single episode since Israeli ground forces invaded Gaza Saturday - was a response to mortar fire from within the school grounds in the Jabaliya refugee camp and said Hamas militants were using civilians as cover.

Two residents of the area who spoke 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.

Majed Hamdan, an Associated Press 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.

An Israeli defence official said it appeared the military used 120 mm shells, among the largest mortar rounds.

UN 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.

Three mortar shells that crashed down on the perimeter of the UN school struck at mid-afternoon, when many people in the densely populated camp were outside getting some fresh air, thinking the area around a school was safe.

'There's nowhere safe in Gaza' 42 dead, dozens injured as Israeli mortar shells explode near UN school in teeming refugee camp

Images recorded by a cameraman from AP Television News showed crowds fleeing the scene, pavements smeared with blood and battered bodies of the dead being carried off by medics and horrified bystanders.

A youth who limped away from the scene was helped along by several others. Sandals were scattered on the pavement by a pockmarked wall.

The UN agency that runs the school along with other programs for Palestinian refugees said two other UN schools in Gaza had been struck by Israeli fire since Monday night.

In the first incident, an air strike on the Asma Elementary School in Gaza City killed three men who were among more than 400 people taking refuge in the building. In the other, an artillery shell landed inside an empty boys school in Jabaliya.

"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 cell. It identified two of them as Imad Abu Askar and Hassan Abu Askar.

Graphic

ismail zaydah reuters A Palestinian stands beside a body near a UN school hit by Israeli mortar shells in the Jabaliya refugee camp in the northern Gaza Strip yesterday.

Load-Date: January 7, 2009

Gaza blitzkrieg follows Israeli tradition of pre-election muscle-flexing

The Daily Star (Lebanon)

December 31, 2008 Wednesday

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THE DAILY STAR

LEBANON

Length: 1121 words

Byline: Daily Star Staff

Body

Israel's stated goals for its massive bombardment of the Gaza Strip looked no closer to being achieved on Tuesday, the fourth day of a devastating offensive dubbed "Operation Cast Lead." Despite heavy damage to **Hamas** infrastructure and the enormous loss of life inflicted on Gaza.

Analysis

RAMALLAH, Occupied West Bank: Israel's stated goals for its massive bombardment of the Gaza Strip looked no closer to being achieved on Tuesday, the fourth day of a devastating offensive dubbed "Operation Cast Lead." Despite heavy damage to **Hamas** infrastructure and the enormous loss of life inflicted on Gaza, the Islamic resistance organization continues to fire rockets at Israel, with four Israelis killed to date.

The Palestinian death toll currently stands at at least 368, with about 1,400 wounded. 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 materialize. Although the firing of projectiles at Israel had been problematic, hundreds of rockets caused little damage and no casualties for many months prior to the onslaught. The rockets were fired mostly in response to Israeli attacks.

Prior to the expiration of a six-month cease-fire on December 19, 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 February 10. During heated debates in the Israeli Knesset, or Parliament, Palestinian-Israeli legislators accused the Israeli government of waging a war for electioneering purposes.

Legislator Ahmad Tibi told one 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 Labor party."

Gaza blitzkrieg follows Israeli tradition of pre-election muscle-flexing

Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak is chairman of the Labor party and a candidate for premiership. He is the main architect of the Gaza operation and stands the most to gain politically from it.

"There are those who are profiting from Palestinian blood in order to get elected," added MP Mohammad Barakeh.

Both MPs were subsequently evicted from the plenum.

Israel has a history of becoming dangerous and overly militaristic around election time. Most of the country's leaders have been former military officers 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 against Lebanon in 1996 came during election time. More than 100 Lebanese civilians sheltering at a UN base near Qana in the South died as a result of Israeli shelling. The United States successfully quashed a UN investigation into the incident by preventing the presentation of conclusive evidence that the massacre was deliberate.

The outbreak of the second intifada, the Palestinian uprising, in 2000 followed a provocative visit to Occupied Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa Mosque by former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, surrounded by hundreds of troops, despite warnings from his own security advisors and local police. He became prime minister the following year after campaigning on a platform of putting down the subsequent uprising.

"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 [with Gaza] breaks out," Israeli analyst and journalist Yossi Verter commented 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 Barak and Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, both of whom are running for prime minister.

They were under heavy pressure from far-right former Prime Minister Benjamin 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 are raining down, and restrain themselves," says Shmuel Bar, a Middle East expert from Tel Aviv's Interdisciplinary Center.

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 neighborhoods. 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 to score political points. Standing beside homes damaged by Qassem rockets fired from Gaza and looking appropriately stern and concerned, he is making the most of an Israeli political tradition that 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. Her lack of military experience and the fact that 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 caretaker Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, who was forced to resign amid 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 neighboring Arab regimes. Shortly before the aerial assault, Livni visited Cairo and explained to Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak the need for the forthcoming attack.

Gaza blitzkrieg follows Israeli tradition of pre-election muscle-flexing

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 competition 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 Mahmoud Abbas, a bitter foe of **Hamas**, has placed the blame squarely on the shoulders of the Islamists. Issues of proportionality, the suffering of the civilian population, and the fact that the cycle of violence actually started a month ago with Israel's cross-border incursion into Gaza, have not registered. - IPS, with The Daily Star

Load-Date: December 30, 2008

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In Focus: Why Do They Hate Us?

Daily News Egypt

January 13, 2009 Tuesday

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Length: 561 words

Body

CAIRO: Why do they hate us, my son asked me when he saw the Palestinian children who were killed by the Israeli massacre in the Gaza Strip.

The question surprised me because my boy is under than four years old, but he cries every day when he watches the horrific scenes of Palestinian children. I told him that they did not hate us, but they hated to live in peace.

Even if Israel is able to achieve its objectives by killing Hamas leaders, it has lost a lot when it comes to Arabs and their children. If you ask any Arab child now what he or she wants, they will say to seek revenge from Israel. It is no longer a question of achieving peace, but of saving the lives of children, women and the elderly who have been killed and their homes destroyed just because they are Palestinians.

Israel miscalculated the situation as usual and took us back six decades.

Everyone is wondering: Why are the Arabs paying the price for the Holocaust? Why should the Palestinian children pay the price for the Hamas-Israel confrontation? Why are civilians being killed?

Now there is a common Arab feeling that Israel, as a State, is no longer wanted in the region and that whatever it does to normalize relations with Arab regimes, it will not gain the sympathy of the Arab people, who see it as a brutal, heartless State.

Whatever dispute takes place among the Palestinians, the Arabs will continue to lay the blame on Israel, which refuses to give the Palestinians their legitimate rights and establish their State, as they are the only people in the world without a State.

Many Arabs and Palestinians are now wondering: What is the feasibility of peace with Israel? Since the 1993 Oslo agreement the Palestinians have not received got nothing but the expansion of settlements in the West Bank, disconnection between the West Bank and Gaza, and a rise in the number of Palestinian refugees abroad. The result is that Israel sold an illusion to the Palestinians, when they accepted a powerless Palestinian Authority.

In Focus: Why Do They Hate Us?

I understand the feelings of despair and frustration among the Palestinian youth, and fully understand why they prefer death to life. For three years, Israel has besieged them like rats in the Gaza Strip and cut off medicine, electricity and bread. Moreover, Israel and the US also punished them for their democratic choice of **Hamas**.

All Arab peoples have been disappointed by the shameful silence of US President-elect Barack Obama. Their optimism turned into pessimism because of his failure to criticize Israel's massacre of civilians and children.

Feelings of hatred towards the United States have been exacerbated because it treated the Israeli army and **Hamas** fighters as equals, in spite of the huge difference between their military capabilities.

Unfortunately, the beneficiaries of these brutal events in Gaza are the extremist organizations that will mobilize a lot of angry young Arabs to carry out bombing operations against Israeli and US interests.

Chances for peace have become very weak as long as the political parties in Israel are killing the Palestinians to win the elections, and as long as Israel insists on depriving the rightful owners of this land of their rights.

Khalil Al-Anani is an Egyptian expert on political Islam and democratization in the Middle East and is a senior fellow at Al-Ahram Foundation. E-mail: kalanani@gmail.com

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Time for Australia to speak out on brutality in Gaza

Canberra Times (Australia)

January 12, 2009 Monday

Final Edition

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Section: A; Pg. 8

Length: 580 words

Byline: The Canberra Times

Body

A discontinuous state of Palestine on either side of Israel would have as much chance of survival as had the discontinuous state of Pakistan on either side of India.

Why then can't Gaza become part of Egypt, and the West Bank part of Jordan? That is the least these countries could do for their suffering fellow Arabs from Palestine.

The Palestinian refugees must come to terms with the continuing existence and dominance of Israel. This will be a bitter pill for them to swallow.

Israel should sweeten the pill as much as possible by making them an apology in the Australian style, and by paying them massive compensation for the loss of their lands. If Israel can't afford this compensation, it should be paid on its behalf by the United States, the country without whose support Israel cannot survive, and by Europe, the continent whose millennium-long persecution of the Jews finally made the establishment of Israel necessary.

Michael McCarthy, Deakin Philip Dorling has rightly highlighted (Forum, January 10) the Australian Government's inadequate response to the crisis in Gaza. Acting Prime Minister Gillard's two statements and Kevin Rudd's one press conference comment to date (and Foreign Minister Stephen Smith's complete lack of comment) have been both insufficient and lacking in even-handedness.

As Dorling notes, the failure of the Australian Government to condemn Israeli air strikes and their hugely disproportionate use of force whilst condemning rocket attacks by Hamas and emphasising Israel's right to self-defence, have projected a clear pro- Israeli stance.

What is concerning is the diplomatic "gutlessness" of the Government's approach; a failure to speak out strongly against the bullying and overwhelming brutality of Israel's attack on the population of Gaza. The Australian Government should also be supporting the suggestion made by Professor Rothwell (Forum, January 10) for Israel to "accept the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court so that the actions of its military and political leaders can be tested against standards of international criminal law".

It is time for the Australian Government to show some courage and moral leadership by speaking up against the appalling brutality being inflicted on the people of Gaza.

Time for Australia to speak out on brutality in Gaza

David Turbayne, Watson Bill Arnett is wondering (Letters, January 10) where all the women and mothers are. They are probably all dead, Bill, hence all the hysterical screaming men.

Kathe Fraser, Queanbeyan I see Sharpe is putting it right up the Israelis in yet another fiercely biased cartoon in The Canberra Times on Saturday. I don't know how they can live with themselves with such a trenchant critic doing cartoons right here in Canberra.

John Cleland, Latham When it comes to arguing moral relativism in the current Gaza hostilities, whatever the right and wrongs of both sides, the charge of "disproportionality" so often cited against Israel's response is surely the most cock-eyed rationale in the mix.

Israel's intentional killing of several hundred Hamas Palestinians in two weeks is no more than what Hamas intended to do over many months of indiscriminate multiple rocket attacks.

Their technology wasn't up to it, not for lack of trying, but if any rockets had fallen on a crowded school or synagogue there would have been dancing in the streets.

Civilian casualties in Gaza were tragic by-product victims of the fog of war, generally unintended by the Israelis, unlike any victims of Hamas.

Bill Deane, Chapman

Load-Date: January 11, 2009

LETTERS

The Tampa Tribune (Florida)

January 6, 2009 Tuesday

FINAL EDITION

Copyright 2009 Times Publishing Company

Section: LOCAL NEWS; Pg. 13

Length: 559 words

Body

LETTER OF THE DAY: Spreading Cheer After The Holidays

Who does not receive one, two or even 10 items during the holidays that we cannot use - items ranging from clothing, appliances, knick-knacks, food baskets, kitchenware, toiletries, etc.? The unwanted list is staggering.

Instead of returning, exchanging or just tossing these new items, I proposed that deserving charities such as Metropolitan Ministries declare the week after Christmas "National Re-Gift to the Needy Week."

Let's place donation sites conveniently throughout the community and distribute the items to those who truly need and appreciate our unwanted gifts.

DEBBIE MARSHBURN

Darby

What If Cuba Attacked Us?

Your editorial Jan. 3, "Israel Is Forced To Defend Itself," was extremely interesting and very well stated. I am very pleased to see there is one newspaper in our country that is supportive of Israel in this matter.

The entire area, "From the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates," belongs to the Jewish people. Hamas and the Palestinian Authority are terrorist organizations whose aim is to eliminate Israel and be cowardly in the process by hiding in the midst of the civilian population. As you so clearly stated, this tactic is used to "claim" that Israel is killing innocent women and children and destroying "houses of worship."

I have a question for those condemning Israel: How would you feel if Cuba was shooting missiles at us in Florida? I am quite sure the answer would be to retaliate with everything that we have and possibly make the island a parking lot.

DICK TILLEY

Clearwater

A Greater Sacrifice

LETTERS

Strange, isn't it? Israel is always characterized as the aggressor. Why is it that there are only demonstrations against Israel when they are trying to defend its way of life? Where were the demonstrations when **Hamas** continually assaulted Israel? Why wasn't the world condemning those who initiated the conflict?

It is also amazing how the Arab world uses any confrontation against a non-Arab nation to bolster its own agenda. Look how it uses the media to justify their actions and criminalize the actions of others. They must have a great public relations team.

Let's face it; as long there is an Israel there will be no peace. We cannot blame Israel for that. For as long as there are Arabs with their own agenda for destruction, there will be no peace. We can blame the Arabs for that.

Peace requires a greater sacrifice than war, but no one wants to listen or make that sacrifice.

RONALD MORROW

Valrico

History Lesson

I have been reading letters from misguided people about Israel attacking **Hamas** forces in the Gaza Strip. A 14-year-old girl from Palm Harbor could not understand why Israel was going into Gaza "for no reason at all."

Young lady, if you read this ask your guidance counselor at school why the group of killers called **Hamas** has sent over 10,000 rockets into Israel since 2001. You think this is done by a peace-loving group?

CHARLES EVANS

Tampa

Typical News Day

Wars all over the globe, suicide bombings, the collapse of our economy, global warming, greedy CEOs, corrupt politicians, the usual local shootings and homicides, labor unions trying to bankrupt the auto industry. Staying positive is, at times, challenging.

RON DANNER

Tampa

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Load-Date: March 28, 2009

Israel pushes deep into Gaza City; Palestinians say residents waving white flags shot dead as they flee their homes

The Independent (London)
January 14, 2009 Wednesday
First Edition

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The  **INDEPENDENT**

Section: NEWS; Pg. 2

Length: 555 words

Byline: Kim Sengupta and Donald Macintyre IN JERUSALEM

Body

ISRAELI FORCES said they had pushed deeper into Gaza City amid heavy fighting, with some units within a mile of the densely populated urban centre. Terrified residents were said to be fleeing from many homes which had been set alight.

At least three Palestinians in Gaza were shot dead yesterday after Israeli soldiers fired on a group of residents leaving their homes on orders from the military and waving white flags, according to testimony taken by the Israeli human rights group B'Tselem.

The testimony was rejected by the military after what it said was a preliminary investigation.

The thrust by Israeli ground forces into Tel Hawwa was the furthest the Israelis had gone into Gaza City since military operations were launched on 27 December. Meanwhile, Israel's Prime Minister, Ehud Olmert, declared that he would press forward with an "iron fist". While his government in Jerusalem is claiming that Hamas's military capabilities have been severely damaged, its senior intelligence sources have revealed that only a "few hundred" of the movement's 20,000 men have been killed, including several of its key leaders.

The officials also stated that Hamas still had significant supplies of rockets left in their arsenal despite firing several hundred of them into Israel since military operations began.

However, Lieutenant-General Gabi Ashkenazi, the Israeli chief of staff, told Israeli MPs: "We have achieved a lot in hitting Hamas and its infrastructure ???but there is still work ahead." Israeli aircraft carried out 60 raids yesterday.

As Palestinian hospital officials revealed that the death toll has risen to at least 952, half of them women and children, John Ging, the UN Relief and Works Agency's director of operations in Gaza, called on the international community to protect civilians in Gaza; he also wants a full investigation into allegations that Israeli military forces have used illegal weapons.

Israel pushes deep into Gaza City Palestinians say residents waving white flags shot dead as they flee their homes

On the relatively peaceful West Bank, a Palestinian man was killed after he tried to grab a gun from an Israeli soldier in Hebron and a 15-year-old boy was shot near the city of Qalqiliya while throwing stones at a road used by soldiers and settlers. Palestinian officials said a settler had fired the fatal shot.

The UN secretary general, Ban Ki-moon, is heading to the region for talks with leaders in Egypt, Israel, Jordan and Syria. He said: "My message is simple: the fighting must stop. To both sides, I say: Just stop now."

In Gaza, Munir Shafik al-Najar told B'Tselem that members of his extended family started trying to leave their homes after the Israeli army began demolishing buildings in the area of Kuza- 'a, close to the Israeli border with southeastern Gaza. Mr Najar said the Israeli soldiers were using gunfire to signify that residents should leave, but then started shooting "indiscriminately".

He testified that his relative Rawhiya had stepped out of the family-owned building, one of whose walls had been destroyed by a bulldozer, expecting her family to follow, but she was shot. The military subsequently attacked another group escaping leaving two more of his relatives dead. The military said late last night that it had found the claim to be "without foundation".

Netanyahu calls for Hamas to be crippled and removed

World, pages 20 & 21

A Rabbi's plea for peace in Gaza

Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg, page 31

Load-Date: January 14, 2009

Kasrils slams 'butchery' in Gaza; 'It is cruel and merciless'

Daily News (South Africa)

January 07, 2009 Wednesday

e1 Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 6

Length: 538 words

Byline: Keith Ross

Body

South Africa's former Minister of Intelligence, Ronnie Kasrils, has slammed Israel for its "absolute butchery and murder" in Gaza.

Kasrils appealed to his party, the ANC, to be more vocal in its condemnation of Israel's bombardment and invasion of Gaza.

He made his appeal when taking part in SAfm Radio's After Eight Debate on whether Israel's actions in Gaza could be justified.

The discussion became passionate at times, with Jewish leaders calling for a recognition of the "moral" difference between the actions of Israel and those of the Palestinian organisation, **Hamas**.

They claimed that **Hamas** had fired thousands of rockets into Israel with the specific intention of killing and maiming innocent civilians, **women** and children. Israel, on the other hand, had gone out of its way to avoid civilian casualties, warning people to move out of target areas.

But Kasrils was not impressed. He rejected claims that the truce between Israel and the Palestinians had been broken by **Hamas**.

"Israel itself is guilty of breaking this truce many times over," he said.

"Israel has been a spoiler. Israel has not wanted this truce to continue. We have seen Israel's own admission that over the past six months it has been planning such an attack meticulously to carry it out by the end of the truce period.

"Those in Tel Aviv, in government and in the military have been itching to get back into Gaza and deal with the situation in this overwhelming, disproportionate, violent, militaristic manner."

Genocide

Kasrils said it was natural for people to resist oppression and drew comparisons with how black South Africans had been "under the boot, under the cosh" in the days of apart-heid.

Kasrils slams 'butchery' in Gaza 'It is cruel and merciless'

It was the experience of humankind, he said, for people to react when dispossessed and made the victims of genocidal action.

He said Israel had been able to get its own way over the years largely because of the support it received from the United States and other Western countries.

Kasrils called on South Africa and other countries to condemn Israel's actions.

"We have not seen anything as cruel and merciless as the siege of Gaza that has gone on for almost two years."

But Israel's actions were defended by the chairman of the South African Zionist Federation, Avrom Krengel.

He said the current situation was the last thing Israel or any Jewish community wanted.

"They had no intention of returning," he said.

"All they wanted was for the Palestinians to live in peace with them. But the continued rocket attacks - over 8 000 in the past three years - have necessitated this action."

Krengel said the Israelis had tried all alternatives, including targeted killings, over the past three years to avoid going back into Gaza.

The Israelis had tried a ceasefire, but 80 rockets had been fired into their territory on the day it ended.

His view was supported by South Africa's Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein, who emphasised the different moral values of the two sides.

Goldstein said **Hamas** had deliberately targeted civilians, while Israel had gone out of its way to avoid civilian casualties.

He said casualties in Gaza could have run into hundreds of thousands if Israel had not shown such concern.

"Israel's war effort is seriously hampered by its concern for civilians."

Load-Date: January 7, 2009

Demonising Israel is not fair reporting

Pretoria News (South Africa)

January 14, 2009 Wednesday

e1 Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 9

Length: 530 words

Body

If I had not read Yusuf Abramjee's name appended to this column ("No one has the right to murder" - Pretoria News, January 8) I would not have believed that so experienced a journalist could pen such untruths.

The claim that the "majority of those killed by Israel are civilians" would have us believe that Abramjee has access to information denied to the BBC, CNN, Sky and Reuters etc.

According to the UN the civilian casualties are approximately 25% of the total, the rest being **Hamas** fighters.

While I make no attempt to minimise the terrible tragedy of these unnecessary deaths (for which **Hamas** must take full blame), I wish only to place Abramjee's exaggeration in proper context.

Incidentally, in a burst of journalistic wisdom he is at pains to point out that these civilians are "men, **women** and children".

What else could they be?

Abramjee insinuates that Israel's killing of 600 Palestinians weighed against its seven-year ordeal of almost daily rocket attacks (over 8000) can hardly be regarded as "tit for tat".

What he fails to acknowledge is that every rocket is fired with the clear intent of killing, not missing. The fact that these missiles (the inaccuracy of which do not discount their potential lethality) fail to hit their target, is largely because 250 000 Israelis have spent a good part of their lives in bomb shelters following a mere 10 to 20 second warning of a pending attack.

Would Abramjee happily have his own children live under similar conditions? This is not a numbers game, Yusuf - it is a reality of the most evil intent.

"Israel can not be above international law", he claims, introducing a tried and trusted mantra sure to create an emotive response without considering its veracity. I challenge Abramjee to quote the international law under which Israel, in her current circumstances of a sovereign democratic state protecting its citizens from indiscriminate attacks, has fallen foul.

Article 8 (2)(b)(v) of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (see the internet) lists as war crimes the firing of missiles at civilian enclaves (towns) that constitute no military threat, and utilising civilians as human shields (see clause xxiii).

Demonising Israel is not fair reporting

But as **Hamas** spokesperson Fathi Hamad proudly announced on Al Aqsa TV on February 29, 2008 (see Youtube): "Palestinians have created a human shield of **women**, children, the elderly and the jihad fighters as if to say to the Zionist enemy: 'We desire death as you desire life'."

Don't weep then when death arises as a direct result of your actions.

Yes Yusuf, you are correct; **Hamas** was elected democratically.

However, it is not the democratic process of the election that counts but what the elected party does thereafter.

Adolf Hitler was also democratically elected.

Finally, Abramjee condescendingly says that "Not all members of the Jewish faith support Israel's attack and it is wrong to place the blame on them all."

On which of them, then, would Abramjee wish to place the blame, and once they have been "identified" is he suggesting that those individuals should now be attacked?

This is an irresponsible comment from someone who should know better.

Get your facts straight, Yusuf,

Victor Gordon, Brooklyn

Load-Date: January 13, 2009

Israel Hits Weapons Smuggling Tunnels

The Journal (Newcastle, UK)

December 29, 2008 Monday

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Section: Pg. 14

Length: 552 words

Body

ISRAELI warplanes pressing one of Israel's deadliest assaults ever on Palestinian militants widened their sights yesterday.

They dropped 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.

Earlier yesterday, Israel's Cabinet authorised the military to call up 6,500 reservist 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, said Gaza health official Dr Moaiya Hassanain.

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, 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**'s ability to fire rockets had been reduced by 50%. 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. 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.

Israel Hits Weapons Smuggling Tunnels

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 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.

Load-Date: December 29, 2008

End of Document

A PALESTINIAN VIEW: Third stage sees war and diplomacy proceed together

Daily News Egypt

January 13, 2009 Tuesday

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Length: 561 words

Body

CAIRO: "œWhy do they hate us?€ my son asked me when he saw the Palestinian children who were killed by the Israeli massacre in the Gaza Strip.

The question surprised me because my boy is less than four years old, but he cries every day when he watches the horrific scenes of Palestinian children. I told him that they did not hate us, but they hated to live in peace.

Even if Israel is able to achieve its objectives by killing Hamas leaders, it has lost a lot when it comes to Arabs and their children. If you ask any Arab child now what he or she wants, they will say to seek revenge from Israel. It is no longer a question of achieving peace, but of saving the lives of children, women and the elderly who have been killed and their homes destroyed just because they are Palestinians.

Israel miscalculated the situation as usual and took us back six decades.

Everyone is wondering: Why are the Arabs paying the price for the Holocaust? Why should the Palestinian children pay the price for the Hamas-Israel confrontation? Why are civilians being killed?

Now there is a common Arab feeling that Israel, as a State, is no longer wanted in the region and that whatever it does to normalize relations with Arab regimes, it will not gain the sympathy of the Arab people, who see it as a brutal, heartless State.

Whatever dispute takes place among the Palestinians, the Arabs will continue to lay the blame on Israel, which refuses to give the Palestinians their legitimate rights and establish their State, as they are the only people in the world without a State.

Many Arabs and Palestinians are now wondering: What is the feasibility of peace with Israel? Since the 1993 Oslo agreement the Palestinians have not received anything but the expansion of settlements in the West Bank, disconnection between the West Bank and Gaza, and a rise in the number of Palestinian refugees abroad. The result is that Israel sold an illusion to the Palestinians, when they accepted a powerless Palestinian Authority.

A PALESTINIAN VIEW: Third stage sees war and diplomacy proceed together

I understand the feelings of despair and frustration among the Palestinian youth, and fully understand why they prefer death to life. For three years, Israel has besieged them like rats in the Gaza Strip and cut off medicine, electricity and bread. Moreover, Israel and the US also punished them for their democratic choice of **Hamas**.

All Arab peoples have been disappointed by the shameful silence of US President-elect Barack Obama. Their optimism turned into pessimism because of his failure to criticize Israel's massacre of civilians and children.

Feelings of hatred towards the United States have been exacerbated because it treated the Israeli army and **Hamas** fighters as equals, in spite of the huge difference between their military capabilities.

Unfortunately, the beneficiaries of these brutal events in Gaza are the extremist organizations that will mobilize a lot of angry young Arabs to carry out bombing operations against Israeli and US interests.

Chances for peace have become very weak as long as the political parties in Israel are killing the Palestinians to win the elections, and as long as Israel insists on depriving the rightful owners of this land of their rights.

Khalil Al-Anani is an Egyptian expert on political Islam and democratization in the Middle East and is a senior fellow at Al-Ahram Foundation. E-mail: kalanani@gmail.com

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Load-Date: January 20, 2009

End of Document

Israel prepares to send in the tanks

The Independent (London)

January 3, 2009 Saturday

First Edition

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The INDEPENDENT

Section: NEWS; Pg. 2

Length: 739 words

Byline: Kim Sengupta IN JERUSALEM and Anne Penketh

Body

Israel appears poised to extend its week-long assault on Gaza by launching a ground assault, amid renewed reports last night that troops and armour were preparing to move into the besieged Palestinian territory.

As more than 300 foreign passport holders were allowed to leave Gaza after the border was temporarily opened, Israeli officials warned that a ground offensive was needed to break the military power of Hamas, which has continued to carry out rocket attacks despite pulverising air strikes.

Tank and troop reinforcements have continued to build up along the edges of the Gaza Strip, with soldiers saying they are waiting for orders to go in. Israeli sources, however, stated that commando raids and temporary occupation of strategic locations were the options being considered rather than a full-scale invasion, which would involve attritional fighting in the narrow alleyways of Gaza - home to an estimated 15,000 Hamas fighters.

There have been extensive reports in the local media of Israel carrying out a land operation which had been delayed by bad weather for much of the week. However, although the Israeli government had repeatedly warned that it may launch an offensive, it remained unclear whether a final decision had been taken.

The US Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, said she had no plans to travel to the region "at this point" to broker a ceasefire, increasing speculation that the Bush administration may be expecting a ground offensive after Israel rejected an EU-backed French proposal for a 48-hour truce earlier in the week. Ms Rice stressed that she was in touch with Israeli and European leaders on securing a ceasefire "as soon as possible".

In his first comment on the crisis, the US President, George Bush, branded the Hamas rocket attacks on Israel an "act of terror" and said no peace deal would be acceptable without monitoring to halt the flow of smuggled weapons to terrorist groups.

A White House spokesman, Gordon Johndroe, appeared to give tacit backing to the Israeli's military tactics by refusing to answer questions about whether the US believed a ground offensive was justifiable. "Those will be decisions made by the Israelis," he said.

Israel prepares to send in the tanks

Asked why Ms Rice was not going to the region, Mr Johndroe said she had been working the phones constantly since the Israelis first struck Gaza a week ago, and there was no "particular need" for her to travel to the region now "since she can do the work from here".

Thousands of Palestinians took to the streets yesterday after Hamas called for a "day of wrath" in response to the attacks on Gaza. The demonstrations in the West Bank and east Jerusalem, during which there were clashes between stone-throwing youths and police, was one of many across the Muslim world as the conflict reached its seventh day.

Riot police in Jordan fired tear gas to stop a march on the Israeli embassy, while in Istanbul thousands of Turks burned Israeli flags after main Friday prayers. The Egyptian authorities deployed thousands of riot police to prevent demonstrations in Cairo and the Islamist opposition group, the Muslim Brotherhood, said many people had been arrested.

There was further bombing in Gaza in which six people, including three children, were reported to have been killed, bringing the number of deaths to more than 400. A mosque, which the Israeli military said had been used to store weapons, was bombed and more than 20 homes belonging to the leadership of Hamas and other Islamist groups were destroyed in air strikes.

More than 30 rockets were fired into Israel yesterday, with four people injured in strikes on homes in the coastal city of Ashkelon.

Palestinians with foreign passports who were allowed into Israel - mostly women with Palestinian husbands and their children - gave dramatic accounts of the impact of the Israeli bombardment as Israel continued to bar journalists from Gaza.

Jawaher Haggi, a 14-year-old Palestinian-American, said her uncle was killed during an air strike when he went out to collect medicine for her father who was dying from cancer. Her father died a few days later. "There is no water, no electricity, no medicine," she said. "It is hard to survive. Gaza is destroyed," she said.

On other pages Gazaleader at war with Israel and his own rivals News, page 23

Mood on the streets is one of defiance - and fury News, pages 24&25

'Israel's hand was forced but that doesn't make it right' Howard Jacobsen, Comment, page 35

Load-Date: January 2, 2009

Gaza Under Attack - Children among 34 killed in Israeli airstrike at UN school

Irish News

January 7, 2009 Wednesday

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Section: Pg. 14

Length: 721 words

Body

International outrage grew over civilian deaths in Gaza last night after an Israeli bombardment killed at least 34 people, many of them children, at a United Nations school.

Hundreds of Palestinians had sought safety at the school after fleeing from a refugee camp in the face of Israeli advances.

It was the second deadly attack on or near a UN-run school in hours and the worst since Israel sent ground forces into Gaza last weekend.

Nearly 600 Palestinians, including dozens of civilians, have now died in the onslaught.

Ignoring international calls for a ceasefire, Israeli soldiers edged closer to Gaza's major population centres. A total of 58 Palestinians were killed in fighting yesterday with just two confirmed as militants.

The rising civilian death toll has drawn international condemnation and raised concerns of a looming humanitarian disaster.

Many Gazans are without electricity or running water, thousands have been displaced from their homes and residents say that without distribution disrupted, food supplies are running thin.

"There's nowhere safe in Gaza. Everyone here is terrorised and traumatised," Irishman John Ging, the top UN official in Gaza, said after the first strike on the compound of a UN school killed three people.

The United Nations said three civilians were killed in the first airstrike.

The second struck 10 yards from a school in the northern Gaza town of Jebaliya.

Dr Bassam Abu Warda, director of Kamal Radwan Hospital, said 34 people had been killed.

Majed Hamdan, a news photographer, said he reached the scene shortly after the attacks. 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 was not enough space for the wounded."

Gaza Under Attack - Children among 34 killed in Israeli airstrike at UN school

UN officials said they had provided their location coordinates to Israel's army to ensure that their buildings in Gaza were not targeted.

The army declined to comment but said **Hamas** often used schools, mosques and civilian areas for cover.

The international Red Cross said an ambulance post was hit as well on Tuesday, injuring one medical worker.

Ten Israelis have died since the Gaza operation began, including three in a 'friendly fire' incident yesterday.

"I am appealing to political leaders here and in the region and the world to get their act together and stop this," Mr Ging said, speaking at Gaza's largest hospital.

"They are responsible for these deaths."

United Nations staff estimate that around 15,000 people have fled to 23 UN-run schools they have turned into make-shift refuges.

UN food aid has halted in the northern Gaza Strip because officials fear residents would risk their lives to reach distribution centres.

Israel says it will not stop the assault until its southern towns are freed of the threat of Palestinian rocket fire and it receives international guarantees that **Hamas**, a militant group backed by Iran and Syria, will not restock its weapons stockpile.

It blames **Hamas** for the civilian casualties, saying the group intentionally seeks cover in crowded residential areas.

"The battle is bitter but unavoidable. We set out on this operation in order to deal **Hamas** a heavy blow and to alter living conditions in the south of the country and to block smuggling into the Gaza Strip," Israeli defence minister Ehud Barak said.

The Israeli army said it had dealt a harsh blow to **Hamas**, killing 130 militants in the past two days and greatly reducing rocket fire into Israel.

At least 15 rockets were fired yesterday. One landed in the town of Gadera, about 25 miles from the Gaza border, lightly wounding a three-month-old baby.

At the outset of the fighting, militants launched dozens of rockets each day.

In Geneva, the Red Cross said Gaza was in a "full-blown" humanitarian crisis. Its head of operations, Pierre Kraehenbuehl, said the few remaining power supplies could collapse at any moment.

Israeli leaders have said there is no humanitarian crisis and that they have allowed the delivery of vital supplies.

Meanwhile, British prime minister Gordon Brown last night said he was "hopeful" that the basis for an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip could be found, warning the Middle East was facing its "darkest" moment.

Load-Date: January 7, 2009

France, Egypt calling for truce

Telegraph Herald (Dubuque, IA)

January 7, 2009 Wednesday

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Section: A; Pg. 6

Length: 1467 words

Byline: The Associated Press

Body

Europe's fears mount PARIS (AP) -- Government officials and Jewish leaders are concerned the conflict in Gaza may spill over into violence in Europe, with attacks reported against Jews and synagogues in France, Sweden and Britain. A Jewish congregation in Helsingborg, in southern Sweden, was attacked Monday night by someone who "broke a window and threw in something" burning. On Sunday slogans, including "murderers ... You broke the cease-fire," were daubed on Israel's Embassy in Stockholm. Assailants rammed a burning car into the gates of a synagogue in Toulouse, in southwest France, Monday. In Denmark, a 27-year-old Dane born in Lebanon to Palestinian parents is alleged to have injured two young Israelis last week in a shooting police suspect could be linked to the Gaza crisis.

Belgium ordered police in Antwerp and Brussels to be on increased state of alert" Tuesday after recent pro-Palestinian protests ended in violence and arrests. France has Western Europe's largest Jewish and Muslim communities and a history of anti-Semitic violence flaring when tensions in the Middle East are high. In 2002, some 2,300 Jews left France for Israel because they felt unsafe. Even in normal times, anti-Semitic incidents are not uncommon. News You can use GAZA CITY, Gaza (AP) - 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. only has 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. 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. 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 initiative 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. 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.

Load-Date: January 7, 2009

A growing sense of unease

Australian Financial Review

January 5, 2009 Monday

First Edition

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Section: NEWS; Opinion; Pg. 46

Length: 790 words

Byline: Geoffrey Barker is a visiting fellow at the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre at the Australian National University.

Body

Israel's actions in Gaza raise troubling questions over its real intentions, writes Geoffrey Barker.

It would be fascinating to know why Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni says the latest massive Israeli air strikes on the Gaza Strip will "change the realities on the ground and give peace and quiet to the citizens in southern Israel".

Certainly there is no historic evidence to support her optimism, and there are no signs that the current Israeli military action has stopped rocket attacks on southern Israeli towns by Hamas militants in Gaza. Home-made Qassam rockets and mortar bombs continue to rain down on Israel.

Yet the strikes have killed more than 400 mostly innocent civilians and wounded at least 1000, while an estimated four Israelis have died in rocket attacks. These statistics clearly suggest the Israeli actions have been, like earlier military incursions into Gaza, excessive, disproportionate and ultimately futile.

If so, it is worth asking what Israeli leaders are seeking to achieve in Gaza - and answers are not hard to find. With elections pending, Israel's always fractious political leaders want to boost their personal and party-political support. Israeli opinion polls report that the attacks on Gaza are extremely popular with Israeli voters and that they have boosted the popularity of several competing parties and ministers. At one crude level, Gazans are being sacrificed on the altar of Israeli domestic politics.

More menacingly, the history of Israeli attacks on the Gaza Strip over the past eight years, and Israel's record in dealing with Gazans, suggests that Israel may be engaged in a long-term strategy to make life so impossible for Palestinian citizens that they will be driven to seek refuge and sanctuary in Jordan, leaving Gaza clear for Israeli territorial expansion.

If this assessment seems conspiratorial, consider the recent history of Israeli incursions into Gaza. It attacked militants in 2001, 2004, 2006 and 2007-08. It has mounted an ongoing campaign of assassination against Hamas leaders, killing among others its quadriplegic founder, Sheik Ahmed Yassin, in 2004. Thousands of innocent Gazans, including women and children, have died along with Hamas militants who have directed attacks against Israelis.

At the same time, life has become increasingly intolerable for Gazans because of Israeli actions notionally motivated by security concerns. Gazans are subjected to daily humiliation and brutalisation by Israeli forces; they

A growing sense of unease

are denied adequate food, water, electricity and medical supplies. Israel ruthlessly restricts humanitarian aid deliveries.

So far, Israel has failed to force Palestinians to abandon Gaza. But it has driven the population into the arms of **Hamas** militants who govern the area and who attack Israel with their home-made rockets and mortar bombs, and whose agenda centres on the destruction of Israel. **Hamas** is, of course, an appalling organisation that imperils the lives of some Israelis, but which is ultimately no match for the formidable Israeli military machine.

If, as Livni claims, Israel wants only peace and quiet in southern Israel, it is going the wrong way about getting it by launching massive air attacks against Gaza, or by building the West Bank barrier wall and extra-territorial settlements. Indeed, Palestinian rocket firings and suicide bombings, while inexcusable, are ultimately partly a function of, and response to, Israeli brutality. There are no clean hands in the Middle East.

It is true that Israel is the only genuine democracy in a volatile region governed largely by medieval courts and near-psychopaths. So there is a clear Western interest in a strong and stable Israel being able to live at peace with its neighbours within secure borders.

But given that Israel is an undeclared nuclear power in a region where others, including Iran, are closing in on the acquisition of nuclear weapons, there is also a clear Western interest in ensuring that Israel at least responds proportionately to hostile acts and avoids provocative actions that could trigger wider regional retaliation.

Israel's actions in Gaza over many years have not met this standard and have raised questions about its real intentions. The latest bombings are further evidence of Israel's tendency to dangerous, excessive and untargeted aggression, and the global condemnation of its actions reflects the unease of Israel's friends.

That unease will be intensified by Livni's extraordinary claim that the entry into Gaza of more trucks carrying aid supplies had removed the need for a humanitarian ceasefire. Her remark, apparently considered, reflects a coarseness unworthy of a humane and civilised politician. Israel deserves better from its Foreign Minister.

Load-Date: April 7, 2012

End of Document

In defence of Israel's actions

Sunday Independent (Ireland)

January 11, 2009

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Sunday Independent

Section: LETTERS

Length: 1402 words

Body

Sir -- The siren wail, like that of a banshee, from the Irish political establishment and intelligentsia, condemning the war actions of the beleaguered democratic state of Israel, must not go unchallenged.

Over three years ago Israel handed over Gaza to the Palestinians, in what turned out to be a forlorn hope, that stability, and peace would follow. They also compelled 9,000 Israelis to vacate the aforementioned territory.

Since the establishment of this peace policy by Israel, over 6,300 rockets have been fired into Israel by the Iranian-backed Hamas terror organisation, causing the deaths of 13 Israelis and wounding hundreds.

One might be cynical and scoff at the low death rate, and point to the ineffectual nature of Hamas to seriously threaten Israel; and suggest that Israel's actions are disproportionate; however, what country would tolerate such constant violent, indiscriminate aggression against its citizens without recourse to action?

The capability of Hamas to inflict mass killings upon Israeli civilians is improving at an alarming pace. The Israeli coastal city of Ashkelon, with a population of 120,000, is within range of Hamas fire; and that, combined with greater technical ability on the part of Hamas, changes the picture for Israel.

The ambitions of Hamas go far beyond recovering pockets of lost territory through irredentism. Hamas is dedicated to the annihilation of Israel as a nation state. This objective has to be condemned outright. As long as only a few speak out on Israel's behalf, the anti-Semitic genocidal ideology of Hamas, supported by Iran, will continue to gain further ground and more innocent people will lose their lives on both sides.

The pragmatism inherent in the overwhelming majority of Israelis must be allowed to triumph, over the massed forces of anti-Israeli hate-filled fanaticism. Only by altering the West's populist perception of this conflict, can it finally come to an end; thereby allowing politics, rather than violence, to take its proper place upon the stage of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict.

Pierce Martin,

Celbridge, Co Kildare

In defence of Israel 's actions

Sir -- I picked up your newspaper by mistake but read the well-written articles with interest until I came to Ruth Dudley Edwards' appalling diatribe. This was gutter press tub-thumping at its worst. By all means cite the arguments for Israel's actions, but do it reasonably.

Responsible journalism would also have presented the point of view of the other side. By the way, Israel is not only bombing Hamas: over 700 Palestinians have been killed. The 'upholder of freedom' has refused entry to international journalists and 'the small country trying to survive' regularly seizes small farms and expels their Palestinian owners. Amnesty International has said that aid is being blocked by the Israelis and that there is a humanitarian crisis in Gaza. Who are the 'woolly-minded'? Those realists on the ground who are not afraid to report the truth or Ruth Dudley Edwards, who is suffering from tunnel vision and who seems to be averse to factual reporting' If I were a regular reader of your newspaper I would demand higher standards from her.

Gwen Morgan,

Cardiff

Sir -- I have lived to celebrate my 87th Christmas and New Year and I sincerely love my country. It upsets me to witness the present state of the economy and the uncertain future facing workers and taxpayers.

While we need to have a government, civil service, gardai, judiciary, army, prison service and other services to run the country efficiently, many people feel that severe cutbacks will be necessary to save the country from bankruptcy.

Voluntary 5 per cent and 10 per cent salary and expenses reductions have been asked for and in some cases consented to, from people who will still have enough to enjoy a decent lifestyle.

We know that our national debt is so high that it may never be paid off, with all that is borrowed to supplement every budget. I suggest that this small country, where there is such an uneven distribution of wealth cannot afford the office of President, with huge salary and expenses. With all due respects to all Presidents since the first incumbent, they could have earned decent livings for themselves and have represented the country well. I wonder have they given the wrong impression of Ireland to the taxpayers of the countries they visited, who funded the elaborate receptions on each of their missions abroad.

Allow the present holder complete her term and never again offer any true patriot such an unnecessary and unaffordable position.

PS To save my family's embarrassment, because they don't know that I am writing this and might think I am going senile, I would ask you to withhold my name and address.

Name and address with Editor

Sir -- "Boys, oh, boys, Barney!" I had to smile when I saw the photo of the naked lady on the first page of The Living Section,(Sunday Independent, January 4, 2009). It showed a naked lady trying to cover her boobs. It made me smile and brought back memories of 1964 when I worked in Earlsfort Terrace. I was only 17 and wore a mini-skirt because they were in fashion. Most mornings on my way to work there was always an old lady at the corner of Leeson Street. She had a walking stick -- and would try to give me a whack of it on my bare legs -- and call me every name under the sun. If only she were alive today to see the really half-dressed women now! She would blow a gasket! Does anyone else remember her?

Name and address with Editor

Sir -- Gosh, I was awakened by the fact that Anne Harris makes her own stuff, and learned to sew on a machine and why not! You see, it's the green-eyed monster, as I have a machine for ages, and never mastered it. That was the most enlightening page I read in a long time (Sunday Independent, January 4, 2009). I can conjure up and visualise shapes and images, but to execute them is another matter and hand-sewing is tedious. There's great satisfaction in creating your very own clobber, but, unless the throw-out age is over, very few young ones would

In defence of Israel 's actions

value the lasting quality, as they can't be seen twice in the same outfit! Do you know, the recession may turn us all back towards common sense.

Kathleen Corrigan

Cootehill, Co Cavan

Sir -- I was in the process of taking the Christmas tree down on Little Christmas (January 6), packing away all the baubles and ornaments that make Christmas so 'magic and make believe'. It's the saddest part of every Christmas, I think, but my last piece of magic every year is the way the Christmas stuff always seems to fit back perfectly into the two cardboard boxes I have stored it in, ever since the girls were little, despite the constant addition of new bits and pieces each year.

My young son had just inadvertently caught me out.

He wondered where the squeaky toy Santa had brought the dog, might have gotten to. I replied, 'You mean the yellow cracker I bought in the pet shop?' Oh-oh! Silence, then a small little voice asked, 'You bought that'

Realising my mistake I added, 'Y'know Santa doesn't really come to dogs, only to kids' but it was already too late. I was left to consider my faux pas. I was taken aback at how easily I had just surrendered our 19-year subterfuge. The soot on the fire-grate, the half-eaten cake, the empty whiskey tumbler, the bulging stockings, all fading to memories.

Loose lips swallow reindeer indeed!

Poor boy. That's a big reality check for him, he's nearly 10, not quite a suspension of total belief just yet, but it's the beginning of the end and it struck me hard, like hitting the brakes on an icy road.

Sensing the first shimmering slide,you realise that you are not going to be able to stop, as you lunge towards that big bend up ahead.

Soon he will be a young man, no longer interested in helping me set up the train tracks around the tree and we won't have any innocent babies to nurture, or ply with time-worn traditional tales and the baby Jesus and Christmas, and the tree, with all the shiny ornaments, which had survived all of our moves and our constant exposure to commercialism, will have lost some of its lustre. It's quite sad, actually.

But then again, what did I expect, it's January, we are all broke, the roads are icy and the whole world is coming to grips with a new reality.

Nothing will ever be as it was again. It seems we all lost a bit of our innocence this Christmas.

Brian Nolan

Barna, Galway

Load-Date: January 11, 2009

Pushing for peace; Gaza

The Daily Gleaner (New Brunswick)

January 12, 2009 Monday

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Section: NEWS;NEWS; Pg. A1

Length: 363 words

Byline: JENNIFER DUNVILLE , dunville.jennifer@dailygleaner.com

Body

Government urged to call for ceasefire in area

They gathered for peace. They rallied for justice and shouted for a ceasefire.

The group of more than 100 people stood outside Fredericton's city hall for more than an hour in sub-zero temperatures Saturday to send a message to the federal government.

"We are demanding that the Government of Canada call for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and restore humanitarian aid," said Jack Gegenberg, a member of the Fredericton Palestine Solidarity group and Jews for a Just Peace.

"We need to take action now because the slaughter in Gaza is too horrible to continue."

The Israeli military launched the offensive Dec. 27 to stop **Hamas** militants from firing rockets into Israel. Gaza health officials say 870 Palestinians have been killed, at least half of them civilians. Thirteen Israelis have also died.

Tracy Glynn, a member of the Fredericton Peace Coalition, said the Palestinian people shouldn't be blamed for the ongoing violence in the Middle East.

She said the Canadian government has shamefully supported Israel's attack on Gaza and that support needs to be withdrawn.

"Since the Israeli military began bombing, more than 80 per cent of Palestinians have been without food or aid," Glynn said. "This fighting has been blamed on the election of **Hamas** by the Palestinian people, but on numerous occasions **Hamas** has called for a truce.

"We need to shift the support in Canada and call for an end to the violence."

Gegenberg said despite what people believe about what's going on in Gaza, a ceasefire is needed. Too many men, **women** and children have died, he said.

"The current assault on Gaza is an aggressive war that violates a long list of international laws and the Geneva Convention," Gegenberg said.

"Canadians must gather together across the country to show our support for a ceasefire.

Pushing for peace; Gaza

"We must demand action from our government. The longer we take to unite in support of a ceasefire, the more people die."

Participants in the rally in Fredericton on Saturday afternoon were urged to send a letter to Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

Pre-written postcards condemning the assaults on Gaza were passed out to the crowd as further encouragement.

Load-Date: January 12, 2009

End of Document

Topple hate with hope

Herald Sun (Australia)

January 12, 2009 Monday

1 - FIRST Edition

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Section: ED; Pg. 18

Length: 889 words

Byline: ALAN HOWE

Body

THE self-loathing of so many Arabs in the Middle East regularly erupts in incidents of unthinkable dread. It's what has picked away at the scab of Gaza.

Gaza will end in tears. Arab tears. Secretly, it's what more than a few of them want.

It's instructive to look at recent chapters of Arab self-flagellation.

Only a people who hate themselves could set about killing whole communities with which they live, in the manner that Iraq sought to exterminate that country's Marsh Arabs.

Following the first Gulf War in 1991, the Iraqi government flew bombing missions against the Marsh Arabs, who had lived in the wetland region of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers for perhaps 5000 years, killing up to 60,000. It was reported they had also been napalmed.

The watercourses, in which the Marsh people grew rice, caught fish and raised buffalo, were then mined, and sometimes poisoned, before a massive program of water diversion and drainage ruined most of them and the ancient people who survived fled in fear.

Many sought refuge in Iran. How desperate were they?

Only a people who truly think themselves and their countrymen and women worthless could think of attaching remote-controlled explosives to the mentally retarded and sending them to work as suicide bombers.

Last February, bombs were strapped to two Down syndrome women who were then sent to busy pet bazaars in Baghdad. The bombs were remotely detonated, killing at least 73 innocents.

The women's afterlife benefits in paradise were not recorded. And in any case, as presumably unwilling participants, perhaps they were not granted martyr status, with its Koranic promises.

Only a people who despise themselves could dispatch their women in so-called ``honour killings" -- these are popular across the Middle East, and especially in Pakistan -- where relatives murder their daughters, sisters and cousins because they refuse an arranged marriage, fall in love with men from other tribes, have pre-marital sex and, in some cases, ``allow" themselves to be raped.

Topple hate with hope

These killings have been thoughtfully caught on camera to be shared over the internet with those locals unlucky enough not to have seen the live show.

Some of these poor women may even have been educated. But many will not have been. Just last month the Taliban in northern Pakistan -- a member of the Commonwealth, a Test cricket nation, an ally of Australia -- ordered closed all girls' schools in the Swat district.

The demand was announced in mosques and broadcast on radio. The deadline is this Thursday, after which they will blow up the schools and kill the children. They have deadly form, and have reportedly destroyed 125 girls' schools already.

“Female education is against Islamic teachings and spreads vulgarity in society,” said the bloke who leads the local Taliban, Shah Dauran.

The noble Dauran will doubtless conduct the public executions of the teachers who ignore his threats.

And how much would you have to hate yourself and your people to encourage your children to die while murdering the blameless offspring of people you have never met?

Raising self-loathing almost to an artform is Mariam Farhat, who is much loved by the others like her in Gaza whose sole wish is the obliteration of Israel.

Farhat's brain squirms with hatred. She proudly sends her sons on suicide missions against Israel's more loved children, unfortunately with some success. Her 17-year-old, Muhammad, opened fire on and threw grenades at Jewish students, killing five and injuring 23 before being shot dead.

On hearing the news, his proud mum uttered “Allahu akbar” and gave chocolates out to neighbours. Before his mission, she did a touching home video of them together.

Since then two other sons have been killed while preparing deadly attacks. Unfortunately, she has three more boys.

The people of Gaza, so inspired by their mum of the year, voted her as one of Hamas's celebrity parliamentarians.

And I would keep that in mind as the debate of the bombing of allegedly “civilian” targets in Gaza gains momentum.

The last time Israel was wearily forced to defend itself by military action was when it was attacked from the north in 2006, after which the UN accused Israel's enemies of “cowardly blending . . . among women and children”.

The Herald Sun published exclusive pictures of Hezbollah launching rockets from high-density residential areas, all of which these liars denied. Hamas has

spent much of the past two years slinging its homemade rockets without warning, and without any reason, on to the schools and houses of innocent citizens of Israel. So many -- about 10 a day -- they seldom made our news pages.

Hamas now admits to having “surprises” for Israel, almost certainly rockets that can reach Tel Aviv.

Israel had to act, and it has. It can't destroy all of Hamas, but it may be able to exterminate some of its leadership.

Israel's actions in Gaza may make it more apparent to locals that supporting Hamas comes at a price.

Only a people who hate themselves could support Hamas and allow the children of Gaza to be killed as some have -- and more will be.

No one in the West hated those girls and boys, but hate surely killed them.

The sort of hate Mariam Farhat can tell Gazans about with a certain Neanderthal relish.

Topple hate with hope

heraldsun.com.au > Do you agree with Alan or are you angry? Speak your mind with blogs and comment

Load-Date: January 11, 2009

End of Document

UN says Israel deliberately targeting civilians

The Balochistan Times (AsiaNet)

January 7, 2009 Wednesday

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Length: 203 words

Body

GAZA CITY: United Nations officials in Gaza City said that Israel is deliberately targeting civilians in Gaza Strip after Israel killed 40 Palestinians at UN School on Tuesday. Spokesman for the UN Relief and Works Agency Christopher Gunness told reporters that UNRWA is "99.9 percent certain" that there was no militants or military activity in the UN School compound, and called for an independent investigation into the incident.

Israel on Tuesday bombed a UN-run school building, being used to shelter people who had fled their homes, killing 40 people, UN officials say.

The Israeli military said its soldiers had come under mortar fire from **Hamas** militants inside the school. A spokesman for **Hamas** denied there had been any hostile fire coming from the school.

Israel has killed or maimed several hundred children and **women** on over 1,000 bombardments since December 27. Israel has perpetrated crimes against humanity and war crimes in Gaza and the United Nations Court specialized in war crimes is expected to bring to justice the Israeli leaders for exceeding boundaries of self-defence and committing genocide. UN official at al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza said that at least 195 children were among those killed.

Load-Date: January 14, 2009

Soldier turned politician who spent his life fighting Arabs

Guardian.com

December 28, 2008

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theguardian

Length: 367 words

Highlight: Profile of Ehud Barak, Israel's defence minister and the architect of the offensive against **Hamas**

Body

Ehud Barak, Israel's defence minister and the architect of the offensive against **Hamas** in the Gaza Strip, has been fighting Arabs since he was a young man.

Drafted in 1959, the teenage kibbutznik - the eldest child of parents who immigrated to British-ruled Palestine from eastern Europe - left the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) 36 years later as chief of staff and its most decorated soldier.

Nicknamed "Napoleon" by army friends, the young Barak (Hebrew for "lightning") made his reputation commanding the elite Sayeret Matkal, the reconnaissance unit, which often operates behind enemy lines.

In 1973, Barak, famously wearing a **female** wig and high heels, led a commando raid in Beirut in which three top PLO figures were killed in revenge for the terrorist massacre of Israeli athletes at the 1972 Olympics.

His fans speak of his "laser-like determination" which his critics have chided as a "lack of peripheral vision." Writing in Yediot Aharonot, the political columnist Nahum Barnea called Barak's decision to blockade the **Hamas**-run Gaza Strip last year an example of the difference "between being smart and being a smartass".

He ran the operation to assassinate the PLO's military chief, Abu Jihad, in Tunisia in 1988 during the first Palestinian intifada. That was part of an Israeli strategy that assumed, then as now, that there is a military solution to the Palestinian question.

Barak became IDF chief of staff in 1991 but then, like many other generals, including his mentor Yitzhak Rabin, left the army to enter politics. He beat Shimon Peres to lead the Labour party and then defeated the Likud's Binyamin Netanyahu in the 1999 elections.

As prime minister, he sought to reach a conclusive peace agreement with Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Authority, an attempt that culminated in the failed 2000 Camp David summit. That led to the second intifada which in turn brought his resignation in 2001.

Israel's yearning for experienced military leaders brought him back to political life after the 2006 Lebanon war and he became minister of defence.

He seems to have a feel for what motivates his enemies and was widely quoted as saying: "If I were a Palestinian I would have joined a terrorist organisation."

Soldier turned politician who spent his life fighting Arabs

Load-Date: December 28, 2008

End of Document

DOOM & GLOOM

Sydney MX (Australia)

November 6, 2008 Thursday

1 - SYD Edition

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Section: WORLD; Pg. 14

Length: 367 words

Body

WEDDING BECOMES A MASSACRE

Weeping Afghan villagers said today that a wedding party was turned into a bloodbath when foreign troops unleashed a massive attack thinking they were targeting insurgents.

Residents of the village of Wocha Bakhta said 36 people were killed and others wounded in hours of fighting on Monday.

President Hamid Karzai later released a statement saying about 40 were dead, including women and children.

The bride was about to farewell her family when someone, believed to be a Taliban insurgent, fired at international troops.

FLOODS, LANDSLIDES KILL 51

Parts of southwestern China have been hit by their worst floods in more than a century which caused landslides that have cost 51 lives and left 43 missing.

The landslides and mud-rock flows in Yunnan province followed at least 10 days of rain, say official reports.

The downpours in neighbouring Guangxi region caused the worst floods in its capital Nanning since 1907.

MAN DRAGGED TO DEATH BY CAR

Japanese police have arrested a 22-year-old bar entertainer on suspicion of murder after a man was struck by a car and dragged 3km.

Keigo Yoshida allegedly drove a van without a licence and hit Gentaro Suzuki, 30, who was crossing a road in Osaka.

Suzuki was dragged through the heart of the city with his clothing hooked to the vehicle, leaving a trail of blood.

"I knew he would die if I kept driving while dragging him. But I was desperate to flee," Yoshida told police.

TV A TRAGIC KILLER FOR BOY, 4

DOOM & GLOOM

A 4-year-old New York boy is dead after a TV fell on him.

A Yonkers police spokeswoman said Timothy DiTomaso was in his bedroom when the TV toppled from a wall unit.

The boy was taken to St John's Riverside Hospital but died.

HAMAS FIRES UP OVER GAZA INVASION

Hamas has fired multiple rockets into Israel hours after six fighters died during Israel's first major incursion into the Gaza Strip since June's truce.

Israel said 35 rockets and mortars were fired, but gave no word on casualties.

Troops had entered Gaza to destroy what Israel said was a tunnel dug by militants to abduct its troops.

One militant died in the gunfight, and a subsequent Israeli air strike on **Hamas** positions in southern Gaza killed at least five fighters, medics said.

Load-Date: November 6, 2008

End of Document

Gaza

The Northern Echo (Newsquest Regional Press)

January 2, 2009 Friday

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Section: LETTERS (NORTHERNECHO LETTERS)

Length: 708 words

Body

JOHN Gilmore asks how anyone can side with Israel (HAS, Dec 30).

I agree the latest situation in Gaza is dreadful and civilian deaths are a tragedy, but, where was his condemnation of Hamas and Hezbollah for starting a war they know they cannot win?

These fanatics have little regard for human life. They hide behind civilians and use women and children as human shields.

Israel was advised to trade land for peace; it did, it pulled out of Southern Lebanon.

Even though it has ceded territory, kidnappings and terror attacks on Israel soil continued.

The fact is there will never be peace in the Middle East until the likes of Hezbollah and Hamas recognise Israel's right to exist, and no longer seeks its total eradication.

Anti-Semitic leftists describe Israel's bombing as "disproportionate".

Are the thousands of rockets fired at genuine civilian targets in Israel "proportionate"?

It is only because Israelis are in underground shelters built out of necessity and bitter experience or have fled out of range that there have not been more casualties on their side of the border.

Israel is fighting for its existence and lashing out in fear and frustration after enduring years of provocation.

Des More, Darlington.

CONSIDER the following scenario. You live in a semi, next door to a very large dysfunctional family who have tapped into your electricity, gas and water supplies for which you pay the bills.

Every night they siphon petrol from your car and constantly chuck their rubbish over the fence into your garden. They play loud music all the time (because they don't go to work, relying instead on hand-outs), and are hated by the neighbours on the other side who are also fed up with their behaviour.

Eventually, you can't tolerate this any more and take action by disconnecting the mains services and locking away your car at night. The response is a tirade of abuse, the murder of your cat with an airgun and your windows put through.

Gaza

Trendy left-wingers instantly label you as the perpetrators of unspeakable crimes and them as your innocent victims. The neighbours on the other side erect a giant fence to ensure that they aren't chosen as the next focus of attention.

This is what goes on in Gaza. It will continue until the Palestinians renounce violence, hold out the hand of friendship to Israel and agree to work night and day until a genuine two-state solution is found.

David Lacey, Durham.

I WRITE to express my outrage at the totally uncalled-for, over-the-top bombing and rocket attacks on Gaza by the Israeli military that, at the time of writing, had killed more than 300 civilians, many of them deliberately targeted and including children, five sisters among them.

It's sickening and inhuman. I understand that the deaths have been greeted with glee by Israeli newspapers.

Ever since the last Palestinian elections, the Israelis have maintained a blockade on such as food, desperately-needed medical supplies and access, plus severe restrictions on water and electricity, causing starvation and many deaths from treatable illnesses. Half the population lives on less than a pound a day.

If you wish to express your concern, please write to Gordon Brown and/or the Foreign Secretary and/or your MP (at House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA) and/or your Euro MP and/or attend a demonstration (Durham, Millennium Square, from 10.45am, or Grey's Monument, Newcastle, from noon, both tomorrow).

John Severs, Durham City.

LIKE their American patrons, the Israelis seem incapable of learning from their mistakes.

It should be obvious most Palestinians want peace and normality above all else. The present onslaught can be guaranteed to change all that.

For every Hamas militant Israeli bombs kill, they will recruit 1,000 more for Hamas. As for destroying the Hamas infrastructure, that's a consideration of singular irrelevance, both economic and militarily.

The Israeli leadership are supposed to be intelligent people, but they seem extraordinarily obtuse about the realities of human nature as well as those of basic ethics.

Traditionally, the Israelis consider themselves a holy nation, God's chosen people, but there is precious little evidence of holiness in raining down bombs on a densely-crowded civilian population.

Tony Kelly, Crook, Co Durham.

Load-Date: January 6, 2009

TODAY'S News

Charleston Gazette (West Virginia)

November 9, 2008, Sunday

Copyright 2008 Charleston Newspapers

Section: NEWS; Pg. P2A

Length: 394 words

Body

Big thrills

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. - Washington Redskins quarterback Jason Campbell (right) and Redskins tight end Chris Cooley take a ride aboard the Big Thunder Mountain Railroad roller coaster at Disney World's Magic Kingdom on Friday.

Obama victory opens door to new black identity

WASHINGTON - Shortly after leaving the voting booth, 70-year-old community activist Donald E. Robinson had a thought: "Why do I have to be listed as African-American? Why can't I just be American?" The answer used to be simple: because a race-obsessed society made the decision for him. STORY, 14A

Canadian reporter abducted in Kabul freed

KABUL, Afghanistan - Afghan and Canadian officials say a female Canadian journalist who had been held hostage for four weeks in Afghanistan has been freed. Mellisa Fung, a reporter for the CBC, was taken hostage Oct. 12 after reporting in a refugee camp in Kabul. She is the second abducted female journalist to be released in two days.

Questions swirl around a second stimulus plan

WASHINGTON - Washington is poised during the next 90 days to approve spending perhaps \$100 billion to jolt the ailing economy. Democratic congressional leaders have suggested passing two separate stimulus plans, one this fall and the other immediately after President-elect Obama takes office on Jan. 20. A pre-Christmas agreement could be tough, however, because President Bush and Republican congressional leaders might be reluctant to support one. STORY/13A

Army general bucks silence on mental health

WASHINGTON - It takes a brave soldier to do what Army Maj. Gen. David Blackledge did in Iraq. It takes as much bravery to do what he did when he got home. Blackledge got psychiatric counseling to deal with wartime trauma, and now he is defying the military's culture of silence on the subject of mental-health problems and treatment. STORY/7A

Hamas leader says he's ready to talk to Obama

LONDON - Hamas is ready to open talks with President-elect Barack Obama, who must deal with the Palestinian militant group if he wants to address the wider conflict in the Middle East, the group's leader said in an interview

TODAY'S News

broadcast Saturday. Khaled Mashaal said that **Hamas** is ready for dialogue "on the basis that the American administration respects our rights and our options." Obama's office said it had no comment on Mashaal's statements.

- COMPILED FROM WIRE REPORTS

Load-Date: November 10, 2008

End of Document

Doom & gloom

MX Brisbane (Queensland, Australia)

November 6, 2008 Thursday

1 - BRIS Edition

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Section: MX; Pg. 10

Length: 366 words

Body

WEDDING BECOMES A MASSACRE

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One militant died in the gunfight, and a subsequent Israeli air strike on **Hamas** positions in southern Gaza killed at least five fighters, medics said.

Load-Date: November 6, 2008

End of Document

Gaza blockade causes food shortage and blackout; Israel keeps border closed, citing rocket attacks and security threats

The Gazette (Montreal)

November 14, 2008 Friday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A14

Length: 378 words

Byline: Los Angeles Times

Dateline: JERUSALEM

Body

Much of Gaza City fell into darkness last night after an Israeli blockade, tightened in response to Palestinian hostilities, caused the city's electricity plant to run critically low on fuel and shut down.

Israel also barred 30 truckloads of relief supplies from entering the Gaza Strip, leaving a UN agency without food supplies for needy families that make up half the Palestinian territory's 1.5 million people.

The partial blackout and the food shortage were the most severe consequences of recent hostilities that have shattered a five-month-old ceasefire along Israel's border with Gaza. With the ceasefire accord due to expire next month, Israel and **Hamas**, the Islamic group that governs Gaza, appeared to be bracing for another round of fighting.

Hundreds of Palestinians in Gaza City joined a candlelight march, organized by a **Hamas**-backed group, to protest against what they called an Israeli siege.

"This is a crime against innocent civilians," said Ziad Abu Khousa, 23, who wondered how he and other students at Gaza City's Islamic University could study for mid-term exams without lighting at night. "Half the population of Gaza are **women** and children, and they have nothing to do with the fighting."

Many refugees from the 1948 war over Israel's creation and their descendants live in shanty towns and nearly all depend on the United Nations for canned meat, flour, sugar, rice and other staples, delivered from Israel.

Neither the Israelis nor the Palestinians have renounced the ceasefire. But **Hamas** has permitted sporadic rocket fire into Israel, and Israeli forces this month have made two brief pinpoint raids into Gaza, killing 10 people.

John Ging, director of the UN Relief and Works Agency operations in Gaza, said the Israeli Defence Ministry had promised late Wednesday that it would allow the 30 truckloads of food and other humanitarian supplies to cross into Gaza yesterday.

Gaza blockade causes food shortage and blackout; Israel keeps border closed, citing rocket attacks and security threats

But at midday yesterday, Defence Minister Ehud Barak ordered the border crossings to remain closed. The truck convoy was turned back, spokesman Peter Lerner said, because of "continued rocket fire and security threats at the crossings."

Palestinian militants fired eight rockets and several mortar shells into southern Israel during the day. No one was wounded in the attacks.

Load-Date: November 14, 2008

End of Document

Blood, tears and fury as a nation lies in ruins; The death toll in Gaza is now said to exceed 800 people, more than a third of them children, and Israel yesterday warned that it plans to escalate its attacks

Sunday Tribune (Ireland)

January 11, 2009

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Section: NEWS; Pg. N18

Length: 1613 words

Byline: Ibrahim Barzak, Gaza City and Kim Sengupta, Jerusalem

Body

Israeli forces yesterday pounded dozens of targets in the Gaza Strip and dropped leaflets warning of an escalation in attacks, as southern Israel came under more Palestinian rocket fire. As flames and smoke rose over Gaza City, speculation grew that Israel was about to launch the so-called Third Stage of its offensive - the forcible entry into Gaza City by thousands of troops.

The Israeli military said that more than 15 militants were killed in earlier fighting overnight. Its aircraft attacked more than 40 targets throughout Gaza, striking 10 rocket-launching sites, weapons storage facilities, smuggling tunnels, an anti-aircraft missile launcher and gunmen. And civilians. In the day's bloodiest incident, an Israeli tank shell landed outside a home in the northern Gaza town of Jebaliya, killing nine people as they sat outside in their garden. They were all from the same clan, and, said health administrator Adham Hakim, their bodies were so mangled, they were brought to hospital in the boot of a car. Two were women and two were children.

This wretched pair will be added to the nearly 300 Gaza children who have been killed by Israeli fire. Thirteen Israelis have been killed, four of them by militant rockets. According to the Hamas-run Palestinian health ministry, the death toll now exceeds 800, more than a third of them children. The United Nations corroborates this, with a report two days ago from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs putting the number of children killed at 265.

The Israelis respond that Hamas often uses schools and homes, and therefore are the ones bringing down fire on Gaza's little ones. Last week an Israeli attack outside a UN school killed nearly 40 people. Both Israeli and Palestinian witnesses said militants carried out an attack from the area moments earlier. But it is Israeli fire, Israeli weapons, Israeli ammunition, and Israeli military who do the aiming, and they are killing women and children at a rate that is sickening the world.

And behind the statistics, the pictures of broken bodies wrapped in winding sheets, are - if they can be found, as the missiles and lies of war are exchanged - the stories of real people. People like Albera Al-Jarou and her tiny son Yusuf, full of life just a few days ago but now quite dead. Albera (36) originally from Ukraine and married to a Palestinian doctor, became the first foreigner to lose her life in Gaza. Her one-year-old-son Yusuf, clinging to her in fright during a heavy bombardment, also died when an Israeli shell hit their home. A daughter, Yasmine, was severely injured and is now in intensive care; another son, Abdulrahman was also wounded but is expected to make a full recovery.

Blood, tears and fury as a nation lies in ruins The death toll in Gaza is now said to exceed 800 people, more than a third of them children, and Israel yesterday....

Albera could have been among the 300 foreigners allowed to leave Gaza by the Israelis last week. But family members not holding a foreign passport were denied the escape and she decided she could not abandon her husband and children.

'Her place was here with us'

"My wife said to me that her place was with us, here, in Gaza. She could never just leave us. So she stayed, and she died," said Dr Awny Al-Jarou, who received cuts to his head. "She died. My beautiful son died as well. My wife was cut in half and my son was in pieces. My heart is breaking but I have two other children and I now have to make sure that they live and grow up. I try not to think about my wife and son, I try to get on with my work. It is very difficult."

Death from the skies is not the only threat facing Gaza's children. Medical facilities are stretched almost to breaking point, and no one can vouch for this better than Dr Al-Jarou. He is at the Shifa, Gaza's biggest hospital, where around 70 patients are in intensive care, among them his daughter Yasmine. They cling to life with the help of four generators working round the clock at a hospital which has been without power for the last seven days because Gaza's sole power plant has stopped working due to lack of fuel after weeks of Israeli blockade.

"How terrible it would be," said Dr Hassan Khalaf, the hospital's director, "if our patients survive attacks, and then die because of a lack of electricity."

And the threats to Gaza's families, these 'collateral' inhabitants waiting to be damaged, now include, according to the World Bank, being drowned by sewage as the Israeli offensive threatens to cause the collapse of a giant lagoon of human waste. The bank says the earthen walls of the 75 acre lagoon - which contains over 450 million gallons of sewage - are being weakened by the bombardment and by the build-up of water pressure because pumps have run out of fuel. If they burst, they could bring about a death toll far greater than that of the military action so far. The lagoon, at Beit Lahiya in the north of Gaza, filled up because the local sewage plant has been unable to process all the waste it receives. In 2007, a much smaller sewage lake, used to take pressure off the lagoon, collapsed, killing five people in a tide of filth which drove 1,500 more from their homes.

The World Bank said: "Pumps transferring sewage from the lake to infiltration basins, critical to the relief of pressure on structure, are not in operation due to lack of electricity and fuel. Failure would put about 10,000 residents of the surrounding area in danger of drowning, and spark a wider environmental and public health disaster." It called on Israel to provide fuel for the pumps, let staff and spare parts through to the lagoon, and secure "a wide no-fire zone" around it.

There was no hope of that yesterday. Saturday's fighting raged after both Israel and Hamas ignored a UN resolution calling for an immediate and durable ceasefire that would lead to the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza. Israel has dismissed the security council resolution passed on Thursday as impractical, while Hamas, whose government in Gaza is not recognised internationally, is angry it was not consulted about the diplomatic efforts.

Yesterday, Syria-based Palestinian militant groups including Hamas rejected the deployment of international observers or troops in Gaza. They also rejected any security arrangement that "infringes on the right of resistance against Israeli occupation". The statement came after Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas called on Hamas to reach an agreement to end the fighting. Abbas, in Cairo for talks with Egyptian officials on a truce, said the Egyptian proposal, put forward last week by Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak at a news conference with French president Nicolas Sarkozy, is the only way forward.

Meanwhile, on the ground, some of the heaviest fighting occurred on the strategic coastal road north of Gaza City, Palestinian security officials said. Israeli forces moved to within about a mile of the city before pulling back slightly. While Israel has largely taken control of the road, militants continue to operate from hidden positions in the area. The road is often used to fire rockets into Israel or attack Israeli navy boats off the Mediterranean coast. Although no rockets were fired into Israel overnight, by yesterday morning, 10 rockets had landed in Israel, the army said.

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One rocket scored a direct hit on an apartment building in the southern city of Ashkelon, lightly wounding two people and causing extensive damage to the structure.

The offensive has caused extensive damage throughout Gaza, fuelling fears of an impending humanitarian crisis. The UN estimates two-thirds of Gaza's 1.4 million people are without electricity, and half don't have running water. There was a lull for three hours yesterday to allow the territory's besieged residents to leave their homes and stock up on supplies, and for medics to rescue casualties, and aid groups to rush through food distribution. It is the third time in recent days that Israel has suspended its offensive to allow aid groups to work. But agencies say three hours isn't enough time. Salam Kanaan of Save the Children said in previous lulls, for instance, the agency distributed food to 9,500 people - far short of the 150,000 people it serves.

Halt on aid shipments continues

UN official Adnan Abu Hasna said the Palestinian refugee agency would distribute aid to about 40,000 people, half of them holed up in UN schools that have been transformed into shelters. All deliveries were coming from supplies already in Gaza. UN officials said a halt on aid shipments into Gaza through Israeli-controlled border crossings remained in effect. The ban was imposed on Thursday after a UN truck driver was shot and killed by Israel. It was unclear when the deliveries will resume.

UN secretary-general Ban Ki-moon spoke with Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert by phone on Friday and told the prime minister that he was disappointed the violence was continuing in disregard of the resolution, according to Ban's office.

Israel says any ceasefire must include assurances that **Hamas** will halt attacks and end the smuggling of weapons into Gaza through the porous Egyptian border. **Hamas** has said it won't accept any ceasefire deal that does not include the full opening of Gaza's border crossings. The UN resolution emphasised the need to open all crossings, which Israel and Egypt have kept sealed since **Hamas** militants forcibly seized control of the territory 18 months ago. Israeli leaders oppose that step because it would allow **Hamas** to strengthen its hold on Gaza.

The rising civilian death toll has drawn heavy criticism of Israel from international aid groups and triggered anger throughout the Islamic world and elsewhere. There have been daily protests in the Middle East and in Europe, where there also has been a rise in anti-Semitic attacks.

Load-Date: January 13, 2009

Hamas or Hannas, they're not black and white; Good and bad, victim and murderer, Jew or Palestinian or Nazi sympathiser ... we can't afford our simplistic arguments

The Times (London)

January 6, 2009 Tuesday

Edition 1, National Edition

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THE TIMES

Section: Pg. 22

Length: 1067 words

Byline: David Aaronovitch

Body

For months - years even - the historical twinning that some campaigners have chosen for the situation in Gaza has been with the Warsaw ghetto. There'll probably be a sign up soon, because in the past week Ken Livingstone, the activist-musician Brian Eno and George Galloway have all made the comparison.

;"Gaza is a ghetto," said Mr Livingstone, in exactly the same way that the Warsaw Ghetto was, and people are trapped in it"; while Eno predicted: "They [the Israelis] will continue to create a Warsaw Ghetto in the Middle East." The less-restrained Mr Galloway pronounced: "Those murdering them [the occupants of Gaza] are the equivalent of those who murdered the Jews in Warsaw in 1942." Busy people sometimes hurry their reading. Mr Galloway, for example, may only have skimmed the day-by-day reports made by SS Brigadeführer Jürgen Stroop on the destruction of the Warsaw Ghetto in 1943.

On the third day of the operation Stroop tells how "large numbers of Jews - entire families - already on fire, jumped from the windows. We made sure that these, as well as the other Jews, were liquidated immediately." Stroop's operation was made necessary because the inhabitants of the ghetto took up what few arms they had, having already seen more than half their number transported to extermination camps - a figure which, if translated into Gaza terms, would mean the deliberate killing of 500,000 Palestinians.

;"A year earlier in this place that was, pace Livingstone, "exactly" a ghetto in the same way as Gaza, the death rate from starvation and disease was more than 4,000 a month - the equivalent of 12,000 in the Gazan "ghetto". On these grounds alone, never mind any others (rockets, Hamas, etc), we may conclude that Gaza 2009 and Warsaw 1943 have very little in common.

;"So why the philistine insistence on this particular match? Partly, I imagine, so that the matcher can mention the "irony" of Jews supposedly doing to others what the Nazis "did to them" - as if there weren't a thousand other closer, but far less narratively satisfying, comparisons.

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;But this ahistorical hyperbole is also the product of a kind of binary thinking, the belief that there can only be two kinds of anything, and two possible responses: there's the good and the bad; there's the victim and the murderer. The only way Jews can shed their unique victim status is if they take on the mantle of the worst kind of murderer, the mantle of Stroop. The only way we can think about the Holocaust (or subsequent little holocausts) is that those who carried it out are so unlike us that they are beyond comprehension.

;Strangely this thought did not begin for me with events in Gaza, but in the reactions to a piece of cinema released here last week. Ten years ago I read a book by a German author, Bernhard Schlink, called *The Reader*, which told the story of a young German boy who, in 1958, falls for an older woman. She becomes his first lover, but then disappears from his life. A few years later, as a law student he sees the same woman - Hanna - on trial for crimes committed as a guard at a concentration camp during the war.

;Gradually he realises that the key to much of her behaviour, exciting and appalling, lies in something as banal as her shame at her own illiteracy.

;The film version, starring Kate Winslet, directed by Stephen Daldry and with a screenplay by David Hare, has met with a surprisingly vigorous dusting-up from some of the Anglophone world's finest film critics. The objections to style or cinematography vary, but those to moral purpose are very similar.

;"Outrageously," said the New York Times reviewer, "Hanna is a victim too, because she took the guard job only to hide her illiteracy, as if illiteracy were an excuse for barbarism." Anthony Lane, of *The New Yorker*, more languidly complained that the audience is "encouraged to muse upon the cultural shortcomings, or improvements, in the life of an ageing member of the SS. This is not an issue that most of us feel the need to worry about." As an assertion, it seems to me, this is more or less completely wrong. But I'll come to that in a minute, after having said that I think neither the book nor the film deserve such castigation. On the contrary.

;Neither invite you to think that Hanna is a good person or a victim, indeed she is rather animalistic, manipulative and lacking in imagination. And neither excuses barbarism in any way. But the story suggests that, if you didn't know your lover was once a concentration camp guard, you wouldn't necessarily be able to tell.

;Wilfully, almost, the critics have missed the point. One of the most important exchanges takes place in the courtroom. Hanna, who joined the SS as a guard in 1943, is being interrogated by the judge about how selections were made in her work camp for those who would be sent to the gas chambers. She answers matter-of-factly that each of the six guards selected ten women every month. The judge is horrified. "So what would you have done?" she asks, genuinely bemused.

;In an interview Daldry talked about how the real trials were reported in the German press in the 1960s. Those in the dock had been depicted as "obviously monsters, sadists, mad people, criminally insane. They must be because only the criminally insane could have been involved in this." He was talking about the binary, evading thought. Schlink, Daldry and Hare are about challenging this evasion.

;So when Hanna asks "What would you have done?" the answer is, how far back shall we go? When 13.75 million German voters put their cross against the overtly Jew-hating National Socialist list in July 1932, didn't they make themselves complicit in the events that ended up with Hanna's choice? Or, to put it another way, couldn't people that you might fall in love with, be capable - depending on the circumstances, created by millions of others - of doing terrible things? That's the question the New Yorker critic so disdains.

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Graphic

Kate Winslet: could you tell if your lover had been a death-camp guard?

Load-Date: July 30, 2009

End of Document

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The Times (London)

January 6, 2009 Tuesday

Edition 2, National Edition

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THE TIMES

Section: EDITORIAL; Pg. 22

Length: 1068 words

Byline: David Aaronovitch

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Load-Date: July 30, 2009

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The same justification for slaughter is everywhere; On both sides of the Atlantic the experience has been weirdly repetitive

Sunday Tribune (Ireland)

January 11, 2009

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Section: NEWS; Pg. N18

Length: 591 words

Body

It all depends where you live. That was Israel's propaganda, designed to demonstrate that we softies - we baby-coddling liberals living in our secure Western homes - don't realise the horror of 12 (now 20) Israeli deaths in 10 years and the unimaginable trauma of living near Gaza.

Forget the 800 Palestinian dead; travelling on both sides of the Atlantic these past couple of weeks has been an instructive, not to say repetitive, experience.

Here's how it goes. I was in Toronto when I found the right-wing National Post trying to explain what it felt like to come under Palestinian rocket attack.

"Suppose you lived in the Toronto suburb of Don Mills, and people from the suburb of Scarborough - about 10km away - were firing as many as 100 rockets a day into your yard, your kid's school, your dentist's office ..."

In Montreal two days later, there's an article in the French-language paper La Presse, signed by 16 pro-Israeli writers, economists and academics, trying to explain what it's like to come under Palestinian rocket attack.

"Imagine for a moment that the children of Longueuil live day and night in terror, that businesses, shops, hospitals, schools are the targets of terrorists in Brossard."

Two days later I am in Dublin. I find a letter in the Irish Times from the Israeli ambassador trying to explain what it feels like to come under Palestinian rocket attack. Know what's coming?

"What would you do," Zion Evrony asks, "if Dublin were subjected to a bombardment of 8,000 rockets and mortars?" So it goes, on and on.

I'm waiting for the same writers to ask how we'd feel if we lived in Don Mills or Brossard or Dublin and came under sustained attack from supersonic aircraft and Merkava tanks and thousands of troops whose shells and bombs tore 40 women and children to pieces outside a school and shredded whole families in their beds.

My favourite journalistic justification for this bloodbath came from my old mate Kevin Myers. "The death toll from Gaza is of course shocking, dreadful, unspeakable," he mourned. "Though it does not compare with the death toll amongst Israelis if Hamas had its way." Get it? The massacre in Gaza is justified because Hamas would have done the same if it could.

The same justification for slaughter is everywhere On both sides of the Atlantic the experience has been
weirdly repetitive

It took Fintan O'Toole to speak the unspeakable: "When does the mandate of victimhood expire?" he asked. "At what point does the Nazi genocide of Europe's Jews cease to excuse the state of Israel from the demands of international law and of common humanity?"

I had an interesting time giving the Tip O'Neill peace lecture in Derry when one of the audience asked if the Good Friday agreement contained lessons for the Middle East. I suggested local peace agreements didn't travel well and that the idea advanced by John Hume, that it was all about compromise, didn't work since Israel's seizure of Arab land had more in common with 17th-century Irish Catholic dispossession than sectarianism in Belfast What I do suspect is that the split between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority has a lot in common with the Irish civil war, with Israel now playing the role of Britain, urging the pro-treaty men (Mahmoud Abbas) to destroy the anti-treaty men (Hamas).

I ended the week in a BBC World Service discussion. My favourite moment came when I said journalists should be on the side of those who suffer. If we were reporting the liberation of a Nazi concentration camp, we wouldn't give equal time to the SS spokesman. At that point a journalist from the Jewish Telegraph responded: "The IDF are not Hitler". Of course not. But who said they were?

Load-Date: January 13, 2009

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The Gaza solution is in the hands of Palestinians

The Jerusalem Post

January 1, 2009 Thursday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 15

Length: 569 words

Byline: TAWFIK HAMID

Highlight: The writer, a medical doctor and Muslim reformer, is the author of Inside Jihad.

Body

After Israel launched its military attack on **Hamas** military installations in Gaza in response to repeated attacks on Israeli civilians, the Arab street wasted no time in demonstrating with passion against Israel. In Europe, many Westerners also took part in the protests.

As an Egyptian Muslim now living in America, I ask myself why the Arab street and its supporters in the West never show similarly strong response against Islamic terrorists who target innocents worldwide and explode markets full of predominantly Muslim civilians in Iraq, Pakistan, Sudan, Turkey, etc. When you consider that the Israeli attack killed some 400 mostly **Hamas** militant in the first four days, the passive attitude of the Muslim world against the terrorists represents extreme hypocrisy. If it truly cared for Muslims' lives, it should have demonstrated in the same numbers and with equal vehemence against the Islamists who murder hundreds of thousands of their fellow Muslims, not to mention the **Hamas** slaughter of rival Fatah members - **women** and children included.

Another question is why we have not seen a similarly strong reaction against the terrorists who conducted the latest attack in Mumbai. Many Indians, Westerners and Jews were killed. Yet there was no spontaneous eruption of outrage and demonstrations in Europe to denounce the attacks as in the case of Gaza. Are these lesser lives than those of the Palestinians? Where is the organized public fury for the wanton killing of Indians and Jews?

We have witnessed the burning of churches in Iraq at the hands of jihadists. We also know that thousands of Christian Iraqis have fled because the Islamists imposed on them the traditional Shari'a choice for non-Muslims: Convert to Islam, pay a humiliating tax (jizzia), or be killed. Yet, we have not heard any thing from the Arab street or its supporters. Only stone silence. Are Palestinian lives worth more than those of Christians in Iraq?

An insular tribal mentality still governs the Muslim world, and there is no willingness to demonstrate against fellow Muslims, even against those who have committed great crimes against other Muslims. And Europe is too eviscerated to come to the aid of Christian victims of anti- "infidelism."

Then there is plain old anti-Semitism. It is so easy to demonstrate against the Jews or Israel and extremely rare to see demonstrations in support of Jewish victims, such as the altruistic rabbi and his wife who were singled out for special torture in Mumbai by the Islamists. It does the bloodstained European conscience good to be able to point a finger at supposed Israeli "aggression" to help alleviate some of its own lingering guilt.

The Muslim world and the Europeans who support the demonstrations against Israel must stop the biased reaction that blindly and reflexively supports the Palestinians and villifies Israel. Those who demonstrate against the military

The Gaza solution is in the hands of Palestinians

campaign on Gaza must realize that if **Hamas** had stopped pounding Israel with its rockets, Israel would not have launched its attack. If the Palestinians focused on building their society rather than destroying those of others, the whole region would enjoy peace and flourish. Should Palestinians recognize the right of Israel to exist, end terrorism against Jews and nurture a sincere desire to live in peace, they would end their suffering. The solution now is simply in the hands of the Palestinians - not the Israelis.

Graphic

Photo: PROTESTING IN Paris against the air strikes in Gaza. No willingness to demonstrate against Muslims who have committed great crimes against fellow Muslims. (Credit: AP)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

End of Document

Might is not all right: Israel has gone too far; COMMENTARY

Australian Financial Review

January 10, 2009 Saturday

First Edition

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Section: NEWS; Leaders; Pg. 62

Length: 626 words

Body

Ever since Israeli forces invaded the Gaza Strip on December 27, the typical response of Western countries has had three elements: acknowledgement of Israel's right to self-defence, support for a diplomatic solution, and demands that the combatants meet their humanitarian obligations.

This has been Canberra's position, and while no doubt the prudent option - balancing horror at the grisly fate of Palestinian and Israeli civilians with a desire to avoid antagonising important domestic constituencies - it's been no more than unexceptionable rhetoric.

Friday's adoption by the United Nations Security Council of a resolution demanding an "immediate, durable and fully respected ceasefire, leading to the full withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza", changed the equation and pushes humanitarian concerns to the forefront.

The question now is whether Israel and **Hamas** will heed the UN, and how quickly. Beyond that lies the broader problem of the intractable nature of the Middle-Eastern conflict. History suggests that, even if the combatants do cease fire, any peace will be a short one.

Of the three elements, Israeli self-defence has been the most problematic.

Of course countries have the right to defend themselves - though this is a bit like saying they have the right to organise themselves. Countries tend to defend themselves whether or not others like it. At issue in the Gaza fighting is not whether, but how, Israel defends itself.

That's hard to know because Israel is controlling what the world knows about its military operation, though presumably it is part way to achieving its goal of stopping **Hamas**'s bombardment of Israeli civilian targets. And the timing of Israel's acceptance of the UN's demand to cease fire will depend partly on the extent to which it feels this goal has been attained.

Presumably, **Hamas**'s military organisation has been hard hit. More to the point, it seems likely that any negotiated end to the hostilities will include a concerted effort to close down the tunnel smuggling network that supplies **Hamas**.

So Israel may soon be able to claim that Operation Cast Lead has eliminated, or dramatically curtailed, this very real threat to its people. In the short term.

Might is not all right: Israel has gone too far COMMENTARY

Nevertheless, this victory will come at a cost to Israel - and not only in the lives of Israelis. Historically, the world's enthusiasm for Israel's right to defend itself starts to flag when civilian casualties pile up - particularly when a single incident kills tens of women and children.

In 1996 Israeli shells landed in the UN compound in the Lebanese village of Qana, killing 106 civilians. In 2006 an Israeli air strike on a building near Qana killed 28 civilians. Both incidents galvanised international opposition to unilateral Israeli military action.

On Tuesday, Israeli fire killed more than 40 civilians sheltering in a UN school in the Jabaliya refugee camp in northern Gaza. In retrospect, this may prove the Qana massacre of Operation Cast Lead. Each time such an incident occurs, Israel's international standing erodes one degree further.

And this, in turn, affects the diplomatic equation. It's a commonplace observation that the Bush administration has presided over an era in which Washington and its allies, such as Australia, eschewed multilateral diplomacy in favour of unilateral military action - as in Iraq in 2003.

But rather than being mutually exclusive alternatives, diplomacy and military action are two tools at the disposal of countries, and they vary the mix according to the needs of the moment.

What is clear is that a country that relies too heavily on military force overreaches itself. And arguably, to judge by the UN Security Council vote - which Washington, against expectations, refused to veto - Israel has done just that.

Load-Date: April 7, 2012

End of Document

Gazans face 'humanitarian crisis' as Israeli raids intensify; Aid agencies warn of looming disaster with supply shortage inflicting more suffering on families

The Independent (London)

January 2, 2009 Friday

First Edition

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The  INDEPENDENT

Section: WORLD; Pg. 22

Length: 795 words

Byline: Kim Sengupta IN JERUSALEM

Body

After six days of Israeli bombardment, aid agencies say that Gazans are facing a humanitarian crisis with air strikes causing severe problems in getting food, medicine and fuel supplies to the besieged civilian population.

The assessment, by several international relief organisations, contradicts the statement by the Israeli Foreign Minister, Tzipi Livni, during a visit to Paris yesterday that "there is no humanitarian crisis in the Strip, and therefore there is no need for a humanitarian truce". While relief shipments were allowed into Gaza by the Israeli authorities in the days before the start of the offensive, they came after weeks of virtually no supplies getting through, the agencies point out.

The biggest difficulty is that many people are too frightened by bombing to venture out to collect food rations. Gaza officials are also unwilling to take part in food distribution because they could be considered legitimate targets by the Israeli military for working for the Hamas-run administration. Chris Gunness of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, which looks after 750,000 refugees in Gaza, said: "How can one carry out proper relief work in these conditions of violence? The people of Gaza have already suffered the most stringent economic sanctions. There are obviously problems with giving out aid. Even when people want to get food for their hungry family, they are very aware of the dangers they are facing in going out."

Mr Gunness said the agency carried out food distribution yesterday. "But, as things stand now, we have only a few days supply left."

Doctors inside Gaza report that hospitals are running out of medicine and equipment as the toll of dead and injured continues to rise and puts further pressure on stretched resources. Anaesthetics, antibiotics and drugs for cancer and other long-term illnesses are in short supply along with syringes and IV fluids.

Dr Hassan Khalaf, of the main Shifa hospital in Gaza City, said that Palestinian civilians are paying a terrible price: "We are getting really badly injured people coming in every day. What is the point of saying you are allowing food in

Gazans face 'humanitarian crisis' as Israeli raids intensify Aid agencies warn of looming disaster with supply shortage inflicting more suffering on families

for people when you then go on to bomb them? The Israelis may say they are just attacking Hamas but I am seeing children and women coming covered in blood. What we are seeing is a war on the people. The Hamas fighters firing the rockets are at the border, they are not in the city.

"We have organised the hospitals so that different ones are looking after different types of injuries. But the common problem we face is that we are having bad shortages in lots of things, especially anesthetics and antibiotics. We are talking to the ICRC [International Committee of the Red Cross] and I hope we shall get some help."

A serious shortage of industrial fuel is also exacerbating the difficulties for civilians after Israeli forces stopped supplies because the crossing points into Gaza were coming under regular rocket attacks, creating the danger of conflagrations. At the same time, the destruction of tunnels between Gaza and Egypt has blocked alternative routes for procuring transport diesel used by Palestinian households.

Christine Van Nieuwenhuyse, head of the World Food Programme for Gaza and the West Bank, acknowledged that a "significant amount" of food was allowed in by the Israelis before the start of the air strikes. "But we must not forget this came after weeks when hardly any food had got in at all. One of our warehouses is full but we have another one empty as it is in an area which has seen a lot of bombings.

"Our partners in Gaza are the Ministry of Social Welfare and their officials are not taking part in the distribution process because they feel they might get bombed for working for a Hamas government. This is a serious problem as is the fact that people are finding it difficult to move about. We are facing an acute food crisis."

Maxwell Gaylard, the UN's humanitarian co-ordinator for Gaza and the Palestinian territories, said "Gaza is facing a serious emergency, that is a fact. Food supplies have been allowed in but there are huge problems caused by the lack of industrial fuel and this is causing severe problems. To address all these problems we need a ceasefire."

Mark Regev, spokesman for the Israeli Prime Minister said "We are doing our utmost to avoid unnecessary suffering for civilians. What we cannot understand is the claim by officials from the ministries there that they cannot take part in the relief effort because they will be targeted. This is nonsense, perhaps the real reason is that it is in the interest of Hamas to ensure that food does not get to the people due to their own particular agenda."

Hamasleader killed as Israelis target faction's senior figures Further reports, pages 24&25

Load-Date: January 1, 2009

The 'Hill of Shame' where destruction is a spectator sport

The Times (London)

January 13, 2009 Tuesday

Edition 2

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THE TIMES

Section: NEWS; Pg. 33

Length: 602 words

Byline: Martin Fletcher; Yonit Farago

Body

In times of peace Parash Hill is a beauty spot where Israelis from the nearby town of Sderot come to picnic and enjoy the magnificent view across a nature reserve and bright green fields to distant Gaza City and, beyond, the deep blue Mediterranean.

There are benches for sightseers, a swing, a sculpture of a man on horseback and fences to stop children tumbling down the steep northern slope.

Today the hill attracts a very different sort of visitor - the ghoulish and vengeful, the curious and anguished, not to mention television crews. They come not to enjoy the flowers or birdsong, but for a spectacular panoramic view of Israel's relentless bombardment of the Gaza Strip. It is, for those that like that sort of thing, the ultimate spectator sport.

Armed with binoculars and zoom lenses, they watch F16 aircraft streak across the sky, trailing flares, before unleashing their missiles on one of the distant white buildings.

Periodically the air reverberates with the boom of artillery fire and a few seconds later another plume of smoke rises amid the densely packed apartment blocks on the skyline. Apache helicopter gunships attack unseen targets. A whine betrays an unmanned drone circling overhead.

Now and again the fire comes the other way. There is a flash, and a Qassam rocket trailing smoke arcs up towards Sderot, Ashkelon or one of the other settlements of southern Israel. In no time Israeli shells rain down.

The disapproving have renamed Parash Hill the "Hill of Shame", and some visitors undoubtedly come for the thrill. "People in Israel are addicted to violence," Eran Shalev, 27, a student, said as he surveyed the crowd on the hilltop. "The way we try to resolve everything with force is not the right way to do it."

But most have been on the receiving end of the **Hamas** rockets. Most know people who have been killed, injured or had their homes destroyed by rockets over the past eight years. Most are worn out by the 15-second warnings that send them rushing to shelters several times each day.

The 'Hill of Shame' where destruction is a spectator sport

Rafi Twitto was watching the offensive yesterday with his wife, Iris. From his belt hung a photograph of his son, Osher, nine, who had a leg blown off by a Qassam rocket 11 months ago.

"I'm glad Hamas is being destroyed but sad that women and children are suffering," he said. "But when they grow up they'll also probably be terrorists.

They are taught very early to hate Israelis and how to hold weapons." Iris agreed. "If I could have, I'd have gone in with our soldiers." David Kunin, 26, an ultra-Orthodox Jew with long black beard and coat, had come to the hill to take pictures.

He said that a rocket shattered the windows of his home in Ashdod last week. "Of course I'm happy," he replied when asked how he felt as he watched the bombardment.

"It would be better if innocent civilians weren't hurt, but the ones who co-operate with Hamas - that's their problem." Others were clearly distressed.

Tanya Zaltzman, 44, a teacher who emigrated from Russia 20 years ago, was there with her boyfriend. One of her students was killed by a rocket last March. Her soldier son had just left Gaza and several of his comrades had been injured.

"I think Hamas is a terrorist organisation and there's no other way to treat it," she said, but continued: "When I see how many people and children are being killed in Gaza I feel very unhappy."

War watchers

In 1861 Washingtonians went to watch the Battle of Bull Run. When the Union army was driven back, roads were blocked as spectators tried to flee in their carriages

Spectators gathered on the hills to watch the Charge of the Light Brigade in 1854

Load-Date: January 13, 2009

HAVE MORE MERCY; CEASEFIRE PLEAS AS ISRAELI STRIKE ON UN SCHOOL KILLS 40

The Mirror

January 7, 2009 Wednesday

Eire Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 6

Length: 558 words

Byline: BY VICTORIA WARD IN ISRAEL

Body

MORE than 40 people were killed yesterday in an Israeli air strike on a UN school in Gaza.

The bloody, lifeless bodies of several children were among those pulled from the rubble of the al-Falluj school in the Jabaliya refugee camp.

Those inside had been seeking refuge from Israel's ground offensive, which has seen massive loss of life.

But outside overworked medics said there was "carnage" as the school was blitzed.

People hit by shrapnel lay in pools of blood where they fell as two tank shells blasted the school's ground - packed with Palestinian civilians.

Just hours earlier, 12 members of the same family, including seven children, were killed in an air strike on their home just outside Gaza City.

The Daya family's house was wiped out when it was hit by Israeli missiles.

Victims included seven children aged between one and 12, three women and two men.

A passer-by was also killed in the strike and at least nine others were last night still feared to be still buried under the rubble.

Rescue workers, whose services have been almost crippled, arrived on the scene hours after the attack.

Three men also died when a second UN school, in the Shati refugee camp on the outskirts of Gaza City was hit.

By mid-afternoon the death toll for yesterday stood at 75 - taking it over 600 since the Israeli action started.

And as the humanitarian crisis intensified, people on both sides of the conflict called for a ceasefire.

Yariv Oppenheimer, of Tel Avivbased Peace Now, said: "How can this amount of force be justified? How do they intend to end it? Israel should take more dramatic steps to avoid killing innocent civilians, even if that means less success against Hamas."

HAVE MORE MERCY CEASEFIRE PLEAS AS ISRAELI STRIKE ON UN SCHOOL KILLS 40

"There is always a political solution, and the international community has to show involvement.

"This is not fighting between good and bad, there are no angels or devils. Most Israelis are behind this operation, they believe that their country had to react against Hamas to protect its citizens.

"And Hamas has made it very easy for people to hold these views - they believe Israel should not exist.

"But this is not a PR-war. This is a violent conflict which is killing people on all sides and it has to stop."

Palestinian Khald Abuznaid, 41 who spoke to the Mirror from Gaza City, said: "Look what is happening here. Surely, the world can see this is not right.

"There is death everywhere. Our towns have been crippled, families have been wiped out. What did we do to deserve this?

"It is getting worse by the hour and there is no one to help us. I beg Israel to stop their fight, have mercy." As Israeli troops pushed deeper into southern Gaza, the International Committee of the Red Cross warned of a "a full-blown humanitarian crisis".

Pierre Kraehenbuhl, head of operations for Gaza, said: "After 10 days of uninterrupted military operations in the Gaza Strip, what we're dealing with is clearly and beyond doubt in my mind a full-blown and major humanitarian crisis.

"For the people inside Gaza, the situation has become intolerable.

"The reports we've had during the night is that the last night has been the most intense in terms of bombardments and military operations."

Israel has claimed it has killed 130 Hamas fighters. Five Israeli soldiers have also died.

DEAD AND WOUNDED

ISRAELI

Civilians dead 3

Soldiers dead 7

Soldiers wounded 35

PALESTINIAN

Medical sources

631 dead

2,700 wounded

Graphic

FACE OF SUFFERING Wounded boy is taken to Shifa hospital in Gaza City yesterday Picture: AP PHOTO/ASHRAF AMRA; BLITZED A family search shell crater in Rafah refugee camp; GAZA CITY: Heavy fighting between militants and Israeli troops; HORROR Palestinian girl's hand under rubble

HAVE MORE MERCY CEASEFIRE PLEASE AS ISRAELI STRIKE ON UN SCHOOL KILLS 40

Load-Date: January 7, 2009

End of Document

Disgrace of child warfare

Hobart Mercury (Australia)

January 12, 2009 Monday

1 - Edition

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Section: TALKING POINT; Pg. 26

Length: 822 words

Byline: PIERS AKERMAN

Body

ISRAEL'S Operation Cast Lead is unfolding like a familiar soap opera on the nightly news.

There's a series of Palestinian terrorists making blood-curdling threats against Israelis, a hail of missiles aimed at Israeli civilian targets, retaliatory strikes against the terrorists -- who unfailingly seek to shelter behind innocent civilians -- followed by scenes of weeping parents at crowded hospitals.

It is a plot line designed to soften the hardest heart.

Unfortunately, those who buy the tear-jerking material are unquestioningly being duped.

No-one, let alone a parent raised in a Western culture, could imagine placing children directly in harm's way or encouraging impressionable infants to worship death, but that is what the thugs and murderers responsible for the slaughter in Gaza have been doing.

It is an Islamist thing and Palestinian television -- often subsidised by the United Nations and the European Union -- is full of it.

In regular drama directed at kindergarten-aged children, they are taught that martyrdom is a beautiful state to aspire to; that suicide bombers are heroes and heroines; and that even cartoon characters can sing and dance and murder their way into paradise.

Palestinian Media Watch and the Middle East Media Research Institute have been documenting this extraordinary perversion in recent years.

Among the scripts they have translated from the Arabic is a cute story of the four-year-old daughter of *female* suicide bomber Reem Riyashi who is shown singing to her dead mother and swearing to follow in her explosive footsteps.

The video clip, aired on *Hamas* TV, shows the little child asking her mother what she is carrying (it is explosives) and why she is putting on a hijab.

All is made clear when the local newspaper (and headstone) reveals that Mummy dearest was no soccer-mom, but indeed a bomber-mom.

Disgrace of child warfare

“Instead of me you carried a bomb in your hands. Only now, I know what was more precious than us. . . may your steps be blessed,” the little girl sings.

“Send greetings to our messenger (Muhammad) and tell him Duha loves you. My love will not be (merely) words. I am following mommy in her steps.”

At which point she finds some explosives her bomb-loving mum left in a drawer and picks up a stick, happily singing: “Oh mommy, oh mommy”.

Don't think this is some aberration. Abhorrent agitprop is the currency of Palestinian children's television programming, with even cartoon characters depicting martyrdom as a highly desirable goal.

In a regular show, on **Hamas** TV early last year, a giant rabbit, Assud, replaced his brother Nahoul -- a giant bee, who had died after failing to get into hospital in Egypt for surgery.

Assud told his young audience: “We are all ready to sacrifice ourselves for the sake of our homeland. We will sacrifice our souls and everything we own for the homeland,” vowing also to “get rid of the Jews and eat them up”.

Regular viewers would recall that Nahoul himself replaced Farfour, the **Hamas** mouse, who was shown being “killed” on the show by an Israeli soldier in 2007.

The young **female** host Saraa Bahoum told her audience: “Yes, my dear children, we have lost our dearest friend, Farfour. Farfour was martyred while defending his land, the land of his fathers and his forefathers.

“He was martyred at the hand of the criminals, the murderers, the murderers of innocent children, who killed Iman Hijo, Muhammad Al-Dura, and many others.” The martyred mouse was more likely a victim of copyright lawyers who saw too close a resemblance to Disney's Mickey Mouse, but that wasn't in the script.

The bee made that clear when he said: “I want to continue in the path of Farfour -- the path of Islam, of heroism, of martyrdom, and of the mujahideen”.

“Me and my friends will follow in the footsteps of Farfour. We will take revenge upon the enemies of Allah, the killer of the prophets and of the innocent children, until we liberate Al-Aqsa from their impurity. We place our trust in Allah.”

Indoctrinating children to become suicide bombers and human shields is a declared goal of **Hamas**, as representative Fathi Hamad proudly told the Palestine Authority Legislative Council last year.

“For the Palestinian people death became an industry, at which **women** excel and so do all people on this land,” he said.

“The elderly excel, the Jihad fighters excel and the children excel. ”

Accordingly, (Palestinians) created a human shield of **women**, children, the elderly and the Jihad fighters against the Zionist bombing machine, as if they were saying to the Zionist enemy: “We desire death as you desire life”.

To ensure that the “death industry” doesn't experience a slow-down, **Hamas** has placed its fighters in civilian homes, schools and hospitals.

It would be inhuman in the extreme not to feel sympathy for the children being used in this callous manner, but it would be unintelligent not to ask why those who are exploiting them are not being called to account.

Load-Date: January 11, 2009

WHOS IN THE RIGHT?

Metro (UK)

January 7, 2009 Wednesday

Dublin Edition

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Section: Pg. 17

Length: 732 words

Body

To that cranky nurse (Anon). Why should drunk people pay to go to A&E? The service in hospitals is disgraceful from some nurses and arent people allowed to get drunk at Christmas? Its your job, so shut up complaining and get on with it. Anon I recently returned from maternity leave to find my job is no longer there due to the downturn.

It looks like the man who covered while I was on leave will replace me. Can someone please advise as my rights or who to contact? Jane When you walk through the city, notice how most people look expressionless. Some people seem emotionally withdrawn, maybe for career purposes. Alex from Dublin New year, new annual commuter dart ticket, old story: does not work in the ticket machines. When will they get it right? Joe C Did you know that a person who remains underwater for a period drowns? Mel So who else thinks the Israelis are hypocrites? They complain and bleat about their persecution in World War II and yet are seemingly trying to wipe out the Palestinians in the name of terror. So why cant aid get through? Why cant women and children be allowed out? It seems like we have played this game before. And would they be so clever and tough without American aid? I think not. They should take a long hard look in the mirror it looks like their reflection is now wearing a swastika! Anyone else have a view? Sarah G Imagine the Hamas commander instead of saying he wished to kill Jewish children in revenge for the deaths of Palestinian children had said: I wish to send flowers to Jewish children to show we dont hate them, we want only to live in peace in our own homeland. How could anyone then resist accepting the justice of his case? Instead, his words turn me from a position of sympathy for the Gazans to one of its just one bunch of brutes against another. Matthew Huntbach Dave Degen: If you are so bothered by what you see I suggest you relocate to southern Israel and live there for just three months and learn how to run for the bunkers every hour, day and night, simply because Hamas rockets are flying in.

Try register your children in a kindergarten that is located in a bunker and enjoy the fact that, when your children leave for school, they may not return in the afternoon, then let me know your view of the bloodbath happening in Gaza.

I find it very annoying that people like you, who have never lived under any fear, sit in the comfort of their homes castigating a legitimate government defending the security of her people. Have you ever asked yourself, why Hamas called off the six-month-old ceasefire? Why did Hamas keep using civilian residences and mosques as armoury and rocket launch sites? Why did Hamas continue to launch rockets into southern Israel despite the fact

WHOS IN THE RIGHT?

that Israel has pulled out of Gaza completely since 2005? Get some needed education of the issues involved before you make such annoying statements about a law- abiding member of the international community. William Smith I was totally shocked to see such a sad and heart-wrenching photo in yesterdays Metro. It seems when two groups go to war, the only true innocents are the children who know nothing of the cause. This man has lost his family over a religious fight for land and a whole generation is now lying cold. If world governments dont step in to mediate, then they are as guilty as the killers of these defenceless children. Graham Great stuff: I get the Metro every day and I love it! Anyhow some days I also take a copy of the competitive equivalent just to see. On their second page they have a few small articles which tell some bizarre happenings around the world, and nearly every time I have read them all the previous day in the Metro. Like how original is that? You are one step ahead Metro.Fiona Hi, hic, hooray: I strongly agree with Anon nurses suggestion that drunks be charged for treatment in A&E units. I have a friend who works as an ambulance driver, and he says that things are much quieter over the normally mental Christmas/New Year period. Is this something to do with the downturn, as some people have less money to spend on drink? Caitríona Brrrrr, its cold: According to reports, last night was one of the coldest for some years with temperatures reaching -9°C in some places in Ireland. So far, I am led to believe this is the coldest and hardest winter in a decade. Thatll be all this global warming then! Chris

Graphic

Battle for Gaza divides opinion

Load-Date: January 7, 2009

End of Document

Nowhere to hide from bombs

therecord.com

December 30, 2008 Tuesday

Final Edition

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Section: FRONT; Pg. A4

Length: 664 words

Byline: Oakland Ross, Record news services

Dateline: JERUSALEM

Body

Nasser Barakat is quickly running out of places to hide.

Shortly after Israel launched its current aerial offensive in Gaza on Saturday, its warplanes struck and destroyed a Gaza City mosque, which the Israelis said had been used for meetings by members of the radical Islamist group **Hamas**.

Right away, Barakat fled his home, which was located next door to another Gaza City mosque.

He moved in with friends who lived close to the campus of the Islamic University -- which was hit by Israeli air strikes on Sunday and again yesterday morning.

"Now I'm in another place," Barakat, 21, told the Toronto Star yesterday.

This time, he's hoping that danger will pass him by but, like other people in Gaza, he isn't counting on it. "No one is safe now. Walking the streets, it's really dangerous."

Rocket fire, exploding bombs, and the crazed din of warplanes -- none of this is exactly new to Gaza's 1.5 million long-suffering souls.

If it is possible to grow accustomed to such torments, then they have done so, after a long and deadly succession of Israeli attacks in recent years.

But this latest operation is something wholly different -- louder, bloodier, and far more terrifying than any that has gone before.

"They've just gone overboard," Amani Abu-Ramadan, 33, a Canadian woman living in Gaza, said of the Israelis. "They've gone over what is normal even for them to do."

With more than 300 dead and at least 1,400 wounded -- a toll of casualties that seems likely to grow -- the current campaign is among the deadliest ever inflicted by Israelis on Palestinians, and it seems far from over yet.

Nowhere to hide from bombs

Somehow, Gaza's law-abiding, peace-loving majority must find a way to survive what have suddenly become the very worst of times.

"Everywhere, there are attacks," said Talal Al-Shawish, who is head of a non-governmental organization that offers recreational programs for women and children in Nuseirat, a refugee camp in central Gaza. "Every 15 minutes, we have rockets and bombs. The situation is very terrible."

There is no electricity now in much of Gaza, and almost everything is closed, including schools and most shops and offices.

"Yesterday, we went out for 20 minutes, just to get the bare essentials," said Abu-Ramadan, who grew up in St. Catharines and has lived in Gaza since 2005. "There was no milk, no eggs, no bread. There's no bread anywhere. I got mostly frozen things."

On Sunday, she said, the fishermen's market by the harbour was destroyed. Later, a police post located half a kilometre away went up in smoke and flames. "It was just exploding like there was no tomorrow."

And a huge number of people have died or been gravely wounded, including people she knows -- friends of relatives or relatives of friends.

She says she's had enough and wants to return to Canada, to visit her sister and mother in St. Catharines.

"I want to go home," she said. "I want to see my mum. It's been too much."

But the border with Israel is closed. Like almost everyone else in Gaza, Abu-Ramadan is trapped.

Whom do she and other people in Gaza blame for this latest and worst in a long procession of ordeals that they have suffered?

They blame Israel, of course. But, for many, the answer is more complicated than that.

"I want to be frank," said Al-Shawish. "We have some people who feel Hamas should pay the price for what it did last year."

He was referring to supporters of the rival Palestinian faction Fatah, which was defeated by Hamas in a spasm of internecine fighting in June 2007. Bitter feelings continue to separate the two sides.

"Sometimes you see small smiles," he said. "But most of the people sympathize with those who have been killed."

Besides, for many ordinary folk in Gaza, the misery and terror of war trump any thought of politics.

"I just want all of this to stop," said Barakat, who is studying for a degree in business administration, or would be if the fighting would end.

"I don't care about Hamas or Israel or Fatah. I just don't want to see this anymore. I just want peace."

Graphic

Photo: Ashraf Amra, The Associated Press , Palestinian mourners yesterday carry the bodies of five members of the Balosha family, including three children and two teenagers, who were killed in an Israeli missile strike on the Jebaliya refugee camp in the northern Gaza Strip. Israel's overwhelming air campaign against the Gaza Strip inched closer to the territory's Hamas rulers yesterday.

Nowhere to hide from bombs

Load-Date: December 30, 2008

End of Document

[chatroom](#)

The Gold Coast Bulletin (Australia)

January 12, 2009 Monday

B - Main Edition

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Section: Pg. 32

Length: 708 words

Body

TO the no name who supports Hamas - it's not the Israeli people's fault they were put there either. Hamas hide behind their own people 2 cause max civilian casualties so people like u jump up and down. - steve, bilambil

TO Reg, returning to sydney or melbourne was the best thing about queensland. I agree, let's just hope u stay. - Mary, pac pines

TO G.W. Gatton. Come on! If that's your biggest problem, you're living a good life.

Enjoy life, champ, you only do it once. - Flyer.

SUPER human, good point. Here's another one. Adam and Eve, first 2 people on earth, had 2 sons Cain and Abel. Now 4 people. The sons left and came back with wives? - E

SUPER human - do your research. Jesus was born in April we choose to celebrate his birth in Dec. Also Noah's ark was real and traces exist today. - Wb

TO Mr Reg go buy 10 cents worth of common sense re pool fencing and u may get the point. Somehow I doubt it though. - GB

TO the Super Atheist Elanora whateva! It's ur right 2 think whateva but if the believers r wrong we will never know our error and u will never gloat being right however if ur wrong u will have plenty of time 2 think of ur error. - Peace Brother

PALESTINE deserves what it gets. they fire rockets 4 mnths in2 Israel yet wen they get da same back @ em they want ceasefire. well that means stop firing rockets a.s.a they do I'm sure Israel wil go home. - simo hosko

IAN @ Palmy, a thier is a tourist with a lisp. - thuper thigh-thier

TO Super human at Elanora. I agree - if Adam and Eve were the 1st man and woman and they had two sons Cain and Abel.

Cain killed Abel and then he went off and got married. But who to? A female ape who was evolving over in the next valley? -

PC Southport

LIFESAVERS should practise what they preach. If they want us to swim between the flags, they should use the pedestrian crossings. Simple.

WHY dont all the palestine protesters go to palestine and join the war and pick up a gun and fight, or they can b real brave and do what they did in london and throw their shoes at a building HAMAS fires 360 rocket propelled grenades into Israel in one week and the big bad Israelis have the audacity to defend themselves against these poor little terrorists. Oh please. Know this, the international community is no longer willing to tolerate these vile acts against humanity and will eradicate those responsible. Remember also, if you aid or harbour terrorists you are a terrorist and will be treated as such. Viva Israel. - Oz

ANOTHER day and again same TXT topic. Why was it so accepted 2 spit on Vietnam returning soldiers? Police, judges, courts and public opinion said it was just part of the job. Yes I was expected 2 put up with that behavior! Cop it sweet it is all part of the job. Shazam! - Gomer Pyle

PASSMORE, Salt & McCrindle. Speaking of ur recent predictions what rubbish! Gentlemen I predict a violent revolution! Yes here in Qld. By the babyboomers. Y not? Wot do they have 2 lose? - The Anarchist

BEST traffic idea ive seen to reduce road stress was in jakarta indonesia, where they have a countdown timer displayed on the traffic lights of busy intersections. they are brightly lit up in large green or red numerals. People are much more calm, relaxed and patient when they know exactly when the lights will change. - Levi, palm beach

THERE have been 18 deaths caused by Hamas rocket fire into Isreal in the past 8 years. In the same period 3000 Palestinians have been killed by the Israeli army in retaliation to the rocket attacks. I cannot believe that no one makes these facts known to the general public. Could this be due to the bulk of ownership of our media in Australia being in the hands of one nationality that has a vested interest in promoting the Israeli point of view. We need balanced reporting not propaganda. By invading Gaza, Israel is fanning the flames of hatred and Hamas are fools for continuing rocket attacks and putting innocent people in danger. - Mark

OUR Govt allows dumping of cheap clothing fruit & vegies from other countries 2 Oz 2 the detriment of our manufacturers and farmers. Yet it said no 2 the detainees. I was surprised considering we are a dumping ground 4 most of the world's rubbish. No 2 the prisoners . . . we have enuff of our own, thank u America! - Blissie

Load-Date: January 12, 2009

Changing the Game, or More of the Same?; THE Hour

The Forward

January 9, 2009

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Section: Letters; Pg. 8

Length: 907 words

Body

Here's the context: A few days after the Thanksgiving holiday, at a party he attended reluctantly, he met and chatted up a young woman. Somewhat to his surprise, she gave him her phone number. A few days later, he called her and arranged a dinner date for December 28. Having asked around about her, he'd learned, among other things, that

she was an ardent Zionist. Determined to make a terrific impression, he figured he'd best bone up on Israel, about which he knew virtually nothing. So he started following news reports, of which there were quite a few. Thus primed, he picked her up on the 28th and headed to one of his favorite restaurants, where they had the following exchange:

He: Some weekend, huh? The Israelis really let Hamas have it.

She: It's horrible. It's so endless, so needless, so pointless.

He: Well, maybe this time Hamas will learn its lesson. They can't just shell Israel day-in, day-out and expect the Israelis to swallow. I mean, what's Israel supposed to do?

She: Yeah. That's the official line. 'We had no choice.' That's what they always say.

He: I don't understand. I thought you were a Zionist. Are you saying Israel did have a choice? What kind of choice? There were more than 300 rockets and mortar shells fired from Gaza into Israel in just this last week, almost 3,000 in the last year. The Israelis warned Hamas over and over, and Hamas did nothing to control the firing. You can't seriously believe that Israel didn't have the right to respond?

She: I'll tell you what I think. If you tuned in a week ago, or a month ago, then for sure you're right. Tactically, the Israelis had to do what they did. No country can allow its citizens to be threatened every day by rockets. But if you tuned in five years ago or, better yet, 20 years ago, which I was too young to do but I've read the history or better yet 40 years ago, before you and I were born, well, then it's a very different story. You're looking at one month in a story that's been going on for 487 months; you're looking at one droplet in an ongoing tsunami. Look just at the droplet, and Israel's totally right; look at the tsunami, and nobody's blameless. Forty-one years of missed opportunities, of terror and misery, of reciprocal stupidity, of random killing and purposeful killing and collateral killing, of dead kids and dead women and dead flowers and dead hopes.

You know what? Hamas was co-founded in 1987 by Ahmed Yassin, a quadriplegic who spent his paralyzed life confined to a wheelchair and guiding what he called 'the armed resistance' against Israel the Qassam rockets,

Changing the Game, or More of the Same? THE Hour

the suicide bombings, the whole rotten bloodletting. By the time the Israelis assassinated him in 2004, he was nearly blind. But they're all half-blind, they're all paralyzed.

And yes, dammit, I am a Zionist. I hope and I pray and I sort of expect that my kids will be Zionists, too, and their kids as well. But my God, I am so afraid of how they will react when they watch the documentaries that tell the whole truth about these days, about these years. Can anyone seriously believe that today's attacks will solve anything? So maybe, just maybe, there'll be a renewed cease-fire. Excuse me, but that's not a solution, it's a respite. You think during their time-out people will come to their senses, decide there's a better way? C'mon, give me one shred of evidence, one precedent that justifies your thinking that.

But let's be clear about one thing: I want a Jewish state. I want a democratic Jewish state. I want a democratic Jewish state that is safe, that is at peace with its neighbors. It's just that I don't think Israel's leaders have a clue as to how to get there, any more than I think the Palestinians do.

He: Alright, enough. Let's say I agree with everything you've said. But what you haven't said is what you would do.

She: I'm not sure that's the right question to ask. If you put the question that way then Israel's action makes perfect sense. **Hamas** fires rockets on Friday, Israel bombs on Saturday and Sunday. Logical. But my grandmother used to say, 'Beware of logical conclusions that don't make sense.' The question you need to ask is how to put an end to the miserable reality, how you can change the rules of the game. What Israel is doing now is just an enhanced version of its standard response more planes more bombs, bigger bombs. What's the end game? What's the strategy?

He: Funny you put it that way. That's exactly what Ehud Barak said in his interview with Fox News 'Our intention is to totally change the rules of the game.'

She: I'm impressed; you're really up on this stuff. But I don't think Barak and I are talking about the same game. He wants a longer cease-fire and no more rockets and no more tunnels for smuggling in weapons and explosives. But look what's bound to happen: Israel bombed the best targets in what it calls its 'target bank' on the first day, and by the third or fourth day it'll be bombing sub-prime targets, and there'll be more and more dead and wounded bystanders, and Fatah won't be able to maintain its dialogue with Israel, and the new law and order in Jenin will fall apart, and every ounce of benefit Israel may wring from all this will be buried under a ton of new anger, new hatred.

He: Wow! I didn't know a Zionist could talk this way. How about another drink? How about New Year's Eve?

Graphic

IMAGE

Load-Date: January 13, 2009

War is not the route to peace; ANOTHER VOICE

Daily Mail (London)

January 7, 2009 Wednesday

IRE Edition

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Section: Pg. 14

Length: 785 words

Byline: Joe Higgins

Body

SINCE December 27 the Israeli Defence Forces have killed over 600 Palestinians in Gaza, mostly civilians . **Hamas** rockets have killed four Israeli civilians. Some call this a war. It should be called a massacre.

On New Year's Day the Israelis dropped a bomb on the home of Nisar Rayan, a **Hamas** leader. It killed him. It also killed several **women** and children in his family. The Israeli government calls this a 'targeted assassination'. It should be called a war crime.

Even in times of relative quiet, Gaza is a hellish place for its residents. Imagine a sliver of land that would just fit into half of the Dingle Peninsula that stretches from Dunquin to Annascaul. Now take the entire population of greater Dublin from Balbriggan to Clondalkin and Tallaght and across to Dún Laoghaire, add another three hundred thousand, and shoehorn them all into this tiny space. Leave them there with the crudest of facilities that couldn't remotely be called an infrastructure and you have Gaza.

I once visited the Jabaliya refugee camp in northern Gaza. The crude concrete and corrugated iron structures in which people lived were piled on top of each other. The 'streets' were narrow laneways of sand where foul wastewater lodged and there was a sickening stench of sewage in the air.

That was 15 years ago. Thousands of Palestinian workers crossed the border each day to work in Israel. Since then the population has almost doubled, such economic activity as existed has been smothered by an Israeli blockade and a military ring of steel has turned the strip into the largest prison camp in history. Criminally, the Egyptian government colludes in this mass imprisonment of a people.

The tragedy of the people of Palestine was to be in the way of the ruthless project to carve out a Jewish state on their territory. Of course the unspeakable crimes of the Nazi Holocaust was a major factor in driving the latter stages of that project, but it was executed by further unspeakable crimes against an innocent people.

The second great tragedy of the Palestinian people is that in responding to the disaster that was inflicted on them they have been cursed with disastrous leadership.

While refugees languished in camps in the Lebanon, Jordan, the West Bank and Gaza, Yasser Arafat and the lieutenants of his Fatah faction of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation created a corrupt and self-serving bureaucracy, albeit posing as freedom fighters.

War is not the route to peace ANOTHER VOICE

They looked to the rotten Arab dictatorships which repressed their own people as ruthlessly as the Israelis repressed the Palestinians. Their terror tactics were a disaster.

In 1994, when I visited Palestine, **Hamas** had the support of a small minority. It was disillusionment with Fatah that allowed them to gain majority support in Gaza. The Israeli government also cynically helped them, in order to counter Arafat's influence, in the same way the American CIA facilitated the birth of Al Qaeda in Afghanistan as a tool against the Russians.

Hamas is a disaster for the Palestinians. Their reactionary and right wing ideology shows no way out of the present disaster. Their tactic of sending missiles into civilian areas of Israel is not just utterly wrong but utterly counterproductive. Far from 'defending' the Palestinian people as they like to proclaim, they have the same effect as peashooters against a giant alligator, merely irritating the beast and inviting it to do its worst to helpless bystanders.

ALTHOUGH hardly reported on, 10,000 Palestinian Arabs and Jews united to march in Tel Aviv on Saturday last to protest against the savagery in Gaza. True, they represent a minority opinion right now, but that event and the slogans that were heard give a clue as to how the nightmare can be ended: Halt the bombing; End the siege; No to the qassam rockets; Jews and Arabs – refuse to be enemies.

The ordinary people of Palestine and Israel desire to live in peace but the murderous Israeli regime, **Hamas**, Fatah and the corrupt Arab leaders cannot and will not achieve this for them.

The alternative to this nightmare is for them to come together and build a new reality based on an independent Palestinian State, guaranteeing also the right of the Israeli State to live in peace.

Achieving this involves ending the disastrous interference of the imperialist powers in the region and counterpointing the destructive capitalism which they imposed with the democratic ownership and control of the wealth by workers, peasants and the poor for the wellbeing of the majority.

On this basis alone is it possible to tear down the walls of hatred and the walls of concrete and barbed wire that sunder communities and nations and visit horror without end on the innocent.

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Load-Date: January 7, 2009

14 more children killed in the terror of Gaza

Daily Mail (London)

January 6, 2009 Tuesday

1ST Edition

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Section: Pg. 8

Length: 584 words

Byline: DAVID WILLIAMS, MATTHEW KALMAN

Body

AT LEAST 14 more Palestinian children were killed in the Gaza Strip yesterday as the misery and terror of civilians trapped by the Israeli bombardment intensified.

With Israel defying mounting international demands for a ceasefire, aid workers warned of a humanitarian crisis facing terrified families trapped in their homes with little power, food, fuel and medicine.

The death toll passed 535 as planes, helicopters, artillery and tanks pounded the Palestinian territory for a tenth day.

Fierce battles with **Hamas** militants raged, some for the first time in the warren of tunnels beneath Gaza City.

Twenty-one of those who died yesterday were civilians. Palestinian medics say a total of 30 children and 18 **women** are among 90 civilians killed since Israel's ground invasion began on Saturday.

Yesterday's casualties included three Palestinian children and their mother killed when a tank shell hit their home in Gaza City.

A three-year-old Palestinian girl died from Israeli army fire in the central Gaza Strip, doctors said. Her father, mother and other family members were also wounded.

And 13 members of another family, including a mother and three children, were killed when tank fire hit their home east of Gaza City.

Amid harrowing scenes in the city's morgue, the weeping father of one of the children begged helplessly: 'Get up, boy, get up, please get up. I am your dad and I need you.' An onlooker compared the children's bodies to 'sleeping dolls'. The eldest was four.

Bombs also hit a hospital morgue where a family were mourning a paramedic killed in an airstrike on Sunday.

Three people were killed and 17 wounded, medical workers said.

Medecins Sans Frontieres, the medical aid agency, said surgical services in Gaza were 'overwhelmed' by the estimated 2,500 wounded in the attacks as the suffering of innocent civilians continued.

14 more children killed in the terror of Gaza

Dominic Nutt, of the Britishbased Save the Children charity, said: 'You're looking at a catastrophe.

'It is hard to know how you would define a humanitarian disaster if this is not considered to be one.' Israel allowed in 80 truckloads of aid yesterday, but there were reports that the Israelis had warned the humanitarian organisation Red Crescent in Gaza not to try to visit two areas where fighting had been taking place and many injured were believed to be.

Israel also scrapped arrangements to allow the first foreign reporters into Gaza since the onslaught began.

One Palestinian father queuing for bread in Gaza City said his sympathy was growing for the **Hamas** Islamists whose rocket fire into southern Israel triggered the offensive.

The Israeli army said 'many dozens' of Islamist fighters had been killed since Saturday's invasion designed to end the rocket attacks.

Israeli defence minister Ehud Barak said the operation would continue until 'peace and tranquillity' was secured for Israel's citizens. At least 24 rockets have been fired into Israel in the past 24 hours and four Israelis have been killed by the missiles since the offensive began.

An Israeli soldier was killed in fighting on Sunday and 48 have been wounded since the invasion.

International efforts to secure a ceasefire moved ahead with French President

Nicolas Sarkozy and Middle East special envoy Tony Blair visiting the region. But they seemed able to offer little beyond words.

A **Hamas** official said a delegation would head for talks in Egypt, which is trying to achieve a ceasefire.

But senior **Hamas** political leader Mahmoud Zahar urged his 20,000 forces to fight on 'in the name of God'.

Graphic

War zone: An Israeli tank on the Gaza-Israel border yesterday

Load-Date: January 6, 2009

Pity the little children War fodder

Geelong Advertiser (Australia)

January 9, 2009 Friday

1 - Main Edition

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Section: PERSPECTIVE; Pg. 27

Length: 803 words

Byline: PIERS AKERMAN

Body

`It would be inhuman in the extreme not to feel sympathy for the children being used in this callous manner . . . '

ISRAEL'S Operation Cast Lead is unfolding like a familiar soap opera on the nightly news. A series of Palestinian terrorists making blood-curdling threats against Israelis, a hail of missiles aimed at Israeli civilian targets, retaliatory strikes against the terrorists -- who unfailingly seek to shelter behind innocent civilians -- followed by scenes of weeping parents at crowded hospitals.

It is a plot line designed to soften the hardest heart.

Unfortunately, those who buy the tear-jerking material unquestioningly are being duped. No one, let alone a parent raised in a Western culture, could imagine placing children directly in harm's way or encouraging impressionable infants to worship death, but that is what the thugs and murderers responsible for the slaughter in Gaza have been doing.

It is an Islamist thing and Palestinian television, often subsidised by the United Nations and the European Union, is full of it. In regular drama directed at kindergarten-aged children, children are taught that martyrdom is a beautiful state to aspire to, that suicide bombers are heroes and heroines, and that even cartoon characters can sing and dance and murder their way into paradise.

Palestinian Media Watch and the Middle East Media Research Institute have been documenting this extraordinary perversion in recent years. Among the scripts they have translated from the Arabic is a cute story of the four-year-old daughter of ***female*** suicide bomber Reem Riyashi who is shown singing to her dead mother and swearing to follow in her explosive footsteps.

The video clip, aired on ***Hamas*** TV, depicts the little child asking her mother what she is carrying (it is explosives) and why she is putting on a hijab. All is made clear when the local newspaper (and headstone) reveals that Mummy dearest was no soccer-mum, but a bomber-mum.

``Instead of me you carried a bomb in your hands. Only now, I know what was more precious than us . . . May your steps be blessed," the little girl sings.

``Send greetings to our Messenger (Muhammad) and tell him: `Duha loves you'. My love will not be (merely) words. I am following Mummy in her steps."

Pity the little children War fodder

At which point she finds explosives her bomb-loving mum left in a drawer and picks up a stick, happily singing: "Oh Mummy, oh Mummy."

Don't think this is some aberration. Abhorrent agitprop is the currency of Palestinian children's television programming, with even cartoon characters depicting martyrdom as a highly desirable goal.

In a regular show on **Hamas** TV early last year, a giant rabbit, Assud replaced his brother, Nahoul, a giant bee, who had died after failing to get into hospital in Egypt for surgery.

Assud told his young audience: "We are all ready to sacrifice ourselves for the sake of our homeland. We will sacrifice our souls and everything we own for the homeland," vowing also to "get rid of the Jews and eat them up". Regular viewers would recall that Nahoul himself replaced Farfour, the **Hamas** mouse, who was shown being killed on the show by an Israeli soldier in 2007.

As the young woman who hosts the cartoon program, Saraa Bahoum, told her young audience: "Farfour was martyred while defending his land, the land of his fathers and his forefathers. He was martyred at the hand of the criminals, the murderers, the murderers of innocent children . . ."

The bee made that clear when he said: "I want to continue in the path of Farfour -- the path of Islam, of heroism, of martyrdom, and of the mujahideen. Me and my friends will follow in the footsteps of Farfour. We will take revenge upon the enemies of Allah, the killer of the prophets and of the innocent children, until we liberate Al-Aqsa from their impurity. We place our trust in Allah."

Indoctrinating children to become suicide bombers and human shields is a declared goal of **Hamas**, as a representative of the terrorist organisation, Fathi Hamad, proudly told the Palestine Authority Legislative Council last year, saying: "For the Palestinian people, death became an industry, at which **women** excel and so do all people on this land: the elderly excel, the Jihad fighters excel, and the children excel. Accordingly (Palestinians) created a human shield of **women**, children, the elderly and the Jihad fighters against the Zionist bombing machine, as if they were saying to the Zionist enemy: 'We desire death as you desire life'."

To ensure that the death industry doesn't experience a slow-down, **Hamas** has placed its fighters in civilian homes, schools and hospitals.

It would be inhuman in the extreme not to feel sympathy for the children being used in this callous manner but it would be unintelligent not to ask why those who are exploiting them are not being called to account.

Load-Date: January 8, 2009

Israel: Militants fired on its soldiers from bombed school

The Salt Lake Tribune
January 6, 2009 Tuesday

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Section: BREAKING; News; National; World

Length: 1577 words

Byline: The Associated Press

Body

An Israeli bombardment struck outside a U.N. school where hundreds of Palestinians had sought refuge on Tuesday, the U.N. and Palestinian medics said, killing at least 30 people. An Israeli official said its soldiers came under fire from militants hiding in the school and that the building stored Palestinian munitions.

Despite international criticism over civilian deaths and calls for a cease-fire, Israeli soldiers edged closer to two major Gaza towns. A total of 58 Palestinians were killed Tuesday -- with just two confirmed as militants, health officials in Gaza said.

The explosions marked the second time in hours a U.N. school came under attack. It was the deadliest assault since Israel sent ground forces into Gaza last weekend as part of a larger offensive against the ruling Hamas militant group that has killed nearly 600 Palestinians.

Nearly half of the dead are civilians, according to U.N. and Palestinian officials.

"There's nowhere safe in Gaza. Everyone here is terrorized and traumatized," John Ging, the top U.N. official in Gaza, said after the first strike on the compound of a U.N. school killed three people in a courtyard. The school has served as a shelter for Gaza City refugees fleeing the blistering 11-day offensive.

A Palestinian rocket -- one of two dozen fired from Gaza on Tuesday -- wounded an Israeli infant.

Dr. Bassam Abu Warda, director of Kamal Radwan Hospital, said 34 people were killed in an Israeli strike outside a second U.N. school in the northern Gaza town of Jebaliya. The United Nations confirmed 30 were killed and 55 injured by tank shells.

But an Israeli official said "hostile fire" was directed at the soldiers from within the school. He said soldiers returned fire and multiple explosions went off, presumably emanating from munitions stored there. The official spoke on condition of anonymity pending a formal army announcement.

The attack occurred at midafternoon, at a time when many people in the densely populated Jebaliya refugee camp were out and about. Many of the refugees apparently had stepped outside the shelter to get some air, thinking an area around a school was safe.

Palestinian militants frequently fire from residential areas. However, Mohammed Nassar, a medic who treated the wounded, said he did not see any gunmen among the casualties.

Israel : Militants fired on its soldiers from bombed school

Footage broadcast on Hamas Al Aqsa TV showed gruesome scenes at the hospital. At first, medics carried in at least five younger boys who were laid out on the hospital floor. It was not clear whether they were still alive.

Other medics then started unloading bodies of older men who had been stacked up in the back of an ambulance, three high, and were dragged without stretchers. One man's legs had been turned into bloody stumps that dragged on the ground as he was pulled from the ambulance.

In later scenes, the emergency room was packed, with all beds occupied and barely a patch of ground where there was not a body or a doctor standing. In other rooms, there were blood stains on the floor and other bodies lying there, with medics running to each of them to take their pulses.

"I saw a lot of women and children wheeled in," said Fares Ghanem, another hospital official. "A lot of the wounded were missing limbs and a lot of the dead were in pieces."

Majed Hamdan, an AP photographer, said he 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 were marks of five separate explosions, all in the same area near the school as the refugees were outside at midday to escape the confines of the crowded building.

U.N. officials say they provided their location coordinates to Israel's army to ensure that their buildings in Gaza are not targeted.

Speaking shortly after the first attack, Maxwell Gaylard, the U.N. humanitarian coordinator for the Palestinian territories, demanded an investigation.

"As one of the most densely populated places in the world, it is clear that more civilians will be killed," he said. "These tragic incidents need to be investigated, and if international humanitarian law has been contravened, those responsible must held accountable."

The international Red Cross said an ambulance post was hit as well on Tuesday, injuring one medical worker.

Israel launched its offensive on Dec. 27 to halt repeated Palestinian rocket attacks on its southern towns. After a weeklong air campaign, Israeli ground forces invaded Gaza over the weekend.

Nearly 600 Palestinians have been killed. Ten Israelis have died since the operation began, including a soldier who was shot on Tuesday.

United Nations staff estimate around 15,000 people have fled to 23 U.N.-run schools they have turned into makeshift refuges. U.N. food aid has halted in the northern Gaza Strip because officials fear residents would risk their lives to reach distribution centers.

Tanks rumbled closer to the towns of Khan Younis and Dir el Balah in south and central Gaza but were still several kilometers (miles) outside, witnesses said, adding that the sounds of fighting could be heard from around the new Israeli positions. Israel already has encircled Gaza City, the area's biggest city.

The rising civilian death toll has drawn international condemnations and raised concerns of a looming humanitarian disaster. Many Gazans are without electricity or running water, thousands have been displaced from their homes and residents say that without distribution disrupted, food supplies are running thin.

Israel : Militants fired on its soldiers from bombed school

"This is not a crisis, it's a disaster," said water utility official Munzir Shiblak. "We are not even able to respond to the cry of the people." He said about 800,000 residents in Gaza City and northern parts of the territory had no access to running water from Tuesday. Gaza's overall population is 1.4 million people.

Israel says it won't stop the assault until its southern towns are freed of the threat of Palestinian rocket fire and it receives international guarantees that Hamas, a militant group backed by Iran and Syria, will not restock its weapons stockpile. It blames Hamas for the civilian casualties, saying the group intentionally seeks cover in crowded residential areas.

Visiting southern Israel, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said he hoped to stop the offensive soon, but said it would depend on Hamas' willingness to stop attacks and stop its smuggling of weapons into Gaza from neighboring Egypt.

"We have no interest in endlessly continuing the campaign. It will stop when the conditions that are essential for Israel's security are met," he said in the rocket-scarred town of Sderot.

The army says it has dealt a harsh blow to Hamas, killing 130 militants in the past two days and greatly reducing the rocket fire. Hamas is believed to have 20,000 fighters.

Israeli forces have seized the main Gaza highway in several places, cutting the strip into northern, southern and central sectors and preventing movement between them. Israel also has taken over high-rise buildings in Gaza City and destroyed dozens of smuggling tunnels -- Hamas' main lifeline -- along the Egyptian border.

Late Monday, a paratroop officer and three Israeli infantrymen were killed in two separate friendly fire incidents, the military said. Heavy Israeli casualties could threaten to undermine what so far has been wide public support for the operation.

A high-level European Union delegation met with President Shimon Peres on Tuesday in a futile bid to end the violence. Commissioner Benita Ferraro-Waldner acknowledged Israel's right to self-defense, but said its response was disproportionate.

"We have come to Israel in order to advance the initiative for a humanitarian cease-fire and I will tell you, Mr. President, that you have a serious problem with international advocacy, and that Israel's image is being destroyed," she said, according to a statement from Peres' office.

In Geneva, the international Red Cross said Gaza was in a "full-blown" humanitarian crisis. Its head of operations, Pierre Kraehenbuehl, said the few remaining power supplies could collapse at any moment.

Israeli leaders say there is no humanitarian crisis and that they have allowed the delivery of vital supplies.

The EU delegation was one of a flurry of diplomatic efforts to forge a cease-fire. French President Nicolas Sarkozy left Israel after a day of meetings with leaders.

Europe "wants a cease-fire as quickly as possible," Sarkozy said Monday, urging Israel to halt the offensive, while blaming Hamas for acting "irresponsibly and unpardonably."

International Mideast envoy Tony Blair said ensuring weapons smuggling to Hamas is halted would be a key step to restoring calm.

Speaking to reporters in Jerusalem, Blair said that stopping Hamas' rocket supply would be a "very significant advance in terms of Israel's security," which would allow Israel to halt its offensive and relieve the suffering of Gaza's civilians.

He would not give details of an international proposal to stop the flow of weapons into Gaza from Egypt.

Israel : Militants fired on its soldiers from bombed school

Israel's operation has angered many across the Arab world and has drawn criticism from countries such as Turkey, Egypt and Jordan, which have ties with Israel and have been intimately involved in Mideast peacemaking.

Graphic

Palestinians who fled their homes from Israeli forces' operations gather in an UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency) at a school building in Shati refugee camp in Gaza City, Tuesday, Jan. 6, 2009. Israel ignored mounting international calls for a cease-fire and said it won't stop its crippling 10-day assault until "peace and tranquility" are achieved in southern Israeli towns that are in the line of Palestinian rocket fire. (AP Photos/Hatem Moussa)

Israeli Army soldiers take cover as a mobile artillery piece fires towards targets in the southern Gaza Strip, on the Israel side of the border with Gaza Tuesday, Jan. 6, 2009. Israel ignored mounting international calls for a cease-fire and said it won't stop its crippling 10-day assault until "peace and tranquility" are achieved in southern Israeli towns in the line of Palestinian rocket fire. (AP Photo/Anja Niedringhaus)

Israeli Army soldiers take cover as a mobile artillery piece fires towards targets in the southern Gaza Strip, on the Israel side of the border with Gaza Tuesday, Jan. 6, 2009. Israel ignored mounting international calls for a cease-fire and said it won't stop its crippling 10-day assault until "peace and tranquility" are achieved in southern Israeli towns in the line of Palestinian rocket fire. (AP Photo/Anja Niedringhaus)

Smoke caused by explosions from Israeli forces' operations rises from buildings on the outskirts of Gaza City, Tuesday, Jan. 6, 2009. Israeli forces edged closer to Gaza's major population centers on Tuesday and attacked new targets, including a U.N. school, taking more civilian lives after ignoring mounting international calls for an immediate cease-fire. (AP Photos/Hatem Moussa)

A rocket fired by Palestinian militants at southern Israel leaves a thin trail of white smoke, as smoke caused by explosions from Israeli forces' operations rises from buildings on the outskirts of Gaza City, Tuesday, Jan. 6, 2009. Israeli forces edged closer to Gaza's major population centers on Tuesday and attacked new targets, including a U.N. school, taking more civilian lives after ignoring mounting international calls for an immediate cease-fire. A Palestinian rocket attack wounded an Israeli infant. (AP Photos/Hatem Moussa)

Load-Date: January 7, 2009

Front: 'As I ran I saw three of my children. All dead'

The Guardian - Final Edition

January 6, 2009 Tuesday

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theguardian

Section: GUARDIAN HOME PAGES; Pg. 1

Length: 1094 words

Byline: Hazem Balousha, Gaza City and Rory McCarthy, Jerusalem

Body

The small dead bodies were laid next to one another on the tiled floor of the morgue corridor, the blood drained from their cheeks. One had a bandage still wrapped around his head, another lay with his mouth half-open in his oversized, bloodstained clothes.

For a week the Samouni family had taken shelter in their small, single-storey home in Zeitoun, south-east of Gaza City, and there they survived wave after wave of Israeli bombing and artillery strikes. Then came Israel's ground offensive, the next phase in what Israel argues is a necessary and justified battle against the Palestinian militants firing rockets out of Gaza.

The Israeli prime minister, Ehud Olmert, promised an "iron fist" for **Hamas** and said he would treat the civilian citizens of Gaza with "silk gloves," though the Palestinians of Gaza know perhaps better than most that there are few silk gloves in war.

The Samouni family woke on Sunday morning to find themselves surrounded by camouflaged Israeli troops and dozens of tanks, who had set up a position in the rubble of what was once the large Jewish settlement of Netzarim. As dawn broke, the soldiers seized control of the highest buildings in the district and ordered several of the neighbours into the Samouni family home and there a dozen of them waited, without food and without water.

"All day Sunday there was shooting and bombing. We didn't have anything to eat, we didn't have water to drink - our water tanks had been damaged in the fighting," said Wael Samouni, 32, who on a normal day would be manning his stall at the vegetable market. "We couldn't sleep."

He stepped out of the house briefly and saw a man shooting an M16 assault rifle. He mistook him for a Palestinian militant. Samouni shouted at him: "Please don't come here. They'll kill us. Go away." But as the gunman turned round, it became clear he was an Israeli soldier. The soldier shouted back in Arabic: "Bring me your ID." Samouni disappeared back into his house and decided not to venture out again.

They passed another night under the bombing and artillery strikes, grateful to have made it through to morning. Samouni remembered sitting in the crowded living room yesterday, surrounded by his neighbours, wondering how much longer they had to endure. It was 6.30am.

Front: 'As I ran I saw three of my children. All dead'

"We were sitting and suddenly there was bombing on our house and everyone started to run. There were three rockets. I have no idea where they came from," said Samouni. The rockets, believed now to be tank shells, hit the building and brought it crashing down. "I looked to my side, took hold of my boy Mohammad and I started to run. As I ran I looked back and saw on the floor my mother, two cousins and three of my children. All dead," he said. Samouni and the others ran from the house, some raised white cloths as flags and they made it to a patch of safe ground where they were taken to hospital by car.

Yesterday, as three of his children were laid out dead on the hospital floor, Samouni was in a bed upstairs in the Shifa hospital, recovering from wounds to his legs and shoulder and comforting his son Mohammad, five, who had suffered a broken arm in the shelling and had just woken after his operation. He was still unsure exactly how many of his 10 children had died.

"It's a massacre," Samouni said. "I'm 32 years old and I've never seen such things as this. I couldn't help myself or any of those around me. We just want to live in peace."

At his bedside was his brother Nael, 36, who lives in a house close by. His wife and daughter had been in Wael's house yesterday morning at the time of the shelling: both were killed.

"I wanted to go and join them the night before, but it was too dangerous to go out. If anyone moved he would be shot," Nael said. "Then when I heard the bombing this morning I saw people running. I saw an injured man fall to the ground. I ran to help, but there was an Israeli sniper in the house next door who shouted: 'Leave him alone.' We couldn't rescue anyone."

As he ran, Israeli troops fired over their heads and then ordered them to lift up their shirts to show they carried no weapons under their clothes. "We just made it out and here to the hospital," Nael said. Then, in a moment of anger, he pointed the blame. "Hamas is responsible for this. They are starving us, now they are killing us," he said. "They asked the Israelis to enter but where is the resistance? They are hiding. All the leaders of Hamas are underground. It's just the civilians confronting the Israeli army. I don't like Hamas and I don't want them ruling Gaza."

Hospital officials believe nine people were killed in the Samouni house, including at least four children. But they were not the only civilians to die at the hand of the Israeli offensive yesterday. Just north of Gaza City in the Shamali district, a missile struck a three-storey apartment block in the middle of the night - home to three brothers, their families and their father. It hit the roof and dropped down to the basement, destroying half the building and killing Amer Abu Asha, 47, along with his two wives, three sons and one daughter.

Yesterday his brother Samer Abu Asha, 50, sat outside on a plastic chair under a green awning. Neighbours came to shake his hand and offer their sympathy before slipping away quickly to avoid the next missile strike.

The family were not asleep at 1.30am yesterday when the Israeli missile struck - the noise of the bombing had been too much. In the moments after the attack there was such confusion no one knew who or how many had died.

"We started searching but it was hard with the dust, the darkness and the smoke," said Abu Asha. Neighbours told them bodies had been taken to the hospital, so they rushed to the Shifa in Gaza City, only to be told no one from their family had been admitted. "We went back home and searched everywhere," he said. Finally they found his brother Amer lying on a patch of ground outside the house, mortally wounded, his stomach ripped open. "We started to search for others under the rubble. We found arms, legs, half a head," he said. "We didn't find a complete body."

Abu Asha admitted that another brother in the family - but one who did not live in the building - was in the Hamas military wing but said he could not account for the bombing. They had received no warning. "It's unjust. They are targeting civilians, children, old women," he said. "Some European and Arab countries are supporting Israel in this terrorism. They want to crack down on Hamas, but Hamas is not in the houses. It's on the front line. Go there and kill them. Not us."

Front: 'As I ran I saw three of my children. All dead'

Load-Date: January 6, 2009

End of Document

Yes, Israel has a right to exist. But so did those blood-soaked Palestinian toddlers on the mortuary slab

Mail on Sunday (London)

January 11, 2009 Sunday

1ST Edition

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Section: Pg. 31

Length: 1053 words

Byline: Suzanne Moore

Body

LESS THAN a month ago I stood gazing at Gaza with no idea it would soon be in flames. How small it seemed, this densely populated little strip of land. Airships patrolled above and we were told of the 650 tunnels into Egypt through which everything, including cattle, is smuggled.

At the Erez Crossing we had a picnic and were told of the baddies. **Hamas** They are without a doubt baddies, who do not recognise the existence of Israel, but they were elected by the people of Gaza. Hence the blockade. Israel will deal with Fatah but not **Hamas**.

Now, hell on Earth has been unleashed. Even the most ardent Zionist must be queasy. Yes, I know about the dead Israeli children and the captured soldier, Gilad Schalit, but nothing, nothing compares to what Israel is now doing.

We were briefed by many Israeli intellectuals. The Mossad guys make our 'war on terror' look like stamp-collecting. They have been profiling and targeting their enemies for many years.

We had been taken to see the wall, the wall with the Banksy graffiti. A lot of it is not a wall but a fence with electric sensors driven through Palestinian land. Israelis are at heart pragmatists. 'Isn't the wall a sign of failure?' I asked. 'No,' said a charming man, the 'No,' said a charming man, the spokesman for the Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin before his assassination. 'Do we choose life or quality of life? It always has to be life.' In Israeli eyes the wall has worked. It has kept out the suicide bombers.

This land is one of the most compelling and beautiful in the world. And the most confusing, not just politically. Ten years ago I was appalled at the way ordinary Israelis spoke of Arabs as less than human. This visit showed me things have changed. Ten years ago everyone said Jerusalem was not divisible, now they say it is. Many believe in a two-state solution. Just not yet.

The young conscripts with their semi-automatics left casually on cafe tables still dance in clubs. Tel Aviv is a party town. 'Do you want to go and see Mark Ronson?' the guys who were showing us around asked.

From intense discussion on the eviction of Jewish settlers in Hebron to a Mark Ronson gig - that is life in Israel. You can forget politics, but you can't forget which side you're on. Ever.

Yes, Israel has a right to exist. But so did those blood-soaked Palestinian toddlers on the mortuary slab

RAMALLAH was bustling, Fatah-controlled but, when we went to visit the Arafat mausoleum, the scarf I had bought to cover my head was unnecessary. These people are not fundamentalists. Hamas, which controls Gaza, knows this. But Israel thinks it can only ever negotiate from a position of strength. Weakness has not led to a peace deal. So they tell you.

We walked out of a meeting with the chain-smoking Fatah leader into a demonstration. It seemed heavy. Everything seemed heavy because we have seen too many pictures of angry Palestinians, but we found out this was actually a demonstration about the rights of the disabled. On both sides life goes on.

Or it did. Not now in Gaza, as death rains down.

More extremism is being fuelled all over the Arab world. The people of Gaza are but pawns. Who cares for them? Certainly not America but not Egypt, Jordan or Syria either.

A professor at Tel Aviv University, a very depressed, thin man, an expert on Syria, lectured us in an airless room. There was no real problem with Syria, he said. Peace could be achieved, the settlers in the Golan Heights could be moved. Iran was the problem and surely where this was all leading. Israel is afraid of Iran and it should be. The centre of the Arab world has moved from Egypt to Iran and, whatever it says, it will have the capability to build nuclear weapons.

Those pesky WMDs which were never found in Iraq will be in Iranian hands.

The hope lies in the young, secular population of Iran but, from the Israeli perspective, this is not reassuring. The peace movement inside Israel, indeed the Left as a whole, is in a poor way. Ever more hawkish politicians win elections. For what exactly are the Israelis meant to do about the Hamas rocket attacks? No one I met was optimistic about either the forthcoming Israeli elections or what Obama will do.

But we were shown graphically what Hamas does. In a bomb shelter in Sderot we talked to Tiger Avraham, this small town's chief paramedic. It is where Hamas is lobbing its mostly Iranian rockets [Kassams]. You get maybe a 15 or 20-second warning to get to a bomb shelter when one is fired. Most fall on empty ground. The ones that don't - well, we were shown a little film about them. Bleeding children, limp babies, dead-eyed weeping women, sirens, screaming chaos. You know such images because you will have seen them in Gaza now or for years in Iraq. All wars are different. All wars look the same.

They look incomprehensible.

Tiger, an overweight, hairy little guy, was magnetic. His wife had died in a car accident. He told us about amputating legs after the rockets had landed. He spoke of his four kids who don't draw pictures of flowers and fields but of being inside always. Their bedroom is essentially a bomb shelter.

Since 2004 more than a thousand Israelis have been killed by such rockets. But the death toll must be reaching that number now in Gaza in less than two weeks. Does one dead Israeli child equal one dead Palestinian child? Is it a numbers game?

GAZA was already being starved of food and medical supplies. Now its people are being punished simply for being there. Israel is pushing for the ultimate confrontation it most fears. War with Iran. It believes it can drive out Hamas, then the Americans will come in with air strikes on Iran. The international condemnation of their action will have little effect inside Israel.

Paramedics like Tiger will be busy for a long time. I admired him. He is a hero. He believes in peace but lives in war. This is the common Israeli mindset.

This is what the outside world doesn't seem to understand.

Which is why we watch powerlessly and the US fails to condemn Israeli action, because the ideology is now one of permanent war.

Yes, Israel has a right to exist. But so did those blood-soaked Palestinian toddlers on the mortuary slab

Not to attack is to be attacked. This is the Israeli defence system - both psychologically and militarily.

Israel has the right to exist. But didn't those blood-soaked Palestinian toddlers, the three of them laid out on the mortuary slab, have a right to exist, too? Where is their future? Israel has slaughtered it. And this they call a show of strength.

Graphic

SCARRED: A young victim of Israel's 'show of strength' in Gaza

Load-Date: January 11, 2009

End of Document

Palestinians Work to Jolt West Bank Back to Life

The New York Times

December 24, 2008 Wednesday

Late Edition - Final

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Length: 1176 words

Byline: By ISABEL KERSHNER and ETHAN BRONNER

Dateline: BETHLEHEM, West Bank

Body

They are lining up once again by the hundreds, candles in hand -- Spaniards, Russians, Sri Lankans -- to descend into the ancient grotto where tradition says Jesus was born. Outside in Manger Square a municipal tree shines with decorations, and telephone wires bear glittery stars in seasonal spirit.

It might seem obvious that in the days leading up to Christmas this city, which lives in the hearts of Christians worldwide, would become a tourist magnet. But only six years ago the Church of the Nativity was the site of a five-week standoff between Israeli troops and armed Palestinian militants. Even today, getting into Bethlehem requires passing through an Israeli checkpoint under the shadow of the enormous Israeli separation barrier.

Yet there are more tourists in Bethlehem this year than at any time in a decade, and their presence signals something beyond the Christmas spirit: life for West Bank Palestinians, oppressive and challenging though it remains, seems to be making substantial, if fragile, improvement.

Both Israeli and Palestinian officials report economic growth for the occupied areas of 4 to 5 percent and a drop in the unemployment rate of at least three percentage points. The Israelis report that in 2008, wages here are up more than 20 percent and trade by 35 percent. The improved climate has nearly doubled the number of tourists in Bethlehem and increased them by half in Jericho.

It is not just tourists. The Bethlehem Small Enterprise Center, financed with German aid, has been open for eight months and is busy helping printers improve their software and olivewood craftsmen their marketing.

"It has been the best year since 1999," said Victor Batarseh, mayor of Bethlehem. "Our hotels are full, whereas three years ago there was almost nobody. Unemployment is below 20 percent. But we are still under occupation."

And all this in a year when the global economy has been sinking at an alarming rate.

Politically, as the mayor notes, there is little real change. A year of negotiations with Israel is drawing to a close without an agreement on Palestinian statehood.

The president of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, whose term officially ends on Jan. 9, has said he will call new elections in the coming months. **Hamas** says that he must step down on Jan. 9 and that it will name a

Palestinians Work to Jolt West Bank Back to Life

competing president if he does not, raising concerns of further instability. Israel has its own elections in February, adding to the uncertainty.

For the Palestinian Authority, the balance between heralding achievements and keeping up criticism of Israeli policies is delicate -- especially with the conservative Israeli opposition leader, Benjamin Netanyahu, leading in polls for the elections, advocating an emphasis on an "economic peace."

The Palestinians say that a sound economy alone will not bring peace, that the conflict requires a political solution.

Still, Palestinian forces are guarding major cities, Israeli troops have stepped back -- although they continue nighttime raids on people suspected of being militants -- and Israel says it is about to significantly ease some restrictions on Palestinian movement in the West Bank, a prerequisite for further economic growth.

A senior Israeli official in the northern West Bank said that 4,000 Israeli Arab citizens were driving in to shop in the area every weekend and that 115 new stores had opened in the city of Tulkarm in the past four months.

Even in Nablus, a volatile city of 200,000 that has been subject to a particularly suffocating Israeli security operation, the atmosphere is beginning to change. A gleaming mall owned by the municipality, under construction since 1999, finally opened earlier this year.

Ahmed Ayed, 22, manages a women's clothing store there. Sporting long hair and a goatee, he said the outlet, the sixth in Nablus of a chain owned by his father, opened half a year ago; a seventh has since opened nearby.

Ziad Anabtawi, chairman of the Anabtawi Group, which includes import, distribution and investment companies, says the Palestinian economy is much healthier today than it was in the 1990s, when it was based on laborers working in Israel, their entry dependent on Israeli good will. Today, it involves large Palestinian investment companies and bankers.

The old city of Nablus, known as the casbah, was until recently a danger zone where Palestinian gunmen frequently clashed with Israeli forces. On a recent afternoon, groups of women relaxed, smoking and picnicking, at a historic Turkish bathhouse, the Shefa Hamam.

A bastion of Mr. Abbas's Fatah movement, Nablus also became a stronghold of Hamas. Candidates widely associated with Hamas swept local council elections in 2005, winning 13 council seats out of 15.

But prosperity, business people there say, depends on Israel's removing the major checkpoints it erected in 2002, a step it said was necessary to prevent the movement of suicide bombers.

For six years, Palestinians have not been able to drive private cars in or out of Nablus without special permission. The Israeli military says that is about to change. Within a few weeks the army is planning to allow Palestinians from the northern West Bank districts of Nablus and Jenin to drive to the south in their own cars, without special permits and with only random inspections.

"We as a command are willing to take more risks as hostile terrorist activity goes down," said Col. Benny Shik, a senior Israeli military official in the West Bank.

Adly Yaish, the mayor of Nablus, said he had heard about the proposed changes and called them "a good start."

The way ahead, though, is dotted with pitfalls. The Israeli military emphasizes that all changes can be reversed. And the Israeli measures to suppress Hamas can sometimes be clumsy and counterproductive. Both Mr. Anabtawi and Mr. Yaish have spent time in Israeli detention in the last year because they were suspected of having financial links with Hamas. Israeli judges ordered them released.

In the West Bank, Hamas is currently subdued, with its armed men deep underground, its political leaders in Israeli jails and those representatives still at large in the local authorities diligently playing by Palestinian Authority rules.

Palestinians Work to Jolt West Bank Back to Life

The governor of Bethlehem, Salah Tamari, an advocate of coexistence for decades, said **Hamas** was weakening in the West Bank as people saw how hard life was in Gaza. What he really worried about was a future with Israel despite his years of Israeli friendships.

In his office, the curtains to his right were drawn shut to keep out the view of the opposite hill of Har Homa, a huge Jewish suburb whose construction he had worked against in the 1990s.

"Israelis are paranoid because of their past, while Palestinians are paranoid because of their present," Mr. Tamari said. "But we are doomed to live together or blessed to live together, depending on your point of view. It is true that the economy is improving slightly. But beyond that, I'm afraid very little is getting easier."

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

PHOTOS: A Palestinian police officer directed traffic on Manger Square, next to the Church of the Nativity, in the West Bank town of Bethlehem on Tuesday.(PHOTOGRAPH BY MUHAMMED MUHEISEN/ASSOCIATED PRESS)

Craftsmen in Bethlehem have improved sales with the help of a business center financed with German aid.

Palestinian **women** relaxed, smoking and sharing food, at a Turkish bathhouse, the Shefa Hamam, in Nablus.(PHOTOGRAPHS BY RINA CASTELNUOVO FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES)

Load-Date: December 24, 2008

End of Document

Hostages to fear and systematic loathing in Israel

The Australian

November 26, 2008 Wednesday

1 - All-round Country Edition

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 14

Length: 1160 words

Byline: Janet Albrechtsen

Body

Peace hopes stay dim as Palestinian children are taught to hate their Jewish neighbours

TO spend a week in Israel is to begin to understand that this country is generations away from peace with Palestinians. The people here talk about tahadiya: a period of calm. To an outsider, it is a week of alarming disquiet where each day reveals yet another culprit killing the prospect of peace. What you see and hear is disturbing enough. Even more destructive to peace is that which is hidden from you. This is how the week unfolds.

Sunday: A Qassam rocket is launched from northern Gaza into Sderot, an Israeli town within 3km of the **Hamas** stronghold.

Monday: Three more rockets are fired into this small town of 20,000 Israelis that has endured thousands of rocket attacks in recent years. I arrive in Sderot by helicopter just ahead of Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak and British Foreign Secretary David Miliband.

I see some of the mangled Qassam rockets that have hit this town. The rockets proudly bear the brand of the terrorists who launch them, written in Hebrew so the Israelis know who is firing at them. The Israelis who later collect the rockets date each of them in white paint and pile them up at the local police station. More than a hundred rockets were launched after Israel destroyed a **Hamas** tunnel built to attack Israel, a tunnel like the one used in June 2006 by militants to kidnap Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit from the edge of the Gaza strip. Shalit is the only Jew left in Gaza, a precious negotiating tool for **Hamas**. The Israeli Government has blocked access points to Gaza until the rockets stop.

Tuesday: A young Ethiopian woman, who has lost relatives to the rocket attacks from Gaza, tells me, "We don't count the rockets anymore". Three more qassam rockets slam into the fields of the Negev desert.

Wednesday: Two Qassam rockets land south of Ashkelon, a town well beyond the Gaza border, on the coast towards Tel Aviv.

Thursday: The Palestinian Authority runs advertisements in Israeli newspapers detailing in Hebrew Fatah's commitment to a peace plan. It is a meaningless commitment. Analysts call this a virtual negotiation. How can Israel negotiate peace with Palestinian interlocutors in Fatah, who have no control over Gaza, where more than 40 per cent of Palestinians live? If elections were held in the West Bank today, predictions are that **Hamas** would win there, putting an end to the co-operation that has stopped the terrorism emanating from that Palestinian enclave.

Hostages to fear and systematic loathing in Israel

Friday: Another rocket is launched from Gaza into the industrial zone of Ashkelon.

Put aside the rocket attacks by **Hamas**, the ineffectual leadership of Fatah, the Israeli settlements that poison relations and stymie solutions, the Israeli blockade of Gaza and the other intractable hurdles to peace. The real, long-term harm is happening quietly away from the prying eyes of what the locals here call Pali-wood: the Hollywood stars, the array of doe-eyed peace activists and the knaves at the UN who simplistically side with the Palestinians. That said, no one imagines Israel is free from fault. But its Government is not creating civil institutions that preach hatred and violence.

By contrast, an entire generation of Palestinian children is being raised on a full diet of hate education, on jihad and anti-Semitism. This is the long-term hurdle to peace in this generation, and the next. Look at the website of Palestinian Media Watch (www.pmw.org.il)

where analysts have long tracked what the Palestinian leadership under Fatah leader Mahmoud Abbas is doing. Not what is said to Westerners in English or what they tell Israelis in Hebrew.

Look at what Palestinians are teaching their children in Arabic. Look at the geography books for Palestinian children that encourage children to see no Israel, books that feature maps of Israel in the colours of the Palestinian flag, and described as Palestine. Learn about the May 2008 soccer championships for young boys in honour of terrorists such as Samir Quntar and Muhammad al-Mabhuh. Or the July 2008 summer camp held for young girls named in honour of **female** suicide bomber Dalal al-Mughrabi, who hijacked a holiday bus in 1978, murdering 12 children and 25 adults.

Listen to Fatah-funded children's television where children are taught to continue the way of the shahids (the suicide bombers) and quizzed about Mughrabi. She is presented as "the beloved bride, child of Jaffa, jasmine flower". Or quizzes where children routinely identify Israeli landmarks, towns and ports such as Haifa, Ashdod and Eilat as Palestinian. Where children are taught that "Palestine" covers 27,000sqkm; in fact Gaza and the West Bank total 6200sqm. When the next generation of leaders is taught from childhood that Israel does not exist, how is future negotiation possible?

The irony is that this hate education is funded by the West, by countries that pour money into the PA who use it to glorify terrorism and to twist young minds against Israel, and peace. Countries such as Australia.

Last year in Ramallah, headquarters of Fatah, Foreign Minister Stephen Smith lauded one of the first acts of the new Labor Government as being a pledge of \$45million to the Palestinian people and \$7.5m going directly to the PA. Does the minister know how the PA is using Western money?

Hillary Clinton knows about the direct flow of Western money into Fatah's sewer of hate education.

Last year she launched PMW's latest report and pointed out the consequences of the toxic indoctrination of children: "We cannot build a peaceful, stable, safe future on such a hate-filled violent and radical foundation."

The other irony is obvious to anyone with any understanding of the Palestinian leadership. Fatah is a discredited, corrupt, ineffective political party filled with the remnants of the Arafat era that has lost support of its people. **Hamas** is a terrorist movement still committed to bloody violence against Jews. There is no two-state solution until Palestinians can agree on one voice to represent them in a genuine peace settlement.

Yet consider this. According to the PMW, more than half of the Palestinian educators in the teachers' union are affiliated with **Hamas**. What hope the children? What hope is there emerging from the next generation a group of moderate Palestinian leaders capable of carving out peace for their people?

These are questions not simply for the present leadership of the Palestinian people. But also for the leaders of countries such as Australia, who talk in rhetorical flourishes about a renewed peace initiative, and yet must surely know that this money is used for propaganda that kills any chance of peace.

Hostages to fear and systematic loathing in Israel

They call this a period of calm. Surely they mean the calm before the storm unless the hate education of the next generation of Palestinians ends.

Janet Albrechtsen travelled to Israel as the guest of the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies and the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

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End of Document

Charity convicted in terrorism trial

Deseret Morning News (Salt Lake City)

November 25, 2008 Tuesday

Copyright 2008 The Deseret News Publishing Co.

Length: 808 words

Byline: Paul J. Weber Associated Press

Body

DALLAS -- A Muslim charity and five of its former leaders were convicted Monday of funneling millions of dollars to the Palestinian militant group Hamas, finally handing the government a signature victory in its fight against terrorism funding.

U.S. District Judge Jorge A. Solis announced the guilty verdicts on all 108 counts on the eighth day of deliberations in the retrial of the Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development, once the nation's largest Muslim charity. It was the biggest terrorism financing case since the attacks of Sept. 11.

The convictions follow the collapse of Holy Land's first trial last year and defeats in other cases the government tried to build. President George W. Bush had personally announced the freezing of Holy Land's assets in 2001, calling the action "another step in the war on terrorism."

After Monday's verdict, family members showed little visible reaction until the jury left. Several women sobbed loudly.

"My dad's not a criminal!" one nearly inconsolable woman said loudly. Court personnel told the family to calm her down, and as family members rushed her out of the courtroom, she said, "They treated him like an animal."

Ghassan Elashi, Holy Land's former chairman, and Shukri Abu-Baker, the chief executive, were convicted of a combined 69 counts, including supporting a specially designated terrorist, money laundering and tax fraud.

Mufid Abdulqader and Abdulrahman Odeh were convicted of three counts of conspiracy, and Mohammed El-Mezain was convicted of one count of conspiracy to support a terrorist organization. Holy Land itself was convicted of all 32 counts.

"I feel heartbroken that a group of my fellow Americans fell for the prosecution's fear-mongering theory," Elashi's daughter, Noor, said outside the courthouse late Monday. "This is truly a low point for the United States of America, but this is not over."

She said that she was proud of her father and that he was "paying the price" for saving lives.

"My dad was persecuted for his political beliefs," she said. "It's as pure and simple as that."

A sentencing date hasn't been scheduled, but the punishments could be steep. Supporting a terrorist organization carries a maximum 15-year sentence on each count; money laundering carries a maximum 20 years on each conviction.

Charity convicted in terrorism trial

Solis ordered the Holy Land leaders detained, citing the long prison terms they may face and their ties to the Middle East.

Holy Land was accused of giving more than \$12 million to support Hamas. The seven-week retrial ran about as long as the original, which ended in October 2007 when a judge declared a mistrial on most charges.

Holy Land wasn't accused of violence. Rather, the government said the Richardson, Texas-based charity financed schools, hospitals and social welfare programs controlled by Hamas in areas ravaged by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The U.S. designated Hamas a terrorist organization in 1995 and again in 1997, making contributions to the group illegal. Government officials raided Holy Land's headquarters in December 2001 and shut it down.

Prosecutors labeled Holy Land's benefactors -- called zakat committees -- as terrorist recruiting pools. The charities, the government argued, spread Hamas' violent ideology and generated loyalty and support among Palestinians.

It was a "womb to the tomb" cycle, prosecutor Barry Jonas told jurors during closing arguments last week.

Holy Land supporters told a different story. They accused the government of politicizing the case as part of its war on terrorism, while attorneys for the foundation said Holy Land's mission was philanthropy and providing much-needed aid to the Middle East.

They reminded jurors that none of the zakat committees are designated by the U.S. as terrorist fronts, and that Holy Land also donated to causes elsewhere, including helping victims of the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995.

"No one here is engaging in acts of terrorism," Theresa Duncan, attorney for Baker, said during closing arguments.

A chaotic courtroom scene ended last year's original trial, which lasted nearly two months and kept jurors deliberating for 19 days. But they deadlocked on many counts, and when a judge polled the panel about other verdicts, some disavowed their vote.

The confusing finish led U.S. District Judge A. Joe Fish to declare a mistrial, and leaders of the defunct charity rushed outside to celebrate.

Observers last year panned the government for presenting a bloated case too complicated for jurors to follow. Prosecutors responded this year by dropping nearly 60 charges in the trial and tightening their narrative to jurors, even offering a kind of road map to help the panel follow the money.

But nearly 15 boxes of evidence wheeled into court on a flatbed still impressed the size of the case, as did the more than one hour that Solis needed to read aloud the indictment.

Load-Date: November 25, 2008

Israel sends more troops into Gaza

MX (Australia)

January 12, 2009 Monday

1 - Melbourne Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 8

Length: 218 words

Body

NEW PUSH

Israel began pouring reservists into heavy clashes across the Gaza Strip on Sunday as the death toll from its war on **Hamas** approached 900 and officials indicated that the end may be in sight.

Troops pushed deeper into Gaza's main city, as planes carried out at least 50 air strikes on the 16th day of a war launched to combat Palestinian rocket fire, which has continued.

Israel's Channel Two said the army has begun sending in some of the thousands of reservists called up when the war began on December 27, and an army spokesman said they would be increasingly ``integrated" into combat units.

Two **women** and four children were killed in a strike on a house in Beit Lahiya, medics and witnesses said.

Israeli officials suggested the end of the offensive may be close, 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 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 the Jewish state was nearing the goals it had set for its operation, but said fighting would continue.

Olmert told ministers that Israel ``dealt **Hamas** an unprecedented blow".

Load-Date: January 12, 2009

**Peres visit to Cairo coordinated with Livni. Egyptian foreign official: Latest
Schalit deal involves freeing 1,400 prisoners**

The Jerusalem Post

October 23, 2008 Thursday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 2

Length: 400 words

Byline: HERB KEINON

Body

President Shimon Peres's trip to Sharm e-Sheikh Thursday for a meeting with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak has been completely coordinated with Foreign Minister and prime minister designate Tzipi Livni, Foreign Ministry officials said Wednesday.

The officials said Peres also spoke with Prime Minister Ehud Olmert about the trip, as well as with Defense Minister Ehud Barak, Mossad chief Meir Dagan, Israel Security Agency (Shin Bet) head Yuval Diskin, and the Defense Ministry's diplomatic-military bureau chief Amos Gilad.

The officials said the Egyptians were interested in hosting Peres because they wanted to show that high-level meetings were continuing even during this transitional period in Israeli politics.

In addition to discussing the Arab League Initiative, which has enjoyed a revival of sorts in recent days, Mubarak is expected to brief Peres on the status of Egyptian efforts to broker an agreement between **Hamas** and Fatah. The two are also expected to discuss the fate of kidnapped soldier St.-Sgt. Gilad Schalit.

Muhammad Bassiouny, the head of the Egyptian parliament's foreign affairs and defense committee, said on the Voice of Palestine Radio Wednesday that the deal Egypt was working on for the release of Schalit would necessitate Israel's release of some 1,400 Palestinian prisoners.

According to Bassiouny, a former Egyptian ambassador to Israel, the deal would take part in stages, with Israel releasing some 450 prisoners in the first stage, 650 in the second and the remainder in a third stage.

In addition, he said, Israel would release minors, **women** and the jailed Palestinian Authority parliamentarians.

Officials in the Prime Minister's Office, keeping in line with the PMO's policy of not talking about negotiations for Schalit's release, had no comment.

Another government source, however, said that while Bassiouny might know someone involved in the talks, he was not considered part of the Egyptian security apparatus headed by Egyptian Intelligence chief Omar Suleiman, who is spearheading Egyptian efforts on this matter.

Israel and **Hamas** have floated widely divergent numbers of prisoners who would be released for Schalit, with **Hamas** putting the figure at around 1,500 and Israeli sources talking about releasing 450 prisoners. However, the

Peres visit to Cairo coordinated with Livni. Egyptian foreign official: Latest Schalit deal involves freeing 1,400 prisoners

main sticking point, according to Israeli government officials, is which prisoners will be released, not necessarily how many.

Graphic

Photo: Shimon Peres (Credit: Ariel Jerozolimski)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

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**IRISH DAILY MIRROR COMMENT: TIME TO END UNWINNABLE GAZA
CONFLICT**

The Mirror

January 12, 2009 Monday

Eire Edition

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Section: LEADERS; Pg. 14

Length: 215 words

Body

THE events in Gaza in the last three weeks has sickened the entire civilised world.

The Israeli government has claimed this is a war but it is not - it is the wholesale slaughter in which **women** and children are among almost 900 people killed.

No one denies Israel's right to defend itself and there is no denying the Israeli people have suffered torment as **Hamas** rockets have rained down on them for several years.

The rationale of the Islamic terrorists behind these attacks was as much to provoke a response from the Israeli military as it was to inflict injury and damage.

It is also true that the **Hamas** hardliners care no more for their own civilian population as do the Israelis.

Israel is a sovereign state which claims to be part of the international community of nations but its actions in Gaza has been nothing short of barbarous.

Its claims that these are defensive actions are ludicrous.

There is nothing defensive about setting off air-burst artillery shells over densely-populated neighbourhoods.

Our Government has been forthright in its condemnation of the atrocities in Gaza.

They, along with other EU leaders, must bring pressure to bear on Israeli authorities to stop the killing.

However, one thing is sadly for sure - at the end of this bloody onslaught there will be no winners.

Load-Date: January 12, 2009

Israelis send in reserves -- GAZA PUSH

Sydney MX (Australia)

January 12, 2009 Monday

1 - SYD Edition

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Section: WORLD; Pg. 8

Length: 217 words

Body

Israel began pouring reservists into heavy clashes across the Gaza Strip on Sunday as the death toll from its war on **Hamas** approached 900 and officials indicated that the end may be in sight.

Troops pushed deeper into Gaza's main city, as planes carried out at least 50 air strikes on the 16th day of a war launched to combat Palestinian rocket fire, which has continued.

Israel's Channel Two said the army has begun sending in some of the thousands of reservists called up when the war began on December 27, and an army spokesman said they would be increasingly ``integrated" into combat units.

Two **women** and four children were killed in a strike on a house in Beit Lahiya, medics and witnesses said.

Israeli officials suggested the end of the offensive may be close, 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 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 the Jewish state was nearing the goals it had set for its operation, but said fighting would continue.

Olmert told ministers that Israel ``dealt **Hamas** an unprecedented blow".

Load-Date: January 12, 2009

Israeli civilians suffer a lot too

Sowetan (South Africa)

January 7, 2009 Wednesday

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Sowetan

THE SOUL TRUTH

Section: OPINION & EDITORIAL

Length: 211 words

Byline: Don Krausz

Body

Israeli civilians suffer a lot too

Anver Suliman's letter of January 6 refers.

As is customary with the MRN, the letter bristles with omissions and inaccuracies.

Suliman says Israel terrorises Palestinians and kills their women and children. Read him and you'd think the Israelis were monsters.

What he does not say is that since April 16 2001 Hamas has fired 6977 rockets and about 3000 mortar bombs at Israeli civilian settlements.

One of them, Sderot, with 23000 inhabitants, has had to endure 45 percent of the attacks.

I recently visited Sderot. The streets were empty of people, who only get 15 seconds warning of the rocket attacks. Each block has a small air raid shelter. Schools have double roofs in the hope that the top one will absorb most of the impact.

I visited a crèche where 62 percent of infants have stress problems. At least 90 percent of inhabitants have experienced a rocket landing in their street or the next one.

Mercifully the casualty rate to the end of 2008 has been only about 250. But what is the psychological cost to the 190000 people living within striking distance?

For years the Israeli government has urged an end to the cowardly attacks. Last Christmas Hamas fired 80 rockets and Israel decided enough was enough.

, Killarney

Load-Date: January 22, 2009

Discrepancies over number of Palestinian civilian deaths

The Jerusalem Post

January 13, 2009 Tuesday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 8

Length: 238 words

Byline: Jerusalem Post staff

Body

The IDF and Palestinian Ministry of Health both put the Palestinian death toll since the start of Operation Cast Lead at just over 900 as of Monday evening. Thirteen Israelis have been killed in the 17 days of conflict, 10 of them soldiers.

However, there were marked differences in the Israeli and Palestinian breakdown of the Palestinian dead. The Palestinian figures indicated that 292 children and 75 women were among the civilian dead; the UN's humanitarian coordinator, which cited these figures, did not give a figure for male civilian fatalities. The IDF, by contrast, estimated the entire Palestinian civilian death toll at some 250.

Based on intelligence and information obtained by the Gaza Coordination and Liaison Administration, the IDF said it had established that at least 400 of the dead were known Hamas operatives, and that it believed 250 of the remaining 500 fatalities were also Hamas operatives.

The UN Special Coordinator for Middle East Peace in Gaza, Hayat Abu-Saleh, issued a report on Monday warning of a mounting humanitarian crisis.

Many basic food items, including food for infants and malnourished children, were no longer available, the report said, and the destruction in Gaza was jeopardizing water, sanitation and medical services. There were increasing risks of epidemic outbreaks resulting from the disruption of vaccinations, uncollected rubbish piling up in the streets and unsafe drinking water.

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

States of mind

The Jerusalem Post

November 23, 2008 Sunday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 14

Length: 1087 words

Byline: LIAT COLLINS

Highlight: What would have happened had the Arabs accepted the Partition Plan and settled down to building their state with the energy that the Jews invested in theirs? First published in the International Edition of November 21, 2008.

Body

Of all the anomalies in the Hebrew language the term "kaf-tet be'November" sticks out as one of the strangest. For some reason, the date on which the UN General Assembly voted on the Partition Plan has remained in the intervening 61 years with the Hebrew figures and English month, as if it doesn't quite dare to let go of the British influence.

Many younger Israelis probably think of "kaf-tet be'November" as a street name, rather than November 29, 1947. It is the address of the former home of Prime Minister Ehud Olmert in Jerusalem's Katamon neighborhood. The sale of the residence has been more in the news than the UN vote which approved - by 33 votes to 13, with 10 abstentions - the end of the British mandate of Palestine and partition of the land into two independent states, one Arab and one Jewish. In effect it created the final push for the establishment of the State of Israel. And for the War of Independence.

While Jews in "Palestine" danced in the streets and set about the serious business of building a country which, miraculously, is still thriving, the Arabs (not yet known as Palestinians) rejected the "two-state solution" and launched a war which has not yet ended.

And Israel's relationship with Britain remains ambivalent, despite official speeches made during President Shimon Peres's visit last week.

In 1947, Great Britain largely ignored the UN plans and barely bothered to hide its partiality to the Arabs. Lawrence of Arabia had evidently granted them a much more romantic nature than the bands of ragged Holocaust survivors struggling to join their brethren in the Jewish national homeland, a dream come true after 2,000 years filled with miserable collective memories.

November 29, 1947, remains one of the most significant dates in Jewish history, not least for the way it managed to unite various sectors of the community in Eretz Yisrael. Even today, although Israelis argue how best to proceed with the "peace process," the majority believe in some kind of two-state solution. And that the country has a right to exist.

History sometimes seems like a series of "what ifs": What would have been had the Arabs accepted the Partition Plan and settled down to building their state with the energy that the Jews invested in theirs? Without the wars,

States of mind

terror attacks and diplomatic manipulations born out of that rejection, perhaps both Israel and Palestine would be the Mideastern equivalents of Singapore.

Sixty-one years after that fateful vote, the "two- state solution" is more in fashion than ever. Although given the current Palestinian divisions, it might have to be a "three-state solution." Gaza and the West Bank are separated by a few kilometers and a whole different world outlook.

GAZA IS not a good example of statehood. It decries the "siege" placed on it by Israel while not only continuing to shell the Jewish communities of the Negev but aiming for the city of Ashdod in the not-distant-enough future.

Hamas begs that the border with Israel be opened. The border, of course, could also be opened with Egypt - were Egypt not so fearful of the Islamist threat from its poor, besieged Palestinian brethren. It has to tread carefully. Hence it was not surprising that a Cairo court last week suspended a deal for Egypt to supply Israel with natural gas.

Perhaps, we should stage a black-out - a la **Hamas** - and show poor, candlelit children suffering from cold. But when the world sees pictures of Israeli children struggling to live to a rhythm dictated by Palestinian-launched Kassams, the country is usually taken to task for the "occupation." A hint to **Hamas**: Gilad Schalit is the only Israeli soldier in Gaza. Let him go and the occupying force will just disappear.

Not that that would mean the end of a military presence in Gaza. While journalists everywhere tend to mindlessly quote the description of Gaza as one of the most densely populated areas in the world, they rarely note that the ratio of policemen/militiamen to civilians is among the highest anywhere. Ask PA leader Mahmoud Abbas: The reason he keeps requesting, and receiving, more released security prisoners from Israel is to boost his own forces. You could ask him in Ramallah or perhaps catch him at Olmert's official residence in Jerusalem. You'd find him in Gaza only over his dead body. So much for two states.

Olmert and Kadima leader Tzipi Livni want to strengthen the moderates. Who wouldn't? But how moderate is Fatah? Admittedly, in the topsy-turvy world which is opting for the Saudi peace initiative, Fatahland does seem tame: They don't go in for official beheadings, stonings or publicly whipping **women** who were foolish enough to get themselves raped. Compared to Saudi Arabia, I suppose, that counts for something.

Hence the calls to provide more weapons to Abbas's forces - as if this will balance out the arms Iran and Syria are providing **Hamas** in Gaza. But guess who's caught in the middle? Israel.

The Arab countries which rejected the UN Partition Plan in 1947 did not fight Israel because of the "settlements." As far as they were concerned in 1947 all Israel was a settlement. What has changed? Israel grew bigger and stronger. No wonder they've not lost any of their animosity. It's been fueled by envy. Fatah might fight **Hamas** today but it doesn't take a lot of imagination to figure out who would be next.

Although, 16 months after taking over Gaza, **Hamas** is definitely a very real problem. With nearly 1,000 tunnels in operation under its de-facto borders, the "blockade" can hardly be said to be hurting the movement. The tunnels are not a secret. The only ones who don't seem to be aware of them are those international do-gooders braving the waves on PR ships to drop off "humanitarian aid." Perhaps they're too claustrophobic to travel by tunnel. And they could die of boredom waiting for Egypt to let them cross from their side. In 1947 Britannia ruled the waves (cf: the Exodus); now it is pirates in the Gulf of Aden and bleeding hearts in the Mediterranean.

So where do go from here? The principle of two states for two peoples laid down in 1947 is probably still the best option. The concept of two sovereign entities living side by side in peace and prosperity remains a worthy dream. But unless it is a vision shared by "peoples" rather than politicians it stands about as much chance as the average house hit by a Kassam. In the search for peace, it is easy to be dazzled by the light at the end of the tunnel. But circumstances require we check it is not being held by a **Hamas** gunman.

Graphic

Photo: GILAD SCHALIT is the only Israeli soldier in Gaza. Let him go and the occupying force will just disappear.

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

End of Document

Israeli shelling kills dozens at UN school in Gaza

Guardian.com

January 6, 2009

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theguardian

Length: 1459 words

Highlight: * Reports of more than 40 killed in and around UN shelter* 12 members of family killed in Gaza City air strike

Body

The civilian death toll in Gaza increased dramatically today, with reports of more than 40 Palestinians killed after missiles exploded outside a UN school where hundreds of people were sheltering from the continuing Israeli offensive.

Two Israeli tank shells struck the school in Jabaliya refugee camp, spraying shrapnel on people inside and outside the building, according to news agency reports.

The medical director of the hospital in Jabaliya told the Guardian 41 bodies had been brought in so far and more could be on the way. Reuters journalists filmed bodies scattered on the ground amid pools of blood and torn shoes and clothes. In addition to the dead, several dozen people were wounded, hospital officials said. The Israeli military said it was looking into the reports.

A United Nations official in Gaza said the school was clearly marked with a UN flag and its location had been reported to Israeli authorities. John Ging, director of operations in Gaza for UNRWA, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, said that three artillery shells landed at the perimeter of the school where 350 people were taking shelter. "Of course it was entirely inevitable if artillery shells landed in that area there would be a high number of casualties," he said.

Asked whether there were Hamas militants in the area at the time of the attack, Ging said it was the scene of clashes "so there's an intense military and militant activity in that area." He said UN staff vetted Palestinians seeking shelter at their facilities to make sure militants were not taking advantage of them. "So far we've not had violations by militants of our facilities," he said. Ging called for an independent investigation of the strikes near UN facilities.

"I saw a lot of women and children wheeled in," Fares Ghanem, a hospital official told the Associated Press. "A lot of the wounded were missing limbs and a lot of the dead were in pieces."

Majed Hamdan, an AP photographer, who rushed to the scene shortly after the attacks, 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.

Israeli shelling kills dozens at UN school in Gaza

"In the morgue, most of the killed appeared to be children. In the hospital, there wasn't enough space for the wounded."

Elsewhere, at least 12 members of an extended family, including seven young children, were killed in an air strike on their house in Gaza City. The bodies of the Daya family were pulled from the rubble of a house in Gaza city's Zeitoun district after it was hit by two Israeli missiles. The dead included seven children aged from one to 12 years, three women and two men. Nine other people were believed to be trapped in the rubble.

Hours earlier, three young men - all cousins - died when the Israelis bombed another UN school, the Asma primary school in Gaza City. They were among about 400 people who sought shelter there after fleeing their homes in Beit Lahiya in northern Gaza.

The UN, which said the school in Jabaliya was clearly marked, said it was "strongly protesting these killings to the Israeli authorities and is calling for an immediate and impartial investigation".

"Where it is found that international humanitarian law has been violated, those responsible must be held to account. Under international law, installations such as schools, health centres and UN facilities should be protected from attack. Well before the current fighting, the UN had given to the Israeli authorities the GPS co-ordinates of all its installations in Gaza, including Asma elementary school."

The killings take the total toll in Palestinian lives since the Israelis launched their assault on the Gaza Strip 11 days ago to above 600. Doctors at Gaza hospitals say that at least one-fifth of the victims are children and a large number of women are among the dead.

Israel continues to insist that the bulk of those killed are Hamas and Islamic Jihad fighters, although its claim to be going to extraordinary lengths to target only "terrorists" has been undermined by one of its own tanks firing on a building being used by Israeli troops, killing four.

The sharp spike in the number of civilian casualties came as Israeli troops and tanks moved into Gaza's second largest city, Khan Younis, for the first time today, supported by intensive artillery strikes as the military pledged to press on with its attack.

In a separate attack earlier in the day, three Palestinians were killed in an air strike on another school run by Unwra, the UN relief agency.

Nine Israelis, including three civilians hit by rocket fire, have been killed in the conflict. At least five rockets fired from Gaza landed in Israel today, including one that hit the town of Gadera, 17 miles from Tel Aviv, police said. A three-year-old girl was wounded.

The heaviest fighting has been in northern Gaza, with witnesses reporting wave after wave of bombing strikes across the north of the territory accompanied by gunfire from helicopters and artillery from land and sea. Thousands of Palestinians have been ordered to leave their homes or forced to flee the fighting.

In Shajaiyeh, east of Gaza City, Israeli troops seized control of three apartment blocks and set up gun positions on the rooftops. Residents were locked in their homes and soldiers confiscated their mobile phones, neighbours said.

Three of the four Israeli soldiers killed by friendly fire died when a tank mistakenly fired on a building where the soldiers had taken up positions. There was heavy artillery fire to cover the evacuation of 24 soldiers who were injured, including the commander of the Golani infantry brigade, one of Israel's key fighting forces.

Israel's defence minister, Ehud Barak, said his country's troops would continue their operation despite mounting Palestinian casualties and growing international calls for a ceasefire.

"Hamas has so far sustained a very heavy blow from us, but we have yet to achieve our objective, and therefore the operation continues," Barak said.

Israeli shelling kills dozens at UN school in Gaza

The Israeli foreign minister, Tzipi Livni, said the offensive was intended to change permanently the shape of Israel's conflict with **Hamas**. "When Israel is targeted, Israel is going to retaliate," she said. Israel has rejected calls for a ceasefire.

The military said it had bombed more smuggling tunnels across the border with Egypt, in the south, and hit more than 40 other sites across Gaza including buildings storing weapons and rocket launching areas.

In Gaza, Mahmoud Zahar, the most senior leader of **Hamas** in the strip and a hardliner in the movement, appeared on the party's al-Aqsa television station and gave a defiant speech threatening attacks not only in Gaza but elsewhere.

"The Zionists have legitimised the killing of their children by killing our children. They have legitimised the killing of their people all over the world by killing our people," Zahar said. He urged **Hamas** fighters to "crush your enemy".

Another **Hamas** figure, a recognised military spokesman called Abu Ubaida, said thousands of **Hamas** fighters were waiting in Gaza to take on the Israeli military, and that rocket attacks would increase. More than 40 were fired into southern Israel yesterday, including one that landed in an empty kindergarten, which, like all schools near the Gaza border, has been closed since the conflict began.. Israeli police said a total of 520 rockets had been fired in the past 11 days of fighting.

Israeli troops are now deployed in and around the major urban areas of Gaza, particularly to the north, in Beit Hanoun, Beit Lahiya and Jabaliya. Using leaflets, telephone calls and radio announcements, they have ordered residents in many areas to leave their homes, forcing at least 15,000 Palestinians to flee to safety elsewhere. At least 5,000 are staying in 11 different UN schools and shelters.

The UN said more than 1 million Gazans were still without electricity or water and that it was increasingly difficult for staff to distribute aid or reach the injured. It said more industrial diesel was needed to reopen the strip's sole power plant, which has been shut for a week. Ten transformers have been damaged in the fighting.

More wheat grain is needed for food handouts, and the UN said Karni, the main commercial crossing, should be reopened to allow it in. Four ambulances and three mobile clinics were destroyed when bombs hit the headquarters of the Union of Health Care Committees in Gaza City.

John Holmes, the UN emergency relief coordinator, said Gaza represented an "increasingly alarming" humanitarian crisis, and that the territory was running low on clean water, power, food, medicine and other supplies since Israel began its offensive. Israeli leaders claim there is no humanitarian crisis.

Load-Date: January 6, 2009

The woman who stands to gain from Gaza's misery; Her bid to become Israel's first female leader since Golda Meir foundered on her refusal to condone political blackmail, winning her a 'Ms Clean' image. Ironically, Tsipi Livni is now using the war to reinforce her credentials for the top job

The Evening Standard (London)

January 5, 2009 Monday

A Edition

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London
**Evening
Standard**

Section: Pg. 20

Length: 1686 words

Byline: MIRA BAR HILLEL

Body

AS TANK and artillery shells rain down on Gaza, here in Tel Aviv, (beyond the range of ***Hamas*** rockets, so far), we are being bombarded by election posters. The war was preceded by an explosion of advertising hoardings, set up along the roadsides, banners across motorway bridges and countless flyers. The predominant image is that of Tsipi Livni, the foreign minister who may well be Israel's leader after the 10 February election. Indeed, this denim-wearing, vegetarian mother-of-two is poised to reap a rich political reward from the Gaza adventure.

She stares down from innumerable posters, her slightly pudgy face airbrushed to a youthful sleekness. She, of course, has been trying to airbrush Israel's image as it takes a pounding over the carnage. In London alone, 10,000 people joined a protest to call for a halt to the war which is said to have claimed more than 500 lives.

As a mood of anger and revulsion takes hold, the French president Nicolas Sarkozy and his foreign minister Bernard Kouchner arrive here today determined to persuade Israel to pull back. Their efforts may well be directed towards Livni, because Israel's prime minister, Ehud Olmert, is a lame duck whose embroilment in corruption allegations led to the calling of next month's election.

What can Sarkozy and the world expect of this 51-year-old ex-Mossad agent? Not compromise, is the short answer. As leader of Kadima she could have become prime minister if she had been prepared to make a coalition agreement with Shas, one of the Orthodox Jewish parties. But Shas wanted a government spending deal that Livni refused to countenance. Her message was: I won't submit to blackmail.

The woman who stands to gain from Gaza's misery Her bid to become Israel 's first female leader since Golda Meir foundered on her refusal to condone political b....

If the French president, who has already been exerting tremendous pressure, thinks he has a chance of changing her mind, he is likely to be disappointed. Livni was in Paris last week as part of a diplomatic offensive to convince international opinion that Israel is simply trying to protect itself against terrorist aggression. She arrived back in Tel Aviv in the early hours of Friday morning and immediately joined a meeting with Olmert and defence minister Ehud Barak. There was only one item on the agenda: do we recommend that the full cabinet authorise the sending of ground troops into Gaza? Yes, Livni, said. We most definitely do.

Many outside Israel will view Livni's apparent appetite for this conflict with dismay and a number of commentators have openly wondered whether her gung-ho attitude is linked to her undoubted ambition. She has only been in politics for 10 years and although she leads the Kadima party, questions persist over her abilities.

The opposition Likud party has been sponsoring a poster campaign with the slogan "The job is too big for her". This touched a nerve. Apart from her relative inexperience, Livni has no background in the area that concerns Israelis most: security. Barak's Labour party may struggle in the polls but his personal rating has shot up by 19 per cent since the Gaza attacks began. He is a former prime minister who left office after his political standing disintegrated but he was a successful high-ranking army officer and Chief of Staff and at times like these, they are the sort of men to whom Israelis have always turned.

What, Livni's critics ask, does she know of war? The answer now is: a lot more than she did. Whether this will translate into votes is impossible to gauge as the conflict continues. Livni is a lawyer who, in her 20s, worked as a spy for Mossad, the Israeli intelligence service. She was based in Paris and her work is said to have been low-level and certainly not anything likely to give Daniel Craig pause for thought. But she has not been reluctant to confirm her past as an agent for her country, no doubt because it helps redress the imbalance of security experience between her and Barak.

The only woman to lead Israel was Golda Meir, prime minister in the late 1960s and early 1970s. She was described by a previous PM as having more balls than the men in his cabinet but she never held the crucial position of defence minister. Many Israelis will remember this, and the fact that Meir's mishandling of the Yom Kippur War of 1973 took Israel to the very brink of defeat.

In committing herself so uncompromisingly to the Gaza operation, Livni may have answered critics who felt she would be weak on security but her fate is now inextricably bound up with the outcome of the onslaught on Hamas and the Palestinians.

If the operation is seen as having been successful and if Hamas rockets stop falling on Israeli civilians, then every political entity in Israel will fight over the spoils. There is a view that if Barak and Livni join forces they will be swept to victory, brushing aside the pre-war favourite Netanyahu.

Military and security considerations aside, Livni is already a strong contender for the prime minister's job. She comes from that generation of politicians known as Princes, whose families played a role in creating Israel's independence.

Livni's father Eitan, a Pole, was one of the key figures in the Irgun, the under- ground movement that fought British rule in Palestine. Her mother was also an active Irgun member and was arrested by the British as a terrorist. She escaped after injecting milk into her veins, feigning illness and slipping away from the hospital to which she was sent.

The Irgun was responsible for one of the 20th century's most bloody acts of terrorism. It planted bombs in the King David hotel in Jerusalem in 1946, killing more than 90 people. The irony of Livni's war on Hamas is that her parents are celebrated in Israel for doing pretty much what Hamas are doing now.

Her heritage will be an advantage at the polls. So, too, is her image as an ordinary wife and mother. She has a good marriage, to advertising executive Naftali Spitzer, and is said to consult him on all major issues. Her friends

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from schooldays describe her as sporty she excelled at basketball and "a bit of a tomboy". She graduated from law school at Bar-Ilan University and after her Mossad episode practised as a lawyer.

Her sons, Omri and Yuval, were in their teens when she decided to enter politics around 10 years ago. At first she was seen as something of a hardliner, a champion of Greater Israel politics. Her mentor was Ariel Sharon, the former prime minister, and when he moved to the centre with his Kadima party she followed him, becoming more moderate and supporting his policy of withdrawal from Gaza.

Despite being burdened with some of Olmert's political baggage, she has a strong following but being a woman will not help. When Likud questioned whether the prime minister's job was "too big for her" they might just as well have said "too big for a woman". Israel cherishes its image as a country where sex equality really does exist but the truth has never lived up to the mythology.

When I was conscripted into the Israeli Army in the 1960s, the men had months of tough and uncompromising training, while the women had a few weeks of what I fondly remember as glorified summer camp. Nowadays women soldiers are often seen carrying automatic weapons and operate checkpoints.

But if they become officers, it is usually in the lower ranks and few are bothered by the reservist call-up.

Some have also detected a reluctance, here in Israel, to take Livni seriously while the fighting continues in Gaza. In Sunday's leading broadsheet, Haaretz, she got fewer column inches than the singer Annie Lennox, who was protesting against the war in London. She also trailed her close friend and ally Condoleezza Rice, her US counterpart, who said something unmemorable on the White House lawn. Eva Navon, a feisty 94-year-old resident of a kibbutz in southern Israel who is refusing the let the Hamas rockets force her from her home, received more attention in the media.

Yet after the disastrous tenure of Olmert, whose weakness for good cigars and designer watches seemed to fit only too perfectly the image of a man accused of base corruption, Livni appeared to some like a breath of fresh air. Her rivals Barak and Benjamin Netanyahu share a history of having been ejected by a disappointed electorate while she revels in the image of Mrs Clean.

Barak is especially reviled for his ostentatious penthouse in the prominent Akirov Tower, overlooking the centre of Tel Aviv. Netanyahu left office so unpopular that his genuine economic achievements received less coverage than his ex-airline stewardess wife Sarah's tendency to throw shoes at the hired help.

But Netanyahu looked as if he could return to office, before the war changed completely the political agenda. He was leading in the polls and his Likud party seemed well-positioned to oust Kadima.

Netanyahu, a brilliant communicator, stands to the right of his rivals and once vowed never to do a "land for peace" deal. But as prime minister he did just that after coming under pressure from Washington. That may be recalled by voters now as he is weighed against Barak, the ex-Chief of Staff, and even Livni, the gung-ho mother.

So far, Livni has made no big mistakes.

But here in Tel Aviv, where most of Israel's voters and decisions makers are, it all hangs on her great gamble to back the war. Can she and her cabinet colleagues really delivery a meaningful victory, one in which Israelis no longer have to fear Hamas terrorism, in whatever shape it arrives? There is a sense here that it can all go horribly wrong, as it did in Lebanon in 2006. If Israelis see television pictures of young soldiers paraded by their Hamas captors while their comrades arrive home in zipped-up bags, any idea of a war properly conceived and prosecuted will be destroyed. And Israel does not exist in a vacuum. International pressure is building by the day. Any ceasefire deal with Hamas that does not guarantee the total cessation of rocket attacks on Israel will be seen as abject defeat.

The woman who stands to gain from Gaza's misery Her bid to become Israel 's first female leader since Golda Meir foundered on her refusal to condone political b....

If Livni is to achieve the destiny she believes awaits her, she cannot allow that to happen. If it does, the declamations of a previously little-known woman politician will be drowned out by the wail of Red Alert air raid sirens..

Graphic

1.Hard line: Tsipi Livni inspects a school in Beersheba hit by a **Hamas** rocket 2.French connection:Nicolas Sarkozy and Tsipi Livni in Paris where the Israeli was a spy

Load-Date: January 5, 2009

End of Document

Israelis shell near U.N. school in Gaza

Chicago Daily Herald
January 7, 2009 Wednesday
L2 Edition

Copyright 2009 Paddock Publications, Inc.

Section: NEWS; Pg. 2

Length: 395 words

Byline: Associated Press

Body

GAZA CITY, Gaza — Israeli mortar shells exploded Tuesday near a U.N. school in Gaza that was sheltering hundreds of people displaced by Israel's onslaught against **Hamas** militants, killing at least 30 Palestinians, tearing bodies apart and staining streets with blood.

Israel's military said its shelling — the deadliest single episode since Israeli ground forces invaded Gaza Saturday — 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 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 the area of the school.

An Israeli official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said it appeared the military used 120mm 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**.

President-elect Barack Obama broke his silence on the crisis Tuesday 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 U.S. has only one president at a time.

At the U.N. in New York, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called the Israeli bombardment of the group's 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.

Israelis shell near U.N. school in Gaza

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.

Graphic

ASSOCIATED PRESS Israeli soldiers carry the coffin of Major Dagan Wertman, 32, who died in fighting in the Gaza Strip, during his funeral in Jerusalem on Tuesday. Wertman and two other soldiers were killed in an apparent friendly-fire incident.

Load-Date: January 7, 2009

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Hundreds of Afghans protest Israeli attacks on Gaza Strip

The Telegraph-Journal (New Brunswick)

January 6, 2009 Tuesday

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Section: NEWS;NEWS; Pg. A6

Length: 430 words

Byline: Steve Rennie THE CANADIAN PRESS

Body

Hundreds of people shouted "Death to America" and "Death to Israel" as the embers of an Israeli flag smouldered on the streets of Kandahar city during an angry demonstration Monday.

More than 700 people spilled into the streets and onto the balconies and rooftops of gated shops in the city's centre to denounce Israeli attacks on Hamas-controlled Gaza.

Community leaders, including Bismillah Afghanmul, a member of Kandahar's provincial council, called for a unified Muslim response to the attacks.

"In the history of Muslims, they never like war; they always like peace," Afghanmul said, according to a translator.

Israel says it launched the offensive 10 days ago to stop Hamas rocket attacks from Gaza, which have traumatized southern Israel. The rocket attacks were in retaliation for the siege of Gaza by Israel.

The United States has supported Israel's "right to defend itself" against the attacks and blames Hamas for triggering the crisis.

But some Middle Eastern and European governments have strongly criticized Israel, accusing it of using excessive force.

Nearly 550 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza - with another 2,000 wounded - in the offensive. Five Israeli civilians and one soldier have been also been killed.

Unlike other demonstrations around the globe, however, rally organizers in Kandahar city also condemned NATO air strikes aimed at Taliban fighters, which have killed scores of civilians.

At least several dozen people - including women and children - died during an Aug. 22 U.S. raid on the village of Azizabad in Herat province.

Afghan President Hamid Karzai has harshly condemned the bombings. Karzai, who has pushed for a review of the use of U.S. and NATO air power, says civilian deaths erode support for the war among his people.

At the demonstration, a man named Matiullah, 38, called the Israeli offensive "disgusting" and questioned what he sees as Muslims being "targeted" by non-Muslim countries.

Hundreds of Afghans protest Israeli attacks on Gaza Strip

"The reason why we got together is to become one against these nations who are bothering us time and again," Matiullah said, referring to his reason for attending the Kandahar city demonstration.

Another man, Haji Ghani, 33, said he was sitting with his ailing mother in a nearby hospital when he got word of the demonstration. He decided to leave his mother and join the protesters in the streets below.

"I am glad that at least we are having demonstration," he said.

"I am really against Israel's attack on Palestine. They are killing innocent people illogically."

Canadian military officials at Kandahar Airfield did not respond to a request for comment.

Load-Date: January 6, 2009

End of Document

LETTERS FROM READERS

St. Louis Post-Dispatch (Missouri)

December 30, 2008 Tuesday

THIRD EDITION

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Section: EDITORIAL; Pg. D6

Length: 1418 words

Body

Bush's midnight rules put politics, ideology in the doctor's office

Regarding "Rule protects anti-abortionists" (Dec. 19): It's a sad day when, in his last month in office, President George W. Bush continues to place his ideology before larger concerns in the United States: increased access to health care and the economy. In his midnight regulation from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Mr. Bush has placed further barriers for women to access birth control pills, emergency contraception and IUDs, and it comes with a \$43.6 million price tag for implementing the regulation.

Because of ambiguous language and leaving terms such as "abortion" undefined, health care workers can use the rule to deny access to most forms of birth control based on their own personal beliefs. Starting in January, pharmacists can refuse to fill prescriptions for birth control pills, emergency rooms can refuse to give emergency contraception to rape victims and, if a nurse or doctor is reluctant to discuss birth control options with a patient, he doesn't have to.

As a leading advocate for women's health, Planned Parenthood will not stand by and watch these basic health care options be taken from women. We will fight this and use all of our power to keep politics out of the doctor's office.

Alison Gee | St. Louis Vice President of Public Policy, Planned Parenthood of the St. Louis Region

Celebrating conscience

Former Cubs broadcaster Steve Stone used to quip that working with legendary announcer Harry Caray was like doing a double-header every day. There was the game he saw, and then there was the game Caray called. Reading the Post-Dispatch is similar. First one reads the words as written, and then one reads between the lines to find the subtext.

The story "Rule protects anti-abortionists" (Dec. 19), about the "medical conscience rule," is a perfect example. On the surface, the article laments the Bush administration's last-ditch attempt to "make it harder for women to get services such as contraception or counseling in the event they are pregnant...."

The real story is that President George W. Bush is protecting our over-burdened medical personnel - doctors, nurses and pharmacists - from the contradictory Freedom of Choice Act, designed to entrench abortion into the recesses of the nation's moral and political landscape. Proponents of the Freedom of Choice Act see abortion as an absolute right that trumps the long-established freedoms of speech and religion of the nation's medical personnel. Without this conscience clause, all hospitals, doctors, nurses and pharmacists will be compelled to take part in a

LETTERS FROM READERS

gross violation of the moral law. Without such protections, we most likely would suffer the closing of several of our Catholic hospitals and see a further burden stacked on the shoulders of our teetering medical profession. Is this the kind of change that we really want or need?

William A. Borst | Richmond Heights

Israel: Acting in self-defense after years of restraint

Israel unilaterally withdrew from Gaza in 2005 in pursuit of peace. Instead of peace, **Hamas** instituted a reign of terror. Since Israel's withdrawal, there has been an ongoing assault by rockets and mortar shells from Gaza on towns and cities in southern Israel. Over the past year alone, **Hamas**, which controls the government in Gaza and which openly calls for the "obliteration" of Israel, has, in clear violation of international law, fired more than 3,000 rockets and mortar bombs into Israeli towns and cities in southern Israel.

While no country can tolerate such deliberate assaults indefinitely, Israel has shown extraordinary restraint. **Hamas**' response to Israel's calls to stop the attacks was to intensify the bombardment on Israeli civilians.

Israel's efforts this weekend to stop the **Hamas** attacks through a military response against the terror infrastructure in Gaza represent pure self-defense and an exercise of its responsibility to protect its citizens.

Hamas' disregard for Israeli life is matched by its disregard for the lives of Palestinians living in Gaza. Using innocent Palestinians as human shields, **Hamas** deliberately fires its missiles from homes, schools and community centers. The use of Palestinian civilians as human shields is a fundamental violation of Palestinian human rights by the **Hamas** leadership.

President-elect Barack Obama, referring to the unrelenting hail of rockets and mortar shells from Gaza, said earlier this year: "If somebody was sending rockets into my house where my two daughters sleep at night, I would do everything to stop that, and would expect Israel to do the same thing."

Israel has acted to stop those rockets and to protect the innocent children and adults targeted by **Hamas** attacks.

Donn Rubin | Creve Coeur Vice President, Jewish Community Relations Council

Worth 1,000 words

For many years, the Post-Dispatch has provided a fine community service in publishing "The 100 Neediest Cases," which encourages readers to support less fortunate members of our communities who need financial help to survive.

Accompanying each case is a portrait provided by various high school students. These portraits are worth a thousand words. The students have achieved empathy with those families in desperate need of financial help, and the portraitists and their feelings are reflected in the faces of their portraits.

These students bring home the meaning of "The Golden Rule" in a sensitive, strong and positive way.

Thanks to the Post-Dispatch for sharing their fine work. They have every right to be proud. They may well be among the future leaders of our society.

Connie Heiman | Olivette

Coming catastrophe

When Metro reduces bus and train service, we will face a real problem. In "Road risks rise as more drivers drop insurance" (Dec. 17), the Wall Street Journal reported that more drivers are forgoing insurance. Picture fewer insured motorists, a sagging economy and less public transportation. Thousands of claims will not be paid, and emergency rooms will be filled with injured motorists and passengers.

LETTERS FROM READERS

The Journal story said, "Your odds of being in an accident with an uninsured driver are substantial." This is a developing crisis that needs our immediate attention. St. Louis Mayor Francis Slay, Gov. Matt Blunt and others must be told to seek a bailout for Metro and MetroLink.

St. Louis and Missouri cannot afford the burden of roads filled with uninsured motorists.

Byron Motley | St. Louis

Play by his rules

Faced with Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich's refusal to resign, the state Supreme Court's decision to not intervene and the prospect of a lengthy and expensive impeachment process, it is time to consider another approach to remove him from office: play by his rules.

He has been accused of making others "pay to play," and it is no secret that he likes money. Thus, the state should consider paying him to not play. A consortium of well-heeled Illinoisans (or we could pass the hat among all of us) could offer to buy him out, much like what happens with unsuccessful college football and basketball coaches. Whatever the amount offered, it would decrease daily until, by a scheduled date, it would total zero. Meanwhile, the governor's problems and pressures on him to resign no doubt would continue to mount.

At some point, the governor would see the precipice approaching and an opportunity to avoid a total free-fall by taking whatever offer was still on the table.

Dan Kirwan | Mount Vernon, Ill.

Utopia is on its way

Recent letters celebrating the end of the Bush administration have inspired me to look forward to the end of the Bush presidency. Since President George W. Bush apparently was the cause of all the problems we have had and still face, it is wonderful to know it will change. We can hope again.

The sun will shine every day. There will be no more terrorist attacks anywhere in the world, let alone in our country. Terrorists will sing like birds, since the man they hate will be out of power. The whole world will love us again. The polar icecaps will refreeze. People who want those in need to be taken care of will increase their own donations to more than \$100. Greed, envy, laziness, irresponsibility and hate will disappear. All fathers and mothers will protect and love their children. All schools will be high-performing. There will be no more child molestation, robbery, murder, rape, unwanted pregnancy or disease. Bush is gone! Utopia is on its way!

Oh, and best of all: The Rams won't lose another game.

Ruth Hemmann | Des Peres

Load-Date: December 30, 2008

Rebuild Gush Katif

The Jerusalem Post

January 14, 2009 Wednesday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 15

Length: 778 words

Byline: MICHAEL FREUND

Highlight: The truth of Zionist history is that Jewish settlements are not an obstacle to peace but an impediment to war. Fundamentally Freund

Body

Last week, shortly after Israeli ground forces entered Gaza, there was a brief news item on the radio which caught my attention.

Amid the flurry of reports emanating from the front, the announcer noted in passing that troops had arrived at the ruins of the Jewish communities of Dugit in northern Gaza and Netzarim in the center of the Strip. He then quickly moved on to discuss various other pressing events in the current campaign against terror.

Left unsaid, of course, was the colossal and bitter irony of this development. After all, it was just three and a half years ago, in August 2005, that soldiers descended on the Jewish communities of Gaza to expel their Jewish residents from their homes. And now the men in uniform find themselves forced to do battle against Hamas in those very same locations.

What a stinging rebuke to all those who preached the gospel of retreat in the face of terror and prophesied peace and harmony by removing Jews.

If nothing else, it is a telling reminder of a basic and fundamental truth of Zionist history and Middle Eastern reality: Jewish settlements are not an obstacle to peace, but an impediment to war.

Only by firmly planting the flag deep into every part of the Land of Israel can we ensure our continued existence in the face of ongoing Arab expansionism and Palestinian irredentism.

That is why it is time now to right the moral and historical wrong of Ariel Sharon's disengagement plan and rebuild Gush Katif.

THE COUNTRY's leaders talk of teaching Hamas a lesson by striking at its infrastructure or delivering a painful blow. I couldn't agree more. But while we are at it, let's also send a message it won't soon forget.

To put it simply: The more you try to kill us, the more we will rebuild. For every Palestinian act of destruction, we will undertake an act of reconstruction.

In the past eight years, Palestinian terrorists have fired more than 8,000 rockets at Israel. Each one of these potentially lethal explosive projectiles was intended to kill Jews. What could possibly be a more fitting response to this unprecedented wave of violence than to enable the return of Gaza's 8,000 Jewish residents?

Rebuild Gush Katif

This is not to imply a moral equivalence between the two. Just the opposite.

Hamas's main aim is to kill Jews, to reduce the Jewish presence in this region. Thus, it and its fellow jihadists must be made to understand that any attempt to diminish the number of Jews living in Israel will be met head-on by efforts to increase it.

So for every rocket fired against us, let another Jew return to Gaza and rebuild.

For every attempt that **Hamas** has made over the years to lessen the number of Jews, we will respond by boosting the figures.

Hamas' strategic vision assumes that the Jewish presence in this part of the world is temporary or transitory. Hence, to best combat it, we must do everything in our power to demonstrate that it is wrong; we are here to stay.

IN FACT, such an approach is not new, and has its roots in the classical Zionist response to the Arab unrest of 1936. After Arab rioters attacked Jaffa and killed 16 Jews on April 19, 1936, the Arab High Command launched a general strike and pressed the British mandatory authorities take steps to restrict the growth of the Jewish presence in the Land of Israel.

Zionist leaders David Ben-Gurion and Chaim Weizmann wisely rejected any attempt to limit Jewish immigration or land reclamation. They realized that such a stance would amount to appeasement, which would only fuel still further Arab aggression against the Yishuv.

In his memoirs, Ben-Gurion writes that "the Yishuv defended itself with courage, wisdom, and restraint... Not one Jewish settlement was abandoned; instead, new ones were established." Rather than yielding to Arab threats and violence, Ben-Gurion and the Zionist leadership pressed forward. In the face of those who sought to reduce the Jewish population, they responded by intensifying efforts to enlarge it as much as possible.

Our present leadership would do well to follow this example, by rebuilding communities such as Dugit, Netzarim and Neveh Dekalim.

This past Sunday, a group of former Gush Katif residents demanded just that. At a news conference in Jerusalem, they said they are ready to recreate the communities that were so senselessly destroyed during the 2005 retreat.

"Let us return home. We are ready at a day's notice to set up tents in the area until permanent construction can begin," the group said.

This is an initiative that all Israelis can and should embrace. Where the Palestinians have sought to inflict death, let us act to reestablish life.

That, more than anything, is the best possible Zionist and Jewish response.

Graphic

Photo: **FEMALE** SOLDIER at a staging area near the border with Gaza (Credit: AP)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

Israel deploys reserves

MX Brisbane (Queensland, Australia)

January 12, 2009 Monday

1 - BRIS Edition

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Section: MX; Pg. 8

Length: 235 words

Body

END CLOSE?

Israel began pouring reservists into heavy clashes across the Gaza Strip today as the death toll from its war on **Hamas** approached 900 and officials indicated the end might be in sight.

Troops pushed deeper into Gaza's main city, as planes carried out at least 50 air strikes on the 16th day of a war launched to combat Palestinian rocket fire, which has

continued.

Israel's Channel Two said the army had begun sending in some of the thousands of

reservists called up when the war began on December 27, and an army spokesman said they would be increasingly ``integrated" into combat units.

Two **women** and four children were killed in a strike on a house in Beit Lahiya, medics and witnesses said.

Israeli officials suggested the end of the offensive might be close, despite having waved off a UN resolution last week 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 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 the Jewish state was nearing the goals it had set for its operation, but said fighting would continue.

``Israel is approaching these goals, but more patience and determination are required," Olmert said at a Cabinet meeting.

Israel had ``dealt **Hamas** an unprecedented blow", he said.

Load-Date: January 12, 2009

Israel deploys reserves

End of Document

Our myopic view of Gaza conflict

The Toronto Star

January 8, 2009 Thursday

Copyright 2009 Toronto Star Newspapers, Ltd.

Section: OPINION; Pg. AA06

Length: 709 words

Byline: Haroon Siddiqui, Toronto Star

Body

I was holidaying in India when the Israeli onslaught on Gaza began Dec. 27.

There were banner headlines coupled with editorial outrage in the Urdu media, the language of Muslims, and dispassionate but balanced coverage in the English media and the regional language newspapers.

Across the Arab Middle East, Al-Jazeera and others were providing one-sided, wall-to-wall coverage of death and destruction in Gaza.

Travelling through Europe, one could appreciate the powerful reporting and commentary, which conveyed the scale of the tragedy, without crossing the line into propaganda for either side.

It didn't take long upon landing here to be reminded how much the political and media establishment - in the U.S. and, lately, Canada as well - are divorced from reality.

The Stephen Harper Conservatives, as well as many editorialists and pundits, seem to inhabit a make-believe world into which no inconvenient facts are allowed to intrude.

Their mantra is that Israel has a right to defend itself, has to protect its citizens from **Hamas** rockets, and had to retaliate for the breaking of the ceasefire by **Hamas** Dec. 19.

True. But deprived of other truths, this performs the desired magic of absolving Israel of any culpability.

According to this view, hundreds of Palestinian civilians, including **women** and children and seniors, being bombed and shelled to death in schools - even clearly marked United Nations schools - mosques, refugee camps, streets and homes are acceptable collateral damage.

Few tears need be shed, especially since **Hamas** is to blame, anyway.

There's amnesia about the brutal 40-year-old occupation.

There's nary a mention that in Israeli military operations in 2008, 420 Palestinians had been killed prior to Dec. 28 vs. five Israelis, according to B'Tselem, the Israeli human rights body,

Our myopic view of Gaza conflict

And Israel's crippling economic blockade had prompted the UN special rapporteur Richard Falk to say on Dec. 9 that Israel's collective punishments amounted to "a crime against humanity," and that the International Criminal Court ought to investigate whether Israeli leaders and military commanders should be indicted.

He noted that the last time there had been "such a flurry of denunciations by normally cautious UN officials" was during the reign of the apartheid government in South Africa.

On Nov. 21, the chief of UN Relief and Works Agency, Karen Abu Zayd, said supplies had run out. She reported "a chronic anemia problem" and "the stunting of children."

All this was long before the latest carnage, which foreign journalists have been prevented from witnessing. Dead, as of yesterday, were 650 Gazans, a fifth of them civilians.

What our political and media establishment are telling us is this:

Israel must not be provoked but the Palestinians can be.

The trauma suffered by Israelis in the border area along Gaza is not acceptable. But 60 per cent of 1.5 million Gazans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder is.

Israeli politicians, facing an election Feb. 10, have to be sensitive to electoral concerns, but Palestinians elected in a fair election Jan. 2006 must be isolated and jailed.

There's an equivalency between Hamas's handmade, ill-targeted rockets and the lethal hi-tech Israeli arsenal, some of it of American origin.

Palestinians must pay heed to Israeli/American/Canadian demands but Israel may ignore calls for a ceasefire by the UN, the European Union and even allies France, Turkey, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, etc.

Israeli lives matter, Arab ones don't. In fact, it is worth prolonging the bloodshed in Gaza, as in Lebanon in 2006, to allow Israel time to achieve one or two more of its objectives. Arab blood is cheap.

"Unfortunately, all this plays into the hands of those Palestinians and Arabs, and more generally, Muslims, who say, 'the West is against us because of who we are and is engaged in a civilizational war against us,'" says Jim Reilly, professor of Near Eastern Studies at the University of Toronto.

"If we include Iraq and Afghanistan, it reinforces the message of Al Qaeda and co-thinkers that they are waging war against a predatory and rapacious enemy.

"All this makes it that much harder for us to argue back against the militants and the zealots."

Haroon Siddiqui's column appears Thursday and Sunday.

hsiddiq @ thestar.ca

Load-Date: January 8, 2009

West Bank keeps its cool in anti-war rallies; Palestinians show unity, free of chaos

USA TODAY

January 12, 2009 Monday

FINAL EDITION

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 6A

Length: 852 words

Byline: Jim Michaels

Body

RAMALLAH, West Bank -- Not so long ago, it might have been a sign of impending bloodshed: knots of Palestinians gathered in a square, unfurling banners and chanting to protest Israel.

Yet as the crowd grew louder at a street demonstration here Sunday against the Gaza conflict, a handful of police officers looked on from a distance -- and the proceedings remained peaceful. The police were close enough to watch but not so near as to provoke the crowd.

"When they arrest anyone, it is to stop chaos," explained Mariam Nakhmeh, a 38-year-old housewife who was among about 150 mostly **female** protesters gathering at Manara Square.

If any region would be expected to explode in violence during Israel's offensive in Gaza, it would be the West Bank -- the other Palestinian territory, which itself has a long history of unrest. However, the area has remained relatively quiet, even as rowdy protests have ignited throughout the Arab world.

Officials here say that after years of bloodshed, Palestinians in the West Bank are tired of the violence. They also point to the growing strength and professionalism of the Palestinian Authority security forces, many of whom have been trained under U.S.- and European-funded programs designed to create an effective force respectful of civil rights.

"There are sit-ins, demonstrations and rallies," said Brig. Gen. Adnan Damiri, a police spokesman. But, he said, people have concluded violence is counterproductive. "Are we supposed to fill our morgues with dead people?"

Gaza and the West Bank would constitute a unified Palestinian state under the long-term Middle East peace plan sponsored by the U.S. and European powers, but the territories have been effectively separate since **Hamas** took over Gaza in a revolt in 2007. Provoked by rockets fired from Gaza, Israel launched an offensive Dec. 27 against **Hamas**, which is considered a terrorist group by the U.S. and Europe. In contrast, the West Bank is governed by Fatah, a rival organization that has shown a willingness to negotiate with Israel.

"Palestinians feel law and order are the ticket to statehood," said Dov Schwartz, a senior aide to Lt. Gen. Keith Dayton, the U.S. security coordinator who is overseeing a program to support and aid Palestinian security forces. "The security services are delivering that law and order."

West Bank keeps its cool in anti-war rallies Palestinians show unity, free of chaos

When Israel launched its offensive in Gaza, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, a Fatah member, ordered his security team at a meeting to keep a lid on violence in the West Bank.

The orders that came out of the security meeting were that peaceful demonstrations would be allowed but anyone trying to incite violence would be arrested, said Brig. Gen. Majid al-Khatib, who heads the joint operations center in Ramallah. The rules state that only the Palestinian flag could be flown and that **Hamas** and Fatah flags were banned from rallies -- a step designed to prevent clashes among Palestinians.

"I am not against people expressing their views," said Maj. Gen. Diab al-Ali, commander of the Palestinian Authority's National Security Forces. "However, we discourage people from getting to the point of conflict."

Police have arrested about 50 people in demonstrations over the past couple of weeks, al-Khatib said. Some are still being held. There also have been scuffles at demonstrations.

Police and security officials say they have kept the demonstrators away from Israeli troops.

"We consider anyone who throws stones at Israelis a criminal," al-Khatib said. "We do not want to escalate the situation."

The security measures have bothered some. "Everybody is demonstrating," said human rights activist Shawan Jabarin, referring to worldwide protests. "What about the Palestinians? You can't control the public in an angry moment." Jabarin said some demonstrators have been roughed up by police.

Col. Akram Rujib, a security official in Ramallah, conceded that "sometimes we violate human rights." He says new training programs are aimed at eliminating such abuses by teaching officers how to respect people while enforcing the law, a balance he compared to "walking on land mines."

During a visit here a year ago, President Bush called the creation of an effective security force "step one" of building credibility with the Palestinian people. The United States has provided about \$161 million for training.

The Palestinian security forces also have benefited from a better relationship with the Israelis. Earlier this decade during the Palestinian intifada, or revolt, police stations were targeted by Israeli forces, leaving security forces weakened.

Now, the relative calm here has given Israelis one less possible front to worry about as it battles **Hamas**. The more effective police force, plus a security wall Israel built around the West Bank, may help explain why **Hamas**' threat to send suicide bombers into Israel has been unrealized.

"In the old days, it was militias or sometimes thugs in uniform," said Ephraim Sneh, a former member of the Knesset, Israel's parliament, who once served as the civil administrator of the West Bank. "Now it is a real organized, disciplined and professional force."

Graphic

PHOTO, B/W, Fadi Aroui, Reuters

Load-Date: January 12, 2009

Letters to the Editor

The Philadelphia Inquirer
January 10, 2009 Saturday
CITY-D Edition

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Section: EDITORIAL; Inq Opinion & Editorial; Pg. A07

Length: 714 words

Body

Not self-defenseRecent letter-writers have sought to justify Israel's devastating attack on Gaza by asserting Israel's right to defend itself against the rocket attacks of **Hamas**.

Of course Israel has this right, but not in the manner it has chosen to follow. Instead of just sending in troops to go after **Hamas** terrorists, Israel has rained down powerful rockets on crowded civilian populations, killing hundreds of children, **women** and elderly. When Israel began the attack on Gaza, there had been just a few innocent Israeli citizens killed by **Hamas** rockets. By the time Israel is finished, more than 100 times that many innocent Palestinian civilians will have died. Where is the justice in that?

William CooneyPhiladelphiaCode of warThe international community has suddenly coined a new buzz word in the code of war: *proportionality*. Until now, the vocabulary of war did not include that word - not in World War II, in Vietnam, or in fighting al-Qaeda.

Indeed, if Israel were going to be proportional, it should have started eight years ago, firing back 6,000 rockets indiscriminately into civilian areas of Gaza, instead of following its current policy of pinpointing military targets. The international community, quite rightly, wants Israel to cut down the civilian deaths in Gaza. But at the same time, it has not condemned **Hamas** for shooting from, and storing weapons in mosques, schools, hospitals, and in the midst of densely populated civilian areas.

Kathy KaplanMount LaurelBoardwalk blasterWhile it was great news to hear of the financial success of Atlantic City's Boardwalk Hall ("Ignoring the downbeat, topping the charts," Monday), it was not mentioned that the hall also houses the world's largest pipe organ. With more than 30,000 pipes encased in chambers in the front, sides and ceiling of the main auditorium and the magnificent, seven-manual console, this instrument is capable of producing monumental sound.

Sadly, it is very much in disrepair, and barely playable. It is hoped that some of the profits generated by the hall's current good fortunes will be channeled into the full restoration of this one-of-a-kind instrument. It would certainly add to the success of the hall's venues, and ultimately to even greater box-office profits.

Don DruryMalvernInsufficient dollarsAt first blush, it's wonderful that individuals, businesses or foundations would consider providing funds to keep libraries open. But the broader context is this: Because these entities have limited funds, they can provide only a finite amount of financial assistance at one time. So a "victory" for the libraries most probably means a "defeat" for some other worthy cause.

Letters to the Editor

Once again, we have a situation in which good causes are fighting over insufficient dollars. The only way to stop this "divide and conquer" is for us to recognize the moral and constitutional obligations we have to provide for one another's welfare - and cheerfully pay the taxes needed to provide adequate services.

Rabbi George Stern Neighborhood Interfaith Movement Philadelphia Reasons to move The decision by Unisys to keep 200 well-paying taxable jobs in Blue Bell may very well have been the result of economic conditions, as stated, but a very basic business principle is involved: Business goes where it is invited, and stays where it is wanted. It is conceivable that Unisys' previous relationship with the city of Philadelphia was the elephant in the room.

Ralph D. Bloch Warrington ralphdbloch@yahoo.com Fight against lead Congratulations to the Mutter Museum on its 150th anniversary and its commitment to raising awareness about current, critical public-health issues - including the devastating impact of lead poisoning ("Odd and relevant," Monday).

During the past six years, Philadelphia has made unprecedented progress in reducing the number of children poisoned by lead and in increasing the number of properties that are safe for children to live in. Among several major initiatives, Philadelphia's "Lead Court" has played a significant role in tracking properties that have poisoned children and helping owners remove lead hazards. These prevention programs must be sustained and strengthened to continue these gains.

Colleen McCauley-Brown Public Citizens for Children and Youth colleenmccauley@pccy.org

Load-Date: January 10, 2009