

End the Carnage in Gaza

by Janet Jagan - 10 January, 2009

The terrible onslaught of the Palestinian people living in the Gaza strip, at the time of writing, continues unabated. The latest statistics, after 12 days of hammering by air, ground and sea by the Israeli government has resulted in 680 dead, and thousands injured. Of this, a United Nations observer noted that 45% of the injured are women and children and 25% of the dead are children.

The commencement of the Israeli attacks began about two weeks ago in the constant air bombardment of the Gaza strip, said to be the most heavily populated area in the world, containing 1 1/2 million people living in the small area occupied by Palestinians. The Palestinians are a stateless people who have been fighting for decades to have their own land, identity and free state.

A grave humanitarian crisis has developed in this small area bordered on the north by Israel and to the south by Egypt. Entry to the Gaza strip at the north is fully controlled by Israel, which only allows humanitarian aid into the Gaza area when it suits that nation. Due to the first Israeli assault by air which pounded the population relentlessly for 24 hours a day for some six days, supplies of water, food and medical supplies became scarce. Thousands became homeless as the air strikes demolished the living quarters of a large percentage of Palestinians. The Israelis claimed that Hamas fighters were their aim, not civilians. Israel said that the attack was aimed at stopping the rockets Hamas was shooting into Israel, which, over the year, had caused the deaths of four Israelis. Israeli ministers, in interviews, claimed that the objectives of their air, land and sea attack on Gaza is the Hamas leadership and not the people of Gaza. The Israeli objective, stated quite openly, is aimed at creating so much suffering that the Palestinian people will reject the Hamas leadership as the cause of their suffering, and then all will be well. Forgotten is the fact that Hamas won an overall majority at the last general elections!

But the Israeli leadership's calculations have not succeeded. The Palestinian people are not blaming Hamas, but the Israeli/USA axis for their hardships, losses and pain. In fact, it was believed that the differences between Hamas and Fatah, the two Palestinian groups that are hostile to one another, mainly on the methods of reaching a solution for a free Palestinian State, would increase. This, too, has not happened. The Palestinian people are united in one objective, to expel the Israeli war machine from occupying Palestinian lands.

The Israelis have shown their indifference to the humanitarian aspects of their assault that mainly women, children and civilians are suffering beyond belief for medical care and medications plus life's necessities of food, water and shelter. The Israelis are cold-hearted in their attitude to allowing international aid to enter the Gaza strip, allocating, only occasionally, a few hours for lorries with much needed supplies, to enter Gaza. I was stunned when I listened to the Israeli Foreign Minister Ms Livni state categorically on TV that there was no humanitarian problem in the Gaza strip! And I listened carefully as a European doctor said that he and his colleagues could not handle the large number of casualties that arrived at the hospital all the time. Some had to wait so long that they died while waiting for treatment, and in some cases they were out of medicines and equipment, not enough beds and staff to care for all the victims of the attacks. By this time, the Israelis had moved to its second stage, the first being air bombardment, the second, land intrusion by tanks and cannons.

The invasion led to the horrific attack on a United Nations–run school where thousands had rushed to for safety. Some 70 deaths resulted from this murderous attack which killed mostly children. The Israelis have had a hard time explaining that attack, saying gunfire came from the building and they responded. But UN observers said it just was not true. And so, the one-sided war continues with blood, carnage and coffins, unbelievable in this 21st century.

Meantime the United Nations is trying to produce a cease-fire to stop the abominable slaughter. Whether the UN can overcome the US block at the UN Security Council is anyone's guess, but world public opinion is very, very strong for a cease fire and the solution to the Middle East's most serious problem – the establishment of a Palestinian State.

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