

**With frontline eyewitness reports and analysis, SchNEWS takes on the Gaza massacre.**

## EYEWITNESS: RAFAH

“With the Israeli ban on international journalists, the Gazan voice has been further muted. Communicating the reality on the ground with the external world is essential to highlight the illegality of Israel’s attacks. We recently started accompanying ambulances to document the attacks on medical personnel, which is a violation of the Geneva Convention. I have seen and felt the suffering of families and cannot leave them, all the civilians are vulnerable to Israel’s attacks. We intend to stay and continue exposing the nature of Israel’s attacks on the Gazan people.” - Jenny Linnel - International Solidarity Movement.

Day 14 of **Operation Cast Lead** - Israel’s attack on the Gaza strip - and the scale of the damage inflicted is becoming apparent. SchNEWS has been in contact with British peace activist Jenny Linell in Rafah. She’s in no doubt that the unleashing of the world’s fourth most powerful army on a civilian population has little to do with suppressing Hamas’ rocket fire. It’s about intensifying the siege and collective punishment of the whole population for daring not to knuckle under. Jenny told SchNEWS:

“It’s not about targeting tunnels on the border – it’s about wiping out half of Rafah. That’s what it’s about. In the north people left their homes as they were warned to by the Israelis – but where are they supposed to stay? Many families began staying in UN schools - now they’ve bombed them! That’s crossing the limit. It means they’ll do anything - anything! Two other families are coming to stay with our family tonight. That’s the situation all over Rafah - people are just trying to put up families who’ve left as best they can. And now leaflets have been dropped saying...

*“Citizens of Rafah: Due to Hamas using your houses to smuggle and store ammunition, the Israeli Defence Force will attack your homes from Sea Street to the Egyptian border. To the people who live in these areas: Block O, Al Brazil camp, Al Shora area and Qishta area, all homes beyond Sea Street must be evacuated.*

*You have from the time you receive this leaflet until 7am the following morning. For you and your children’s safety follow what this leaflet says. - The leadership of the Israeli Defence Force”*

From the borderline to Sea Street - that’s thousands and thousands of homes. They’ve all been threatened – many families directly on the border had already fled - now there’s just this mass exodus and goodness knows what’s going to happen. Some people have had automated messages [from the IDF] saying if you live in such and such an area, if you have tunnels, if you have weapons in your house you will be targeted. But they’ve been hitting anyone and everything whether or not you’ve had a message.”

Effectively the whole of Rafah has been declared a free-fire zone for F-16s and helicopter gunships. During the siege the tunnels across to Egyptian Rafah were



a vital lifeline (see SchNEWS 617). The Israeli airforce is now attempting to smash the network using giant U.S supplied bunker-busters. The locals are used to a level of constant violence and intimidation - years of IDF operations with armoured bulldozers have created a no-mans land of smashed houses along the border strip.

“There’s no bomb shelters or anything like that. You just sit in your house as the bombs drop around you. Bombs that were going off on the border 2km away and it feels like they’re just at the end of the street. We have to keep the windows open all the time because they’d shatter otherwise from the force of the explosion. People are not hysterical – they’re Palestinians which means they’ve experienced so much of this all their lives. But this is above and beyond – the level of aggression – is like nothing that’s ever been seen before. There’s nowhere to run to.”

## EYEWITNESS: GAZA

*Ewa Jasiewicz is an international peace activist currently in northern Gaza. This is an edited version of a piece written on Thursday January 8th 2008:*

**“This is the the deliberate terrorisation of an entire civilian population. They’re going to come in as deep as they can – they’re going to kill as many as they can” - Ewa Jasciewicz, 06/01/09.**

I’ve been working with the Palestinian Red Crescent ambulance services in Jabaliya, Beit Hanoun and Beit Lahiya for the past 5 days and nights.

Paramedic Ali Khalil’s team was shot at on Monday afternoon. He told me, ‘We had been told we had the go-ahead from the Israeli army through co-ordination with the Red Cross but when we arrived at the area we were shot at. We had to turn back’. Yesterday afternoon, a medical volunteer, Hassan, was shot in the leg as he and his colleague had to drop the stretcher they were carrying after coming under Israeli sniper fire. There are reports of scores of dead bodies lying in the streets un-claimed. The

Palestinian Red Crescent Society estimates there are 230 injured which they haven’t been able to pick up.

There are reports of 18 corpses in one home alone and the injured dying from treatable wounds because of a lack of access to medical treatment.

Sporadic battles are taking place between Palestinian resistance fighters, armed with basic machine guns, the odd grenade, and warm clothes. They’re up against the fourth most powerful army in the world, armed with state-of-the-art war planes, Merkava tanks, regional governmental co-ordination and intelligence, a green light to kill with impunity in the name of self defence, body armor, night vision, and holidays in Goa when it all gets too much...

The paramedics, drivers and volunteers at the emergency services risk their lives every

*Continued overleaf...*

**EYEWITNESS: GAZA** *continued...*

time they leave their base and even working within their bases. Medics evacuated their original base near Salahadeen street due to heavy shelling from Israeli forces early last week.

Yesterday around 1am we were called out to a strike in the Moaskar Jabaliya area. The area was pitch black, our feeble torches lighting up broken pipes streaming water, glass, chunks of concrete and twisted metal. 'They're down there, down there, take care', people said. The smell of fresh severed flesh, a smell that can only come from the shedding of pints of blood and open insides, was in the air. I got called back by a medic who screamed at me to stay by his side. It turned out I'd been following the Civil Defence, the front line responders who check to see if buildings are safe and put out fires, rather than the medics.

The deep ink dark makes it almost impossible to see clearly, shadows and faces lit up by swiveling red ambulance lights and arms pointing hurriedly are our guides for finding the injured. 'Lets get out of here, lets get out' say the guys, and we're leaving to go, empty handed, but straining to seeing what's ahead when a missile hits the ground in front of us. We see a lit up fountain of what could be nail darts explode in front of us. They fall in a spray like a thousand hissing critters, we cover our heads and run back to the ambulance. One of the volunteers inside, Mohammad, is shocked, 'Did you see? Did you see? How close it was?'

At approximately 4am, we hit the streets in response to an F16 war plane attack on the house of Abdullah Sayeed Mrad in the Block Two area of Jabaliya Camp in the Northern Gaza Strip.

In Naim Street Beit Hanoun, at 9.30pm on Sunday, Samieh Kaferna, 40, was hit by flying shrapnel to his head. Neighbours called him to come to their home. Fearing his home would be struck, he and a group of relatives began to move from one home to another, to be safer.

The second missile struck them down directly. When we arrived one man, eyes gigantic, was being dragged into the pavement, half of his lower body shredded, his intestines slopping out. He was alive, his relatives were screaming, we managed to take four, whilst six others, charred and dismembered, were brought in on the back of an open cattle truck. Beit Hanoun Hospital was chaos, with screaming relatives and burning bodies. Three men died in the attack, 10 were injured, six from the same Abu Harbid family. Three had to have leg amputations, and one a double amputation.

Burning shrapnel in eyes is a common injury, shrapnel slices deep into to any soft fleshy parts of the body. We brought a boy from Beit Hanoun with a distorted heavily bandaged head wrapped in bandages, to Al Nasser hospital with its specialist eye unit and mental health clinic. When we get there, its pitch black, doctors are sitting around candles, the place is freezing and full of shadows. Both the doctors and their patients have been blinded with Israeli-controlled power cuts that intensify the confusion, fear, and psychological darkness caving in on people here.

Khalil Abu Shammalah, Director of Al Dhumeer Association based in Gaza City said: 'It is a breach of the fourth Geneva Convention to target emergency medical services under conditions of war and occupation. Battlefield casualties are also protected under the Geneva Conventions and cannot be targeted once injured. Israel is in breach of international law'.

People were coming back to their homes for the first time. The Hamdan Family had three homes in a row destroyed. I asked one woman sitting amongst the ruins of her home where she would go now? She replied, 'Beit Hanoun UNRWA school'. 'But do you think that will be safe?' I ask her. 'No, but I have nowhere else to go' she replied.

The Al Naim Mosque was also completely destroyed, holy books still smouldering from

***"THEY'RE after another Sabra and Shatila – the deliberate terrorisation of an entire civilian population.. They're going to come in as deep as they can – they're going to kill as many as they can." - Ewa Jasciewicz, 06/01/09***

the attacks. Approximately one in 10 of the some 100 mosques in the Jabaliya area have been destroyed in Israel's assault. 'We see them as personal centers for us, they're not Hamas, and we paid for them out of our own money, they belong to us, not anyone else', explained one Imam based in Jabaliya.

On Sunday night, all Sikka Street residents were given five minutes to leave their homes, ordered out through loudhailers, unable to take any belongings with them, rounded up by Israeli occupation forces and taken to the Al Naim Mosque. Women, children and the elderly were put inside and men aged between 16-40 were kept in a field outside in the cold and interrogated. Six were taken to Erez, three were released a day later and were told by soldiers, according to a witness, that it was safe for them to make their own way home along Salahadeen Street. It was there that special forces allegedly shot 33 year-old Shaadi His-sam Yousef Hamad 33, in the head.

Whether people stay in their homes or leave, they are being bombed. Majid Hamdan Wadeeya, 40, was hit in the leg and spine with shrapnel while he and his family were preparing to leave their home in Jaffa Street, Jabaliya. We arrived at his home on Tuesday afternoon to find the family's decrepit red car still running and the family minivan stuffed with mattresses, towels, blankets, and belongings, blasted open. They had been hit by a missile from either a drone or apache. 'We were going from the bombing, from the bombing', screamed his children, all terrified. We managed to take half of the family, the rest got in their red car and followed.

Everyone here knows someone who has been killed in Israel's massacres. I can't keep up with the stories of missile struck cousins, nephews, brothers, the jailed, the humiliated, the shot, the unreachable, the homeless, the now even more vulnerable than ever, people, not pieces, piling up in morgues all over Gaza, not pieces, people. These people are struggling to live and breathe another day, to avoid the lethal use of F16s, F15s, Apache Helicopters, Cobra Gun Ships, Israeli naval

gun ships, that are targeting them.

Whilst people say they are resisting the worst attack on them since the Nakba, Israel proceeds to break up the West Bank, under a project of roads and tunnels 'for Palestinians' which reinforce the existing illegal settlement system, apartheid wall, land and water theft and Palestinian bantustanisation.

How do you break a people that won't be broken? 'They will have to kill each and everyone of us' people tell me. From the first days here people were expecting 'the shoah' threatened upon them by Matan Villai, Israel's deputy defence minister this February. It is happening now -this is the Shoah.

The third Intifada being urged now has to be our intifada too. As Israel steps up its destruction of the Palestinian people, we need to step

up our reconstruction of our resistance, our movements, of our communities in our own counties, where so many of us live in alienation and isolation. We need to be the third intifada – people here need more and say repeatedly that they need more than the demonstrations, because they are not stopping the killing here. Demonstrations alone, are not stopping the killing here.

The arms companies making the weapons that are targeting people here, the companies that are selling stolen goods from occupied land pillaging settlements, the companies building the apartheid wall, the prisons, the East Jerusalem Light Railway system. These companies, Carmel Agrexco, Caterpillar, Veolia, Raytheon, EDO, BAE Systems, they are complicit in the crimes against humanity being committed here. If the international community will not uphold international law, then a popular movement should and can – we can use the legal system of international law as one of many means to hold on to our collective humanity.

The European Union decision, undertaken by the Council of Ministers this December, to upgrade relations with Israel, from economic ties to cultural, security, and political relations must be reversed. The EU represents a core strategic market of legitimacy and political economic reinforcement of Israel and as such its capacity to commit crimes against humanity, with impunity.

We can cut this tie, we can halt this decision which if approved this April, will empower Israel further, bring it closer to the 'community of nations' of the EU, and give a green light for further terror and crimes against humanity be inflicted upon the Palestinian people. This is a decision which has not yet been ratified. We can influence that which hasn't happened yet.

There are concrete steps that people can take, learning from the lessons of the first Intifada and the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaign to dismantle the South African Apartheid regime. Strategies of popular resistance, strikes, occupations, direct actions. From the streets into the offices, factories and headquarters is where we need to take this fight, to the heart of decision-makers that are supposedly making decisions on our behalf and the companies making a killing out of the occupation. The third intifada needs to be a global intifada.

# GLOBAL OUTRAGE

Protests and peace vigils around the world began the day after the bombing of Gaza began on December 27th. While the Stop The War Coalition were straight into organising, they weren't the only ones, and many at the demos weren't prepared to let

STW stewards call the shots. Significantly the crowds at many Europe-wide demos were made up of Muslim/Arab people. Also present in numbers were yer organised lefties, and various anarchist types also braving the winter cold to join in.



Protesters have been occupying the rooftop of Raytheon, Bristol, since December 9th.

## ANTI-ARMS TRADE CAMPAIGNS

For anti-militarism campaigns, it's mostly been business as usual as they continued to target companies profiting from this and every other war - such as **EDO-MBM/ITT** in **Brighton** and **Raytheon** in **Bristol** - but obviously this issue is highlighted during such a bloodthirsty military adventure.

The most notable recent anti-arms trade effort - and particularly impressive during the winter cold-snap - is the continued occupation by three protesters of the roof at Raytheon in Bristol. This occupation began on December 9th, well before the Gaza attack, and has been supported by several demos at the premises under the banner 'Smash Raytheon' (See SchNEWS 660). Raytheon is a US arms giant who specialise in missiles, and will be raking it in during the Israeli attacks.

In fact the Bristol Business Park, Frenchay, has become a bit of a protest hot-spot, as across the road from Raytheon is Boeing,

another corporation at the heart of the US war machine. Boeing's range of aircraft reads like a who's who of death machines, including the infamous Apache helicopter gunships which are currently terrorising Gaza, plus F15 fighter jets, Hellfire missiles and more. On New Years Eve ten windows were smashed at Boeing's Bristol premises.

\* There are two **Rooftop Solidarity** demos this week at **Raytheon** - January 8th at 2.30pm, and Saturday the 10th, at 12.30pm. Come and lend support as the rooftop dwellers go into their fifth (freezing) week. For transport to both demos from central Bristol meet at the top of Picton St, off Stokes Croft, at the designated start times. For more see <http://raytheonout.wordpress.com> and <http://bristol.indymedia.org>

\* All week (5th-10th) **Bristol** daily peace vigil, weekdays 5pm-6pm, Saturday 3pm-4pm at the 'Centre', opposite the Hippodrome.

## PROTESTS IN BRITAIN SINCE THE ATTACK STARTED

\* **Saturday 28th December** and Sunday 29th saw quick responses to the Israeli aggression. Around 2000 showed up outside the Israeli embassy in **London** to express their outrage, and the police utterly failed to keep the demonstrators inside their protest pen. Despite the best efforts of the Stop the War organisers the demos were definitely of your up-fer-it variety. One STW organiser was heard saying "there's just too many people here." As well as plenty of argy bargy with the police, the scene of a copper's hat in flames provided warmth and cheer on a cold winter's night.

\* **On Friday Jan 2nd** thousands marched through **London**, ending with bloody clashes at the **Israeli Embassy**. Protesters threw shoes at 10 Downing St, and one firework exploded at the iron gates to Downing St.

\* **There was a hastily called international day of action on Saturday the 3rd and British cities came out in force...** The biggy was **London** with 50,000-odd, while 4,000 came out in **Manchester**, 3000 in **Edinburgh**, plus hundreds turned out at many places, including **Brighton, Portsmouth, Lancaster, Liverpool, Newcastle, and Exeter**. In

**Birmingham** demonstrators tried to storm the Town Hall, but the SWP managed to defuse the momentum that the protest had.

\* **Last Sunday (4th)**, there was a demo outside the **Israeli Embassy** on Kensington High St, **London**. Then on Monday saw demos in **Edinburgh, Glasgow**, and later than night in **Brighton** pixies painted the road outside their local bomb factory, **EDO-MBM/ITT**, writing "EDO kills kids in Gaza for cash" on Home Farm Rd outside EDO.

\* **On Friday (9th)** there's a demo in **Bristol** - march from Easton to the city centre. Assemble 2pm Stapleton Road (by the Railway Bridge) <http://bristol.indymedia.org>

\* **Mass London Demo** against attack on Gaza - this Saturday (10th).

Meet 12.30pm at Speakers Corner, Hyde Park, march to Israeli Embassy, High St. Kensington. [www.stopwar.org.uk](http://www.stopwar.org.uk)

\* Also on **Saturday (10th)** in **Leeds** there's a peace vigil - 12.30pm, Leeds Art Gallery, The Headrow; vigil in Wrexham meet 12 noon at Queens Square, Wrexham.

\* In **London** there are daily protests this week at the **Israeli Embassy**, Kensington High Street, W8, from 5.30pm-7pm (tube - High Street Kensington).

\* In **Brighton** on Sunday 11th, Palestine Solidarity Campaign march and rally, 1pm, Palmeira Sq.

## INTERNATIONAL PROTESTS

Spontaneous protests erupted in city centres across the world after the attack began, often targeting the local Israeli Embassy. This is just a snapshot of some of the events from January 3rd:

\* **In Israel:** Last Saturday, as the Israeli army began its bloody ground offensive in Gaza, some 10,000 descended on **Tel Aviv** to protest against their government's war crimes. The police tried to stop the demo, saying it would be attacked by right-wing rioters (well they got that bit of it right!). Police also demanded that the organisers prevented the hoisting of Palestinian flags, but this was overturned by a petition to a High Court judge.

The far-right thugs did their best to break up the peace demo. While police kept the two sides apart during the demo, at the end they disappeared, allowing the right-wingers to attack the remainder of the marchers. Peace protesters managed to take refuge in a building, but the right wing nutters attempted to break in, threatening to 'finish them off'. Eventually police came but stood back as the thugs lurked on the street to intimidate.

\* But this wasn't the biggest demo in Israel. In the northern town of **Sakhnin** some 50,000+ took to the streets in unprecedented numbers - mostly Palestinian citizens of Israel. Around 1,000 later left there in a convoy of coaches to join the Tel Aviv demo. <http://gush-shalom.org>

\* An Israeli military airbase at **Sde Dov** was blockaded with a 'die-in' by nineteen activists from **Anarchists Against the Wall**. All were arrested and kept in custody while one minor



Kicking off outside the Israeli Embassy on January 4th



Another Israeli flag burns outside Downing St, Jan 4th

was held under house arrest. Police are threatening to prosecute them as a criminal group conspiring to commit more serious sabotage.

\* **Across the Middle East and the Muslim world there have been large protests.** Last Friday, after prayers, large demos erupted including 10,000 in **Djakarta**, plus **Tehran, Istanbul, Cairo, Amman, Damascus, Kabul, Khartoum**, the northern Sinai city of **el-Arish** - Egypt's closest city to Gaza, and many others. In **Aden, Yemen**, protesters broke into the Egyptian consulate protesting against Cairo's non-response to Israel's offensive. Within the West Bank street battles and demos kicked off, including a large demo in **Ramallah**.

\* **European cities** saw large turn-outs including 20,000 in **Paris**, 10,000 in **Amsterdam**, and others. There were marches across the **US** but apart from several thousand in **New York** they didn't recall the heady days of the Iraq Invasion. Most **Australian** cities held marches, with **Melbourne** turning out 6,000. In **Oaxaca, Mexico**, demonstrators from the local social movement marched on the US consulate, but were attacked by police and shot at with tear gas, with 19 violently arrested, and many beaten and robbed while in the lock-up.

But as SchNEWS has said countless times, it's not just about making up the numbers on the city A-B marches. In Britain there is a building movement against arms industry targets - which has grown out of the 2003 anti-war movement. In recent years successful campaigns have hit EDO-MBM/ITT in Brighton, Raytheon in Bristol, Heckler & Koch in Nottingham, as well as ongoing peace camps like Faslane in Scotland. The politicians aren't listening, so the companies who supply the war machine are legitimate and effective targets for action.

## DEMONSTRATE Stop the Massacre Israel out of Gaza

**Saturday 10 January**

Assemble 12:30pm,

Speakers Corner, Hyde Park march to Israeli Embassy

Called by Stop the War Coalition, BMI, PSC and many others

### FOR MORE INFO SEE

<http://electronicintifada.net>

<http://www.maannnews.net/en>

<http://www.freegaza.org>

<http://www.palsolidarity.org>

<http://talestotell.wordpress.com>

# GAZA RELIEF BOAT RAMMED

**Early in the morning of 30th December the Free Gaza vessel, *The Dignity*, found itself surrounded by a number of Israeli warships.**

Ex-US Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney, a passenger on the boat, described how the Israeli boats called them 'terrorists and subversives' on the ship phone before ordering them to return to Cyprus (despite later claims that they were unaware of the boat's identity or origins). They then fired live ammunition around the boat before ramming it three times, causing heavy damage. At the time it was 90 miles off the coast of Gaza and well within international waters.

*The Dignity* was carrying three surgeons and tons of medical supplies for the dilapidated and collapsing Palestinian medical system as well as human rights workers and journalists from Al-Jazeera and CNN. It was the latest attempt by Free Gaza to breach the blockade in the face of Israeli threats and intimidation (see SchNEWS 644 and 653). The first boats arrived in Gaza in August 2008, the



The *Dignity* with heavy damage after being shot at and rammed by an Israeli warship

first international boats to land in the port for 41 years. Five boats have safely made it so far.

Free Gaza have stated their determination to continue with their mission to break the siege and raise international awareness. They have already identified another boat, capable of carrying 30 passengers and 10-15 tones of cargo, and are hoping to launch in the next two weeks. They are currently looking for passengers for the boat, especially doctors, journalists, long-term human rights workers, and political figures and urgently needed medical supplies.

Anyone interested in being a passenger can contact Karin at: [kpally@earthlink.net](mailto:kpally@earthlink.net) or call Huwaida at +357-96-723-999, while anyone who can make any donation of medical supplies or a contribution towards their purchase can contact Lubnna at [gmail.com](mailto:gmail.com) or +357-99-081-767. They also request that supporters stage vigils outside the Israeli Embassy from the moment the boat departs until it arrives safely in Gaza.

\* [www.freegaza.org](http://www.freegaza.org)

## CEASEFIRE? WHAT CEASEFIRE?

**Ceasefire ends - Hamas fires rockets - Israelis retaliate.** Lots of people die. Many in the media are questioning whether the Israeli response to Hamas' declaration that they would not seek to renew the ceasefire is proportionate. Some even question who was responsible for the breakdown of the ceasefire and the failure to renew it. Few however, are asking the question of whether there ever actually was a ceasefire.

In June, Israel and Hamas signed an Egyptian brokered agreement that Hamas and its affiliates would put an end to rocket attacks into Israeli territory while Israel would stop incursions and military actions in the Gaza strip, ease border restrictions and allow goods into the besieged and impoverished territory. The term used was tahadiya, 'calm' or a 'lull' in hostilities.

In the six months that followed each side frequently accused the other of breaching its side of the agreement and responded by breaching their own terms of the agreement. The first months saw a 'relative calm', a drastic reduction in rocket and mortar attacks even as groups outside of the control of Hamas, mostly Islamic Jihad, continued to limit Israeli military actions, confining them to strikes on the rocket crews in border areas. Restrictions on the Israeli border were sporadically loosened then tightened in response to the rocket fire, though even when open little more than the bare essentials were getting through to ease the desperation of the Gazan people. The terms 'fragile', 'delicate' and 'uneasy' were habitually prefixed before the 'ceasefire's or 'truce's found in reportage.

The turning point however, was 4th November when Israel launched a raid into Gazan territory targeting what they say was a tunnel being prepared to be used for the capture of Israeli soldiers. One Hamas fighter was killed. In response, mortars were launched at the Israeli military followed by an Israeli air strike that killed five more Hamas fighters. For the all the lip service that was paid to it in the month that followed, any semblance of a ceasefire was effectively over. Rocket attacks and air strikes resumed and the borders stayed firmly closed.

As the agreement expired Hamas declared that they would not seek a renewal. Their argument was articulated by Ali Abunimah, co-founder of The Electronic Intifada, "what is Israel's idea of a truce? It is very simple: Palestinians have the right to remain silent while Israel starves them, kills them and continues to violently colonise their land."

Since then, Israel has accused Hamas of using the period to re-arm while media reports coming out of Israel and comments by loose lipped Israeli military personnel have alluded to six months of planning for the current attack.

Did anyone on either side believe that the agreement was a step towards peace? Did anyone seriously believe that there would be no more rocket attacks or air strikes? Given the history of failure and betrayal of all previous ceasefires it seems extremely unlikely. 'Hamas don't want peace!' has been the cry of the Western media pundits as the rocket fire persists, even as the Israeli tanks roll in. That they don't want peace is unfair. That their members no longer believe in it, perhaps accurate.

**IF YOU'RE NOT PISSED OFF YOU'RE NOT PAYING ATTENTION**

# GAZA GAMEPLAN

Having promised 'a bigger shoah' (Hebrew for Holocaust) against Gaza last March (by Israeli Deputy Defense Minister Matan Vilnai), the Israeli state seems to be keeping its promise. The tally of innocent dead and schools, clinics and homes destroyed might make you think that these latest and worst round of atrocities in Palestine are destruction for destruction's sake.

Just what are the Israeli's aims here? If you're watching the BBC or other equally compliant media, you'll hear that they are bombing Gaza to "stop the rockets." Gordon Brown, George Bush, whoever repeat the same line. Utter bollocks. The Hamas-Israeli ceasefire stopped the rockets, and Israel broke the terms of the ceasefire by refusing to end the siege (see SchNEWS 617).

The excuse, as much as one is needed, is the Palestinian armed groups' firing of rockets into Israeli territory. To date, the Qassam rockets, "stupid backyard cherrybomb rockets that couldn't hit the ground if gravity didn't help out", have claimed around 20 lives since the first one was fired eight years back.

Even if the Israelis really wanted to stop the Qassams, any military pundit worth his salt would tell you that this invasion won't work. A Qassam rocket requires no high tech parts and can be assembled in any garage or workshop. So unless the IDF plan on destroying every building in Gaza (which admittedly they might) it wont work.

If this 'war' is really an election campaign, then it's hard to imagine a bloodier one. But, if short term electoral goals are all that counts, the plan is working as far as the Israeli Labor Party is concerned. Their popularity shot up some 30-40% in the first week of the bombing. It's a chilling thought about the Israeli national psyche that the route to the Knesset is through a sea of Palestinian blood.

But there's no business like Shoah-business when it comes to Israeli elections. The big three parties of the Israeli political scene are competing with each other for the genocide vote in the upcoming elections.

The frontrunners for the February elections - Ehud Barak (Labor Party boss and Defence Minister), Tzipi Livni (top dog of the ruling far-right-of-centre Kadima) and Benjamin Netanyahu (Likudnik psychopath) are competing for votes amongst an electorate that's been programmed to hate/fear Arabs. In order to win the election, they're trying to outdo each other in appearing tough on terror. What this means for the Palestinians is another genocidal war against a civilian population.

When they tried it on in Lebanon in 2006 the mighty child killers of the Israeli Defence Force were forced to run back across the border with their tails between their legs by the guerilla tactics of Hezbollah (see SchNEWS 552). Anxious to repair the damage to their self esteem, the Israeli military and political elites have now sent the IDF into Gaza, acting in true bully tradition and picking on the weakest target they could find - the prison by the sea that is Gaza.

But for those on the ground it seems inconceivable that this amount of bloodshed can really be caused for such narrow electoral

gain? This is one of the worst massacres of Palestinians since '48.

Norman Finkelstein puts Israel's war aims this way: "The goals of the Israeli government, it seems to me, are pretty clear. Number one, Israel wants to re-establish what it calls its 'deterrence capacity'. That's a technical term the Israelis use. It basically means to restore the fear of Israel among the Arabs in the region. After the defeat inflicted by Hezbollah, and the inability of Israel to launch an attack on Iran, it was almost inevitable that they would then target Hamas, because Hamas is also defying the Israeli will. According to the Israeli papers, Barak was planning the attack already before the last ceasefire, and they were just waiting for a provocation from the Palestinians."

There are other games being played here though. Diplomatic cover has been provided by the Americans as a last gift to the Middle East from the Bush Administration. Hamas has been a sore point with the US since they arm-twisted anti-Hamas Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas into holding elections- which his Fatah party then promptly lost.

The American game plan can be seen in the diplomatic manoeuvres being played out in the UN. Having blamed Hamas for the violence, the quisling Palestinian president has been calling for a ceasefire that includes international peacekeepers- ie. Egyptian, British and French troops (no doubt alongside other loyal US stooges such as Kuwait) to enforce the peace.

An international monitoring force on the Green Line (aka 'the border') is exactly what the Palestinians have been asking for from the international community for decades now. If it was armed and empowered to repel Israeli incursions, and if it was extended to the West Bank it might even form the basis for a lasting peace (fat chance of that under Pax Americana).

But what seems to be suggested here, along with these dubious suggestions of a 'humanitarian corridor' is that an international force will patrol inside Gaza, looking for tunnels and Palestinian weapons. Equally worrying, what's being mooted is that this 'humanitarian corridor' would be governed by Mahmud Abbas and his Fatah goons, effectively reasserting PLO control inside Gaza under UN guard.

This would be music to Israel's ears. It would mean that the UN, EU and the rest of the international community would be directly complicit in the Occupation. Pre-empting this, the Gaza-based Popular Resistance Committees have said that any international troops would be treated as enemies invading the area. It's hard to see any country volunteering its services as policeman of Gaza.

In the forefront of every Gazan's mind however, is that the attacks are a preparation for transfer. After all, most of the population of Gaza are refugees from what's now known as Israel. The Zionist ideology has no place for Palestinians anywhere in historic Palestine, and they would like nothing better than for Gaza to just sink into the sea, or its people to leave.

# MEDIA WAR

It's worth looking at how the mainstream media has been used as a tool in the Israel Army's high tech arsenal. Israel attacked in the days between Christmas and New Year in the West. This is media 'down time' when both journalists and audiences are away from the offices, and most people are more concerned with sleeping off hangovers than watching the news. Major events can pass by with little initial outrage. This isn't the first time this tactic has been tried in recent years. On Christmas Eve 2006 Ethiopia and the USA attacked Somalia whilst the world's press was on holiday. It seems to be taken straight out of a US State Department handbook.

Israel has an army of highly polished, attractive spokespeople on standby to justify war crimes at a moment's notice. These talking heads are trotted out to explain why Israel never targets civilians, why the Qassam rockets threaten the existence of Israel, how Israel had been preparing this attack for six months and how that they were caught unawares.

But then Israel doesn't normally have to try so hard to justify themselves when they have the BBC to back them up. Especially in those first few days, the BBC was up to its old Iraq War tricks.

The first day of the bombing (230 dead), the lead article on the BBC website was "Israel Prepares for Prolonged Op" - a misleadingly biased headline for a massacre. They then state that Israel is bombing Gaza to stop rocket fire. No Israelis are quoted as saying this, it's taken as objective truth. When the toll of Palestinian dead is read out, the Palestinians are merely quoted as claiming so many died. Israel is then given over 100 words to describe why it had to attack Gaza. The Palestinian government of Gaza has to wait until the 3rd from last line to explain that there was "an ugly massacre" (three words only).

This style of reporting only applies to Israel and other chosen allies. When the BBC report on Darfur, they don't feel the same need to interview the Janjaweed militia commander about why he felt it necessary to burn the village to the ground. When the story of the Nazi death camps broke, the BBC didn't cut from the piles of dead bodies to the Jeremy Paxman of the day saying "And here with me in the studio is Joseph Goebbels. Mr Goebbels, can you explain to us why you think the final solution is necessary to defend the Reich?"

But this kind of media spin only works for a while. As the far right Jerusalem Post helpfully explains: "there are few dramatic pictures from Israel, and gaping holes in apartment buildings hit by Grad rockets can't compete with footage from Gaza of crying children splattered in blood." In other words - our propaganda campaign can't compete with the images of murdered children.

That's why Israel has imposed a news blackout on Gaza. Journalists are not allowed in. If Israel can't stop the terrible images coming out from the Gaza Strip, then at least they can stem the flow. And the Beeb is always helpfully on hand to remind people back home that "numbers of dead cannot be independently verified," as if Palestinian Medics can't be trusted to count the bodies in the morgue.

## ELEMENTARY MY DEAR WATSON

The Sea Shepherd ship the *MV Steve Irwin* has been patrolling the ocean off the coast of Australia since December 21st to stop another season of Japanese whaling (for last year see SchNEWS 616). It is chasing two Japanese vessels, forcing the whalers to retreat and stop hunting.

The *Steve Irwin* came tantalizingly close to the *Kaiko Maru* whaling in Antarctic waters. Once within throwing distance, activists tarred one of the vessels with rotten butter, bottles of methyl cellulose and permanent dye. The whaling ship moved hard to starboard and bumped into the *Steve Irwin*, damaging the helicopter deck. The campaign's Captain says they "will continue to pursue, harass and intervene against their blatantly illegal lethal assaults on the whales."

While the Japanese whaling ships claim to carry out scientific research under approval of the International Whaling Commission, campaigners say whaling is being undertaken for commercial use - which has been banned for 23 years and breaches both the IWC conditions and International Conservation law. They are also in Australia's Economic Exclusion Zone and Southern Ocean Whale Sanctuary where whal-



Bowling a few overs from the *Steve Irwin* as it swaps paintwork with the Japanese whaling boat *Kaiko Maru*. 'Research' - who are they kidding?

ing is prohibited under an Australian Court Order. However, so far the Australian government have remained silent on the issue.

Sea Shepherd captain Paul Watson, says, "we still have them on the run and we intend to keep them on the run for as long as our fuel resources allow." The *Steve Irwin* has 40 international volunteers and an Animal Planet film crew onboard producing the 2nd year of the series *Whale Wars*.

On Tuesday this week (Jan 6th) the Japanese had to abandon their operations as one of their crew had fallen overboard. The Sea Shepherd joined the whaling ships in search for the missing man, but were told the whalers did not want help from an "eco-terrorist" organization.

\* [www.seashepherd.org](http://www.seashepherd.org)

## SHAC VERDICT

On December 22nd four people from the campaign group SHAC (see SchNEWS 652) were found guilty of "conspiracy to blackmail" the animal testing laboratory Huntingdon Life Sciences. Supposedly there was a six year campaign that included hoax bombs, threatening letters and criminal damage - but none of the four were linked to any of these crimes. What the prosecution boiled down to was that these people were the "leaders" of SHAC, and there had been illegal actions against HLS and its associates - so therefore the act of running an open campaign, organising legal demos and publishing information (available in the public domain) about HLS and companies that dealt with it, - was tantamount to waging a campaign of blackmail. So therefore the leaders of SHAC are considered responsible for the actions of others. They are awaiting sentence.

Some people involved were only 17 when they joined and have not been part of SHAC for the length of time the conspiracy occurred. Three people earlier in the year had plead guilty to conspiracy, and this fact was used by the prosecution to imply that two of the other accused who had lived with some of those that plead guilty must be guilty by association. (Do you know what your flatmate gets up to when you're not around? They might be conspiring!)

The police operation has seen a massive amount of resources piled into it, led by NETCU who are the government's political police force protecting businesses. NETCU's job is to harass animal rights campaigners and are increasingly turning their turning to anti-war and climate change activists. In one extreme example police arrested and raided the houses of two protesters who had hung a banner against a customer of HLS.

One curious fact of this case is that it was tried in Winchester, while SHAC is based in Kent and HLS in Cambridge. Winchester is a very conservative town and was also the place where the *Gandalf 3* were found guilty of "conspiracy to incite criminal damage" for reporting direct action. ([www.schnews.org.uk/hotstuff/gandalf/index.htm](http://www.schnews.org.uk/hotstuff/gandalf/index.htm)). SchNEWS smells a real conspiracy...

\* More info on SHAC: [www.shac.net](http://www.shac.net)

\* Support the prisoners: [www.myspace.com/shacukprisonersupport](http://www.myspace.com/shacukprisonersupport)

...and finally...

The film *Waltz with Bashir* has been nominated as Israel's entry into the BAFTAs. For those of you who haven't seen the film, it is a cold, hard look at the 1982 war in Lebanon from the perspective of 19 year old conscripted Israeli soldiers. It doesn't pull any punches, as soldiers are shown randomly killing civilians and shooting up Beirut without any plan, let alone consideration for Lebanese lives.

How embarrassing it would be for Israel and its right-wing pundits if the country won a prestigious film award - for a film which depicts the Israeli Army at its worst.

**Disclaimer**

SchNEWS warns all readers - the weather forecast for London on Saturday is a maximum of 2°C - so rug up. Honest!

## INSIDE SchNEWS

78 year old prisoner Ronnie Easterbrook is now entering the third week of a hunger strike. Already in failing health due to previous protests, this may be his final act against a judicial and penal system that he believes has unjustly imprisoned him for 20 years.

Ronnie was convicted of armed robbery and attempted murder in 1988 after a failed robbery on a wages van. A police informant, Seamus Ray, set the job up and duly tipped off the police. The gang were ambushed by armed police and one was killed. Ronnie, one other robber and a police inspector were wounded. The shoot-out was filmed by a Thames TV crew.

Easterbrook claims the police were operating a "shoot-to-kill" policy, but he was not allowed to use this in his defence. Although he wanted his barrister to focus on police tactics the request was refused on the grounds that a political defence was not permitted - the rules have since changed. He was forced to represent himself, and ended up with a 'whole life' sentence.

Ronnie's tariff has been reduced from whole life to 12 and a half years but he won't apply for parole because he doesn't recognise the legality of his sentence and demands a fresh trial. After 20 years inside (eight years beyond his sentence), in a last desperate bid to draw attention to his case, Ronnie has embarked on

what could become a death fast - if the authorities fail to act. His case is not one that attracts automatic sympathy, but at the age of 78 it is time to let him go home to his family.

Send a postcard or letter of support to Ronnie, this will also let the prison authorities know he is not isolated and people are aware of his situation: **Ronnie Easterbrook (B58459), HMP Gartree, Gallow Field Road, Market Harborough, Leicestershire, LE16 7RP**

\* [www.brightonabc.org.uk](http://www.brightonabc.org.uk)

## OUTSIDE SchNEWS

Rod Coronado, the well known US eco and animal rights activist, was released from prison on December 25th. He has served time on a number of occasions since 1995 for his activism (see SchNEWS 556), and this time had been sentenced to one year in March 2008 on a felony charge for a 2003 public speech in San Diego where he demonstrated the use of incendiary devices. This happened the day after the bombing of an apartment building in San Diego which caused \$50m of damage, and was attributed to ELF. Although Rod has associations with the ELF, he was never a suspect. Free for Christmas, he now has to spend three months in a halfway house. <http://supportrod.org>

## PARTY & PROTEST

For listings updated weekly see

\* [www.schnews.org.uk/pap](http://www.schnews.org.uk/pap) \*

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