

OMNI NEWSLETTER SPECIAL NO. on GAZA

BUILDING A CULTURE OF PEACE AND JUSTICE. Compiled by Dick Bennett, March 3, 2008

CONTACT YOUR CONGRESSIONAL REPRESENTATIVES

--Senator Blanche Lincoln: Web Site (they have contact links): www.lincoln.senate.gov;
<http://www.lincoln.senate.gov/index.cfm>; <http://www.lincoln.senate.gov/webform.html>

Washington Office: 355 Dirksen Senate Office Building Washington, D.C. 20510-0404

Phone: (202) 224-4843 Fax: (202) 228-1371.

Fayetteville office: 251-1380. Lincoln's staff is better informed than Boozman's (see below), but obviously (her vote to join Bush in appropriating \$95 billion more to keep the occupation going) they need a lot of education.

Northwestern Regional Office South College Avenue, Suite 205, s. of Meadow
Fayetteville, AR 72701

(479) 251-1224; FAX (479) 251-1410

State Central Office 912 West Fourth Street Little Rock, AR 72201

TEL: (501) 375-2993 FAX: (501) 375-7064

--Senator Mark Pryor: Web Site (see contact link): www.pryor.senate.gov ;

<http://www.pryor.senate.gov/contact/> Pryor has no office in NWA, so call or write him and his staff in DC: **Washington Office: 217 Russell Senate Office Building Washington, D.C.**

20510-0403. Phone: (202) 224-2353 Fax: (202) 228-0908

Main District Office: 500 Pres. Clinton Ave., Suite 401, Little Rock, AR 72201.

Phone: (501) 324-6336 Fax: (501) 324-5320. If you would like a specific reply to your message, please visit <http://www.pryor.senate.gov/contact>.

--Congressman John Boozman, District 3, 12 counties from Benton to Washington

Lowell office: 479-725-0400. 213 W. Monroe, Suite K, 72745. Boozman's new office in Lowell is located at 213 West Monroe in Lowell between I 540 and Business 71. Go there, talk to Boozman's staff members. The office is in the Puppy Creek Plaza, past the McDonald's on the right. His suite is in the back of the complex to the left. Or write or call. **Ms. Stacey McClure** is Assistant Chief of Staff for the Lowell office. STACEY.McCLURE@MAIL.HOUSE.GOV

Ft. Smith office: 479-782-7787; 30 South 6th St. Rm 240, Ft. Smith 72901.

Harrison office: 870-741-6900; 402 N. Walnut, Suite 210, Harrison 72601.

DC address: 1708 Longworth House Office Bldg., Washington, DC 20515; 202-225-4301

WE, THE PEOPLE

NEWSLETTER ON GAZA AND ISRAEL

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GAZA

I received the following on March 2, 2008



A Prophetic Voice in Jewish, Multireligious, and American Life
IN GOD'S NAME, END THE BLOODSHED NOW

Dear friends of shalom, of salaam, of peace -

Dear believers in the One God, bearing whatever Name, Who teaches that all human life is sacred
--

What is happening now in southern Israel and in Gaza is intolerable. Bottom line: If you click to --
http://salsa.democracynaction.org/o/602/t/4180/letter/?letter_KEY=930

you will find an easy way for YOU to write your local newspaper calling for U.S. action to end this bloodshed. And here is background:

On Saturday, March 1, the leading Israeli newspaper Haaretz reported that -- "Sixty-four percent of Israelis say the government must hold direct talks with the Hamas government in Gaza toward a cease-fire and the release of captive soldier Gilad Shalit. Less than one-third (28 percent) still opposes such talks." For details on the professional poll that reported these results see --

<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/958473.html>

Ignoring the desires of the people, the Israeli government has rejected such talks when offered (as recently as six weeks ago) by Hamas. And so Palestinian rocket attacks on Israel and Israeli bombing and strafing of Palestinians continue. This weekend, one Israeli civilian and more than 50 Palestinians - many civilians, including children - died.

To people of all religious beliefs and communities and to all people of ethical commitment wherever they derive their views, this situation is intolerable. Muslims everywhere who honor the Quran's prohibition of attacks on civilians have a special responsibility to demand that Hamas end these attacks on Israelis; Jews everywhere who honor the Torah's teaching that all human beings are made in the Image of God have a special responsibility to demand that the Israeli government end its attacks on Palestinians.

THE U.S. GOVERNMENT SHOULD INSIST THAT ALL ATTACKS IN EITHER DIRECTION BETWEEN GAZA AND ISRAEL CEASE NOW, PERMANENTLY. IT SHOULD SUPPORT A RESOLUTION TO THAT EFFECT IN THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL.

Again -- If you click to http://salsa.democracynaction.org/o/602/t/4180/letter/?letter_KEY=930

you will find an easy way for YOU to write your local newspaper saying this. You can modify the

suggested text as you like. In addition, please call your U.S. Senators tomorrow morning (Monday, March 3) at 202/CA4-3121, ask for the Senators from your state, and then ask for the staffer who is dealing with Middle East policy and say your piece -- your peace. Be polite and firm. (If you live in D.C. and have no Senator, ask for Harry Reid, Senate majority leader.)

PLEASE CLICK NOW TO THE LETTER-SITE.

Shalom, salaam, peace - Arthur

The Shalom Center | 6711 Lincoln Drive | Philadelphia, PA 19119
www.shalomctr.org | office@shalomctr.org | 215.844.8494

SIGN AVAAZ PETITION TOO

Dear friends,

The Gaza-Israel crisis is out of control. **It's come to this: bloody full-scale invasion, or a cease-fire.**¹ With rockets raining down on both sides, Israel launched a ground assault into the Gaza Strip this weekend. Over a hundred combatants and civilians from both sides lie dead.² **The next 48 hours are crucial** -- Israel's cabinet will discuss a larger invasion Wednesday. But **Hamas floated a Gaza ceasefire months ago, and 64% of Israelis support the idea.**³

Both sides know they are in a battle for global legitimacy, and international opinion counts. **We need a massive global outcry for a cease-fire now** -- sign the emergency petition below, then forward this message to friends and family. **We will deliver our petition to senior Israeli and Palestinian leaders this week**, as well as in a major billboard campaign:

http://www.avaaz.org/en/gaza_ceasefire_now/1.php

Citizens on both sides are desperate for safety. Many experts believe that **without a ceasefire to stabilize Gaza, there is no chance for achieving a comprehensive peace** and a fair two-state deal. While the US still maintains no-one must talk to Hamas, Israel itself has begun to break that taboo, and public reports and our own contacts indicate that European and Arab officials now support a Gaza ceasefire.

Like the Hezbollah-Israel war of 2006, this conflict is spinning out of control. Just as it did

Gaza and Israel are on the brink of all-out war - **before it's too late, let's raise a massive global outcry for a ceasefire to stop the violence** and protect civilians:
[Sign the Emergency Petition](#)

then, **international pressure can help achieve a ceasefire today**. The combatants take public opinion very seriously. So let's send a united global message to the warring parties to stop the violence -- **sign the petition and spread the word today**:

http://www.avaaz.org/en/gaza_ceasefire_now/1.php

With hope and determination,

Paul, Galit, Esra'a, Ricken, Ben, Graziela, Pascal and the whole Avaaz team

PS **The UN has already called for both sides to cease all acts of violence**⁴ -- the European Union, Turkey, Russia, the UK, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and many other states have joined the global chorus. This is not just a war but a growing humanitarian crisis. **Last month we met with EU Middle East envoy Marc Otte and senior advisers in European member states** to deliver a call for a ceasefire and an internationally-overseen opening of the Gaza crossings, and we have seen progress since from the international community.⁵ There is much more to do. We've campaigned hard for real Middle East talks, but unless Gaza is stabilised, no lasting peace is possible.

Sources:

1. Invasion or ceasefire – *Guardian* news report on the Israeli debate:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/mar/03/israel.gaza>

2. *The Times of London* news report - both sides claiming success, 110 dead:

http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/middle_east/article3473788.ece

Missiles now reaching the Israeli city of Ashkelon:

<http://ap.google.com/article/ALeqM5iDwNccgnikUMFy7O6LWalsmaFUqwD8V5I2I00>

3. 64% of Israelis support ceasefire talks with Hamas:

<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/958473.html>

4. UN and EU call for an end to the violence:

<http://www.reuters.com/article/newsMaps/idUSN0127116720080302>

5. European and international policy shifting:

<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/956434.html>

and <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/951934.html>

[-525.240872-]

ABOUT AVAAZ

Avaaz.org is an independent, not-for-profit global campaigning organization that works to ensure that the views and values of the world's people inform global decision-making. (Avaaz means "voice" in many languages.) Avaaz receives no money from governments or corporations, and is staffed by a global team based in London, Rio de Janeiro, New York, Paris, Washington DC, and Geneva.

This article BY **Saree Makdisi** gives a lucid overview of what is happening in Gaza. It stresses a couple of points that are very useful for understanding the actual situation, and cutting through some of the ideologically skewed ways in which it is framed by the

mainstream media. For one thing, it shows how and why the issue of the Palestinian rockets being fired into Israeli border towns is clearly a rationalization for Israel's military "response". Specifically, it details how Israel has been gradually constricting life in Gaza over the years, a process which clearly started, and picked up momentum, before the first Qassam entered Sderot. For another thing, while condemning these deadly missiles, it clearly demonstrates the disproportionate nature of the Israeli "response", pointing out:

"In the past few weeks, many more Palestinian parents have watched the lives of their sick children ebb slowly, quietly and (as far as the global media are concerned) invisibly away in Gaza's besieged hospitals than Israelis have been hurt--let alone actually killed--by the erratic firing of primitive homemade rockets from Gaza.."

Finally, it forcefully states the magnitude of Israel's criminal action in Gaza: this is a population that Israel, as occupier, is responsible for sustaining. Instead, it is tightening the screws to the point where starvation is beginning to set in. And it appears to have the support of the international community in doing so.

This is intolerable. There are hardly words to express the pain of watching this nightmare unfold in our name. Fortunately, there is a resistance movement that is working hard - and perhaps successfully - to counter this vicious policy: the convoy organized by Gush Shalom has received a permit to transport its goods into Gaza. This is certainly no gift of the Israeli government, but the result of intense and sustained lobbying. For more information about the convoy see: http://zope.gush-shalom.org/index_en.html

Judith Norman

February 1, 2008 (web only)

Saree Makdisi: "The Strangulation of Gaza"

<http://www.thenation.com/doc/20080218/makdisi>

Below you will find a EMERGENCY REPORT on the situation of the civilian health system in Gaza, from Physicians for Human Rights in Israel.

This gives flesh and blood -literally - to the reports in the regular press.

PHR-Israel Urgent Update: Gaza 2.3.08

Palestinian Health System in Gaza on Brink of Collapse; patients and injured denied access to medical care.

1. Medical Crisis in Gaza

Israeli military forces commenced widespread operations against Gaza on 27.2.08, following the death of an Israeli civilian in a college campus in the south of Israel, and damage caused by a Qassam rocket to a hospital campus in the town of Ashqelon. As a result of these operations 101 Palestinians (according to Palestinian counts), the majority of whom were civilians, have been killed. Two Israeli soldiers

have also been killed. This number of casualties is the highest since the start of the AlAqsa Intifada in 2000.

As early as Wednesday at 22:30, Israeli forces shelled the compound of the Ministry of Interior. As a result two civilian structures were severely damaged: the Palestinian Medical Relief Society office and dispensary, including its Mobile Clinic vehicle, and the offices of Palestinian human rights organization Al-Mezan. Both organizations are long-term partners of PHR-Israel and have provided for the rights of Palestinian patients and civilians for many years. 7-month-old baby Muhammad alBurai was killed in the same attack, when his home, adjacent to the compound, collapsed on top of him.

Following a weekend of continuous airstrikes, shellings and limited land strikes, hospitals in Gaza are now finding it almost impossible to function due to massive overload of injured people continuing to arrive for admission today, and since last Wednesday, 27.2.08.

The larger hospitals in Gaza are fully occupied. Since Friday 29.3.08, surgery is performed 24 hours a day in all 12 operating theaters of Shifaa' Hospital. Medical teams at this hospital are working in emergency mode since 4 days ago. Medical supplies and other equipment are dwindling, and there is a shortage in beds, needles, wound dressings, anesthetics and heavy medical equipment such as CPR machines.

As a result of recent events, the ability of hospital departments to maintain their routine services is impaired. The enormous numbers of injured arriving and the necessity to cover the shortage in beds has forced hospitals to stop medical treatment of dozens of patients, including cancer patients, heart patients and other chronic patients, and to send them to their homes until the end of the crisis.

According to medical information received from Shifaa' hospital, the majority of injuries are a result of direct hits, shrapnel and shock waves caused by bombardments by the Israeli air force, as well as the collapse of buildings on their inhabitants.

Following basic initial care provided at Shifaa', and after assessment, the hospital has decided to refer dozens of patients in life-threatening condition with the greatest possible urgency to hospitals outside the Gaza Strip.

Of these dozens, PHR-Israel has received a list of 25 patients, all suffering from explosive injuries, who are in urgent need of medical care and were referred to Israeli medical centers. Fourteen are currently unconscious in grave danger of their lives, seven others are severe orthopedic cases (injuries to lower limbs) and four are severe internal cases. All have submitted requests to exit Gaza via Erez Crossing but have not yet received any response from the Israeli authorities. All the cases are severe and extremely urgent.

Although some patients have been allowed exit for care in recent days, Erez Crossing has been closed since noon today. Hundreds of other injured people,

whose conditions allow transport to more distant medical centers, have been referred to Egypt, following an arrangement regarding injured patients between the Hamas government and the Egyptian government. A similar agreement has been reached with Jordan, but patients referred to Jordan must apply for an exit permit via Erez with the Israeli authorities.

Remember -- If you click to http://salsa.democracyinaction.org/o/602/t/4180/letter/?letter_KEY=930 you will find an easy way for YOU to write your local newspaper saying this. You can modify the suggested text as you like.

Ramzy Baroud is a writer who grew up in Gaza. In this deeply moving essay he relates other times when the people of Gaza decided to take matters into their own hands. The message is two-fold: First, under certain conditions, people just *know* what needs to happen, they don't need someone to instruct them. Secondly - when enough people rise and resist, they cannot be stopped. Racheli Gai

Ramzy Baroud: People's Power in Gaza
<http://www.palestinechronicle.com/story-013108182747.htm>
Thursday January 31, 2008 (from *Jewish Peace News*)

[D: Here are the final 2 paragraphs] This "largest jailbreak in history", as one commentator described it, will be carved in Palestinian and world memory for years to come. In some circles it will be endlessly analysed, but for Palestinians in Gaza, it is beyond rationalization: it simply had to be done.

Armies can be defeated but human spirit cannot be subdued. Gaza's act of collective courage is one of the greatest acts of civil disobedience of our time, akin to civil rights marches in America during the 1960's, South Africa's anti-Apartheid struggle, and more recently the protests in Burma.

Palestinian people have succeeded where politics and thousands of international appeals have failed. They took matters into their own hands and they prevailed. While this is hardly the end of Gaza's suffering, it's a reminder that people's power to act is just too significant to be overlooked.

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A Prophetic Voice in Jewish, Multireligious, and American Life

Peace-seekers - (Please circulate this message as you like.)

I am sorry to say that a report The Shalom Center sent out earlier today was over-optimistic, saying the Israeli Army was restoring normal fuel and electricity service to Gaza. (Thanks to Rabbis for Human Rights in Israel for alerting me to the true state of affairs.)

As of January 28, the most immediate impact of the Gaza-Sderot fuel embargo has eased slightly -- but not ended.

After more than a week of near-total ban on fuel supplies, the Israeli Army told the Israeli Supreme Court yesterday that it would resume permitting Gaza residents to purchase fuel -- but would limit the amount they could buy by as much as 81% and would cut the electricity supplied directly to Gaza beginning February 7.

See our special crisis Websection for the detailed report from Gisha, an Israeli human-rights group that has filed suit in the High Court to end the fuel embargo.

The special crisis Websection is at -

[http://www.shalomctr.org/taxonomy menu/1/128/3/23/170](http://www.shalomctr.org/taxonomy/menu/1/128/3/23/170)

In it are ten essays or reports from different sources on the origins, causes, and events of the crisis. Much of this information

has not appeared at all in the conventional American media.

Reading them will give you a brief but useful introduction to the origins and course of the crisis.

Shalom, Arthur

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The 1.5 million Palestinian inhabitants of the Gaza Strip are facing a tremendous humanitarian and medical crisis. Israel's sharp restrictions on fuel and electricity have severely damaged the provision of safe drinking water, forcing people to make do with extremely poor quality water which is dangerous to their health.

A group of Israeli organizations is planning a major action for Saturday, January 26th, to bring [a relief convoy](#) of desperately needed water filters to be distributed in Gaza by their Palestinian partner there, The End the Siege Campaign.

We must not stand idle.

[Join our solidarity rallies THIS WEEK in Boston, Philly, and San Francisco!](#)

Call on Congress to speak up! The United States must call for an immediate end to the siege on Gaza, urging Israel to open its border crossings to people and goods.

Rep. Barbara Lee has called on Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to request that the Administration "do all it can to secure the delivery of these vital humanitarian goods and services to Gaza." (For full letter in pdf format,click here: [page 1](#), [page 2](#))

If you live in Rep. Lee's Congressional District, [click here](#) to send her a letter of thank you. If you live elsewhere in the United States, [click here](#) to send a letter to your Congressperson urging them to speak out on Gaza today.

Also from *Jewish Peace News*

I have no idea what more, what else needs to, or can, be said about the Israeli- and world-imposed situation in Gaza besides: END THIS ABOMINATION NOW.

Below are a few items reporting on some of its manifestations, on how the UN is addressing it, and on joint Palestinian-Israeli civil society resistance to the inhuman siege. Rela Mazali

Fuel availability in the MoH hospitals, access of patients and passage of drugs shipments

From: Dalia Salha [mailto:dsa@who-health.org]

Sent: Sunday, January 20, 2008 4:01 PM

Subject: Current Situation

Fuel availability

Today Gaza has received 154 megawatt out of the needed 240 megawatt (the need in the winter time):

The local power plant produced 30 megawatt out of the 55 megawatt the Israeli company provided Gaza with 107 out of the 120 megawatt that usually provides; and The Egyptian provided the 17 megawatt that usually provides.

The Gaza power plant declared that the plant will stop functioning today by 4:00 pm as there is no fuel supply

Information collected from 6 MoH hospitals- 20 January- 2:00 pm on fuel availability show the following

Facility name
Storage capacity
Available amount

Kamal Edwan Hospital
9,500 liters
4,700 liters

Beit Hanun Hospital
8,100 liters

2,700 liters

Shifa Hospital
57,000 liters
15,000 liters

Paediatrics Hospital
10,000 liters
1,200 liters

Aqsa Martyrs Hospital
16,700 liters
7,400 liters

Gaza European Hospital
120,000 liters
12,000 liters

Total
221,300
43,000

Hospital generator consumption is at 40 -50 lit/hour. The available fuel will be depleted within few days as the daily electricity cuts is 12 hours.

Gaza European hospital in Khan Younis has declared the emergency status at the hospital. All the departments have stopped working except the intensive care unit and the operation room. The hospital is accepting only urgent cases.

Aqsa Martyrs hospital in the Mid zone will work for only 4 hours per day to decrease starting tomorrow.

Shifa hospital has three generators that feed three different parts. The fuel availability in one tank is 200 liters. The generator will stop functioning within hours. This generator feeds the laundry room, oxygen extractor, pharmacy and the oncology department.

The hospital will declare the emergency status by tomorrow due to the continuous consumption of the available fuel.

2. Access of Patients/drugs' shipments

Access of patients

The Israeli has informed the Palestinian liaison officer that urgent patient should be allowed to get out of Gaza; however,

On Friday two patients attempted to cross and crossed

Saturday Erez crossing is closed

On Sunday: 43 patients with their 43 companions in addition to two urgent cases (transported by ambulances) with their two companions

have been allowed to cross Erez

Drugs shipments

WHO had coordinated for 48 pallets to get into Gaza through Kerm Shalom on the 17th of January. only 23 pallets were allowed to get in and the passage of other pallets were delayed till the 21 st of January.

ICRC had coordinated the passage of 48 pallets to come into Gaza today the 20th of January, however, the shipment had denied access and delayed till Tuesday the 22nd of January.

Dalia Salha, MPH
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Tel: 282 2033/286 2997 - Fax: 284 5409
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Detainee delivers baby, family not allowed to visit

By IMEMC Staff
January 18, 2008
<http://www.imemc.org/article/52365>

Palestinian Ministry of Detainees, in the West Bank city of Ramallah, reported on Friday that detainee Fatima Al Ziq, from Gaza, delivered her baby, Yousef, in Kfar Saba Israeli hospital. She was subjected to harsh treatment while being transferred to the hospital and was cuffed.

Head of the Ministry of Census, Abdul-Nasser Farawna, said that Fatima was not allowed to have any family members while she was in delivery and was not allowed any visitation after she had her new born baby.

Farawna added that two days ago his Ministry voiced several appeals to Human Rights Groups and the International Red Cross to intervene and provide Fatima with the needed medical attention.

He also stated that Fatima, 40, is a mother to eight children, in addition to her new born baby. She was kidnapped by the Israeli army on the Eretz Crossing on May, 20, 2007, while she was accompanying her niece Rawda Habeeb, who was also kidnapped with her.

Fatima was subjected to different sorts of torture and is still detained without charges or trial.

Farawna elaborated that the number of infants who were born in Israeli prisons since the outbreak of the Al Aqsa Intifada in September 28, 2000, arrived to four.

Farawna also stated that those children lived months and years in

Israeli detention facilities, and that such conditions will affect them and their development as chains and bars will always remain in their minds.

The Ministry of Detainees voiced appealed to several Human Rights groups to intervene and practice pressure on the Israeli Authorities to allow its lawyers and the Family of Fatima to visit her, and called on Human Rights Groups ensure that Fatima receive the adequate food and suitable environment in addition to adequate medical attention.

It is worth mentioning that Fatima is barred from her visitation rights and did not see any of her children since she was kidnapped by the army last year.

<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/947468.html>

w w w . h a a r e t z . c o m

Last update - 05:18 23/01/2008

By Shlomo Shamir, Haaretz Correspondent

NEW YORK - The UN Security Council is expected to issue a presidential statement Wednesday denouncing Israel's conduct in the Gaza Strip.

The council held an emergency session yesterday on the humanitarian situation in Gaza, at the Arab states' request, and the debate was expected to continue far into the night.

The initial draft circulated Tuesday demanded an immediate halt to Israel's "illegal" actions against Gaza's civilian population, expressed "grave concern" over the deteriorating humanitarian situation there and demanded that Israel honor its obligations under international law.

However, Israel has been lobbying Security Council members to soften the language, arguing that the draft is utterly one-sided, and UN sources said that both the United States and Britain back Israel's objections, while other council members are also uncomfortable with the current language.

Noting the ongoing rocket barrages from Gaza on Sderot, Israeli representative Gilad Cohen demanded at yesterday's session: "What would Security Council members do if London, Moscow, Paris or Tripoli were being bombed? Would you continue to sit with folded hands?"

Riad Mansour, the PLO observer at the UN, countered by accusing Israel, "the occupying power," of "cruel and illegal behavior" that "endangers the lives of millions" of Palestinians and "undermines the chances for peace."

The decision to issue a nonbinding presidential statement came after

the U.S. indicated that it opposed a formal resolution denouncing Israel.

ISRAEL CONVOY TO GAZA

On Saturday January 26, nobody stays home!

End the Siege!

Relief convoy to our neighbors in Gaza

Does it help the children of Sderot when we force the children of Gaza to drink polluted water? It seems the government of Israel thinks so (if they think).

Gaza is under siege! Hundreds of commodities needed for maintaining daily life are not allowed into the Strip, by order of the Government of Israel. Even the entry of water filters - vital for purifying the water drawn from Gazan wells, which are heavily polluted by brine, oil and sewage - has already been prevented for over half a year. The Israeli media doesn't succeed (and doesn't even try always) to convey to the public a true impression of how severe the situation is. But anyone who has talked to Gazans in the past months understands that the situation has long since developed into a regional disaster, which puts us, too, in danger.

As is well known, the Gaza Strip is a small, poor, overcrowded territory even in "ordinary" times. The occupation of the Strip did not end with the "Disengagement"; on the contrary, passage of persons and goods, in and out of the Strip, was made far more difficult by the Israeli authorities, and no one can enter or leave, by land, sea or air, except by permission from the Israeli security services. As far as Gazans are concerned, Disengagement brought no liberty, but just made occupation that much worse!

However bad the suffering is of the residents of Sderot, Ashkelon and the kibbutzim and moshavim in the area under the barrage of Qassam missiles, mortar shells and sniper bullets, it is in no way a justification for a cruel siege which severely harms a million and half civilians - men, women and children. The siege is an immoral act and a violation of International Law - and from a practical point of view, increasing the bitterness and suffering in Gaza leads to an intensification of attacks on the Israeli side, not to their end. Unlike what we have been made to believe, residents of Sderot and residents of Gaza are not to be seen as opponents: both are victims of a stupid and vicious policy of the Government of Israel.

In the convoy, departing from all over Israel on Saturday January 26, 2008, we will take with us a large quantity of water filters and firmly demand of the military authorities that they be allowed into the Strip where they are urgently needed, together with basic foodstuffs - flour, rice, oil, salt, lentils, beans - for distribution to residents driven to extreme poverty and despair by the siege.

On the border of the Strip we will conduct a protest rally,

simultaneously with a rally held by our Palestinian friends on the other side. Together, we will demand of the Government of Israel to remove the siege of Gaza forthwith! We intend to hold the rally where we can have eye contact with the Palestinians, at a distance of no more than one kilometer.

Our friends on the Palestinian side, peace and human rights activists of the Palestinian International Campaign To End The Siege such as the well-known psychiatrist Dr. Eyad Sarraj, will go to the border area despite the great difficulty and risk, in order to greet and support us. It is far easier for us to go towards them and support them. In a joint Israeli-Palestinian action on both sides of the border we will present a true alternative to the continuing escalation, to the shooting and killing, destruction and suffering, missiles and tanks. An alternative of ceasefire, of a true end to direct and indirect occupation, an alternative of peace and prosperity for Israelis and Palestinians, for Sderot and for Gaza.

The convoy will include both buses and private cars. It is very important to arrive with a car, if you have

one, in order to create a long and highly visible convoy. If at all possible, let us know in advance, even before

Monday Jan. 21, to Ya'akov 050-5733276 or Teddy 052-5017141. It is especially important to let us know as soon as possible if you can come with a car - so that we can make better preparations.

Donations to help buy products for the convoy, and defray other expenses, can be transferred via POB 3322, Tel-Aviv 61033, Israel, or handed to our activists during the convoy itself (checks should be made out to Gush Shalom, and prominently marked 'For Gaza Convoy').

We have made considerable and lengthy efforts to coordinate this activity. The convoy will depart from organized rendezvous points at predetermined hours, in order to arrive together and create a long convoy. The rendezvous points are as follows:

Haifa: Solel Boneh Square (buses & private cars) 7:45

Tel-Aviv: Arlozorov Railway Station (buses) 8:15

Reading Parking Lot (private cars, joined by the buses from Arlozorov) 8:30

Jerusalem: Liberty Bell Park (buses) 8:30

Teddy Parking Lot (private cars, joined by the buses from Liberty Bell) 8:45

Be'er Sheba: University Gate (buses & private cars) 10:15

Signs, posters and cloth banners for the buses will be available at the rendezvous points. Please arrive in time to 'decorate' the cars. Everybody is asked to bring from home commodities needed in Gaza (milk

powder, mineral water [not of Eden Springs], oil, flour, school supplies [satchels, pens and pencils etc.] and cigarettes) as a family package for a Gazan family. If you want you can add a personal letter in Arabic or English to the recipients.

Those who arrive in their cars are asked to tie a symbolic aid package to the roof of the car (if you were not able to do it before arriving, please bring the products and a rope with you, and we will help you tie them at the rendezvous).

We also ask all of you to bring drums, whistles, and those who have them - a shofar, in order to make a huge outcry of breaking down the wall of the siege. Please bring food and drink for a whole day.

Registration for Tel-Aviv and Haifa:

taliashiff@gmail.com Talia Shiff 052-3738832

Registration for Jerusalem and Be'er Sheba:

moshepesach@yahoo.es Moshe Pesach 050-9702338

Participating organizations:

Gush Shalom, Combatants for Peace, Coalition of Women for Peace, ICAHD - The Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, Bat Shalom, Bat Tzafon for Peace & Equality, Balad, Hadash, Adalah, Tarabut-Hithabrut, Physicians for Human Rights, Alternative Information Center, Psychoactive - Mental Health Professionals for Human Rights, ActiveStills, Student Coalition Tel-Aviv University, New Profile, Machsom Watch, PCATI - Public Committee Against Torture, Yesh Gvul, Gisha, Social TV on the internet.

Details on the Palestinian International Campaign to End the Siege to which we are allied: <http://www.end-gaza-siege.ps/IndexEn.htm>

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AVAAZ APPEAL TO END BLOCKADE

Dear friends,

! The people of Gaza are being squeezed to death. **This week's blackouts have finally reached the attention of the world -- and the international community could help end the blockade.** Our obligation is clear. This isn't about Israel vs Palestine or Hamas vs Fatah: this is about **1.5 million human beings locked up in the biggest prison on**

earth. The siege of Gaza is a collective punishment violating international law, and far from ensuring Israel's security, it is only stoking rage and desperation.

Incredibly, the UN, European Union and Arab League have so far failed to act. We must seize this moment with an emergency campaign: demanding that the international community step in to **end this blockade, ensure the free flow of supplies, and help broker the ceasefire** which civilians on all sides desperately need. **Please click below to sign the emergency petition -- we'll deliver it to the UN, EU and Arab League when we reach 100,000 signatures**, so sign and tell everyone you know:

http://www.avaaz.org/en/gaza_end_the_siege/8.php?cl=51695392

The humanitarian crisis of sealed-off Gaza is only getting worse, and a rain of missiles is falling. No genuine peace talks will be possible while the siege continues. In the Israel-Lebanon war of 2006, **we saw how global pressure and assistance can help stop a crisis and protect civilians from harm** -- we cannot stay silent about the crisis in Gaza. Please add your name now at the link above, and forward this message widely.

With hope and determination,

Ricken, Paul, Galit, Esra'a, Pascal, Ben and the whole Avaaz team

PS For more about the crisis:

Associated Press article including Red Cross report:

<http://ap.google.com/article/ALeqM5iNIUuovp8Buyld1S6EFTSWfznQZwD8UB050G0>

Former Clinton official calls for ceasefire, ending siege:

<http://www.iht.com/articles/2008/01/21/opinion/edmalley.php>

UN reports on the humanitarian crisis, including background to the blackouts:

http://www.ochaopt.org/?module=displaysection&ion_id=11&static=0&format=html

Deepening medical crisis in Gaza (UN):

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=75693>

PSS In a global interactive poll, **tens of thousands of Avaaz members helped to set our direction for campaigning on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict** -- addressing the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and achieving a reciprocal ceasefire were both supported by over 90% of respondents:

http://www.avaaz.org/en/annapolis_results_2

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Fayetteville office: 251-1380

Senator Mark Pryor: Phone: (202) 224-2353 Fax: (202) 228-0908

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END OF NEWSLETTER ON GAZA 3-3-08

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