



On Saturday, Dec. 27, 2008, Israel began a devastating series of attacks on the population of Gaza. Here are some quick facts after 22 days of violence:

How many Palestinians and Israelis have been killed thus far (through Jan. 18, 2009)?

More than 1,200 Palestinians have been killed, & over 5000 more wounded.¹ 13 Israelis have been killed.²

Who broke the ceasefire that was in place earlier in the Fall of 2008?

Israel broke the ceasefire on Nov. 4th, when its armed forces carried out a number of attacks resulting in the deaths of 6 Palestinians.³ Hamas had not fired any rockets from Gaza since June 19th (when the ceasefire between Hamas and Israel was finalized), and only resumed following the Israeli attack.

How many Israelis have been killed by rockets launched from Gaza?

About 20 Israelis have been killed by Gaza rocket attacks since they began in 2001.⁴

How many Palestinians in Gaza have been killed as Israel seeks to stop the rocket attacks?

About 2150 Palestinians in Gaza have been killed by Israel since 2005.⁵

What has been the position of Canadian political leaders on the recent violence?

Conservatives and Liberals blame Hamas for the violence and assert Israel's right to self-defence.

- The current (**Conservative**-led) Canadian government, while calling for calm stated, "Israel has a clear right to defend itself against the continued rocket attacks by Palestinian militant groups which have deliberately targeted civilians. First and foremost, those rocket attacks must stop."⁶
- **Liberal** leader Michael Ignatieff released a statement very similar to the government's stating: "The Liberal Party of Canada unequivocally condemns the rocket attacks launched by Hamas against Israeli civilians and calls for an immediate end to these attacks. We affirm Israel's right to defend itself against such attacks, and also its right to exist in peace and security."⁷
- The **NDP** condemns the violence of both sides without blaming or excusing either.
- The **Bloc Quebecois** issued a statement calling for a halt to the Israeli siege of Gaza, but nonetheless blaming Hamas for triggering the current outbreak of violence.

Does Hamas want to destroy Israel?

The 1988 Hamas founding Covenant states that its intent is to "raise the banner of God over every inch of Palestine." Nevertheless, statements from its leaders for many years have been clear that Hamas would agree to a peace with Israel based on the 1967 borders (Green Line).⁸

Does Israel still "occupy" Gaza?

Yes. While Israel vacated its permanent military and colonist infrastructure in Gaza in 2005, the Hague Regulations and the Fourth Geneva Convention make clear that "occupation" depends on more than just a constant physical military presence. Because Israel controls access to Gaza, reserves the right to intervene militarily, and controls Gaza infrastructure (e.g. water, electricity, fuel, radio and TV frequencies), among other things, Israel continues to have obligations as occupier under international law.⁹

When did the Israeli Blockade of Gaza begin?

Israel has maintained a blockade of the Gaza Strip since mid 2007, which has largely prevented the entry of food, medicine, fuels and industrial supplies.¹⁰

Has the International Media been permitted to enter Gaza to report on the current hostilities?

No. Since the beginning of November 2008, Israel has forbidden foreign journalists from entering Gaza.

What crimes were committed by Israel in its bombing of a UN school by Israel on Jan. 6th?

On January 6th, Israel attacked a UN-run elementary school in Gaza, resulting in the deaths of at least 40 people. It was in this school where hundreds of Palestinian refugees sought shelter following warnings by the Israeli Army to evacuate their homes. The Director of Operations of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) confirmed that UN flags were visible at

the school in Djabalia and that the Israeli Army was repeatedly given the precise coordinates of all UN schools.

Art. 147 of the Fourth Geneva Convention lists the following acts as “grave breaches” of international humanitarian law:

- Wilful killing of protected persons (i.e. civilians)
- Extensive destruction and appropriation of property, not justified by military necessity

If applicable, the perpetrators of these acts would be guilty of war crimes.

Israel defended its actions by accusing Hamas of firing rockets from the grounds of these schools in an attempt to use civilians as human shields. Following an investigation, UN officials in Gaza confirmed this accusation to be untrue.¹¹ Even if Hamas fighter had been in the immediate vicinity, Israel is still obliged under international law to protect civilians. And if, as Israel contends, Hamas was using civilians as human shields, it does not diminish this obligation.

Brief History

In 1947 and 1948, 700,000 Palestinians were expelled from their homes and land by Zionist colonists and eventually by the Israeli Army that was formed in 1948, following Israel’s declaration of independence. Some of these Palestinian refugees fled to what we refer to as the Gaza Strip. Since 1967, when the Israeli Army invaded Gaza, Israel has exerted effective control over the territory, and bears the legal responsibility of a military occupant. This occupation, which continues despite UN resolutions and legal prohibitions on the acquisition of territory by force, has been devastating for Palestinians; over the course of many years, the population has endured the repeated destruction of its infrastructure as well as blockades of all crossings (land, sea and air), resulting in the halting of shipments of food, medicines and fuels. The present conflict must be viewed in the context of an illegal occupation that has lasted over 40 years.

¹ “Arab peace plan ‘not dead’ despite Gaza war: Blair,” AFP, Jan. 18, 2009, 6:30 a.m. EST

² « No truce until Israel ends Gaza assault, opens border crossings: Hamas leader, » CBC News, Jan. 10, , 9:16 p.m. EST

³ “Gaza truce broken as Israeli raid kills six Hamas gunmen,” McCarthy, Rory, guardian.co.uk, Nov. 5, 2008

⁴ See “Israel gives military green light for Gaza ground offensive: report,” CBC News, Dec. 31, 2008 for Israeli rocket casualties in recent violence. See CJPME’s factsheet, “Qassam Rocket attacks from Gaza” at www.cjpme.org for previous data.

⁵ See “OCHA-oPt Protection of Civilians: Summary Data Tables,” United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Oct. 2008 for data through October, 2008. Estimate includes the 800+ Palestinian fatalities in recent violence.

⁶ “Statement by Minister Cannon on the Situation in Israel and the Gaza Strip,” Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada, Dec. 27, 2008

⁷ “Statement by Michael Ignatieff, Leader of the Official Opposition, on the Situation in Israel and the Gaza Strip,” The Liberal Party of Canada (http://www.liberal.ca/story_15558_e.aspx), Dec. 29, 2008

⁸ See CJPME Factsheet, “Hamas and the 2006 Palestinian Elections,” February, 2006 at <http://www.cjpme.org/DisplayDocument.aspx?DocumentID=25&SaveMode=0>

⁹ See CJPME Factsheet, “Israel’s ongoing status as Military Occupant of Gaza,” June, 2008 at <http://www.cjpme.org/DisplayDocument.aspx?DocumentID=70&SaveMode=0>

¹⁰ See CJPME Factsheet, “Siege of Gaza – Pervasive and Devastating (update: May, 2008),” May, 2008 at <http://www.cjpme.org/DisplayDocument.aspx?DocumentID=62&SaveMode=0> See also CJPME Case Study, “Right to Health Case Study: Gaza, 2008,” July, 2008 at <http://www.cjpme.org/DisplayDocument.aspx?DocumentID=214&SaveMode=0>

¹¹ “UN: No Hamas Fighters in Bombed Gaza School,” Tim McGirk, Time – World, Jan. 7, 2009 at <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1870087,00.html>