

URGENT ACTION

CEASEFIRE, BUT NOT YET JUSTICE

Israel and Hamas reached a ceasefire on 26 August, ending their conflict after 50 days. The need for justice for civilian victims on both sides is urgent, as is the need for Israel to lift its blockade of the Gaza Strip.

At least 2,104 Palestinians, mostly civilians, including 495 children, had been killed by the time Israel and Hamas agreed a ceasefire on 26 August, according to UN figures. Of the 71 killed on the Israeli side, six were civilians, including one child. On 23 August the Israeli military had dropped leaflets on the Gaza Strip, where some 1.8 million people live in a space 41km by around 11km, warning residents to "stay away from any site in which terrorist organizations are operating". Between 23 and 26 August Israel attacked six high-rise buildings housing dozens of families, as well as commercial offices. On 23 August Israeli air strikes hit the tower block Za'far 4 Building, housing 46 families; the next day Israel destroyed the Rafah Commercial Centre. On 25 August Israeli jets targeted two tower blocks in Gaza City, the 12-storey Basha Building and the 15-storey Italian Compound commercial centre, containing a two-storey shopping mall and the Ministry of Public Works and housing 70 families. They gave telephone warnings to residents to evacuate, but more than 100 were injured in the strikes and those living in the buildings lost all their belongings. Two Israeli civilians from Kibbutz Nirim were killed and four injured in a mortar attack from Gaza about one hour before the truce came into effect, and a five-storey building housing 10 families in Shaykh Zayed, in northern Gaza, was destroyed 45 minutes later.

The UN Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict of 2008/2009 concluded that Israeli military and Palestinian armed groups had committed war crimes and possible crimes against humanity. The Israeli and Hamas authorities still have not adequately investigated the findings and perpetrators of such crimes still enjoy impunity. The UN Security Council has also failed to take effective action in response to serious violations or hold those responsible to account, by for example referring the situation to the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court. Gazans' right to enjoy an adequate standard of living is further away from realization than ever. Seven years of Israeli blockade has forced most of them into subsistence living, with around 80 per cent dependent on humanitarian aid. Water shortages and lack of access to clean water have worsened since the latest conflict. Under the terms of the truce, the blockade should be eased to allow in humanitarian supplies and building materials.

Please write immediately in Hebrew (to Israel only), Arabic (to Hamas only), English or your own language:

- Calling on the Israeli authorities to do everything necessary to prevent further indiscriminate or otherwise unlawful attacks on civilians, and end the blockade on the Gaza Strip, which amounts to collective punishment of the population, in breach of its obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law;
- Calling on Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups to do everything necessary to prevent further rocket attacks against civilians in Israel and to end other violations of international humanitarian law.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 9 OCTOBER 2014 TO:

Minister of Defence

Moshe Ya'alon
Ministry of Defence, 37 Kaplan Street
Hakiryia, Tel Aviv 61909, Israel
Email: minister@mod.gov.il
pniot@mod.gov.il

Salutation: Dear Minister

Chief Commander

Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, Hamas
(Islamic Resistance Movement)
Muhammad Deif, Gaza
Email: english@alqassam.ps
english@palestine-info.co.uk

Salutation: Dear Chief Commander

(Letters cannot be sent to Gaza due to the blockade)

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 203/14. Further information: <http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE15/025/2014/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Gaza estimated that 435,000 people, a quarter of the population, had been displaced, staying in emergency shelters or with host families during the conflict. As of 26 August, 108,000 people had their homes severely damaged or destroyed. The situation worsened after an Israeli ground operation began on 17 July, and evidence of war crimes mounted as hospitals and clinics reported damage and schools were hit. Hospitals have been subjected to direct attacks and damaged by shelling from tanks and missiles: al-Aqsa Hospital in Deir Al-Balah and Najjar Hospital in Rafah city, among others, have been severely damaged in direct attacks and by tank shelling and missile fire. The entire population of Gaza is surviving on severely limited water supplies of unsafe water; in some areas, water was cut off for days or weeks because of the attacks. Since the 29 July attack by Israel on the only power plant in Gaza, which is likely to have constituted a war crime, Gaza has been without its primary source of electricity and the UN and World Health Organization (WHO) warned that the entire Strip faced a public health disaster.

According to the Israeli military, during the 50-day conflict Palestinian armed groups fired 4,562 rockets and mortar shells from the Gaza Strip, of which 3,641 exploded in Israeli territory, and 224 fell in built-up areas, while the Iron Dome missile defence system intercepted 735 rockets. There have been reports, unconfirmed as yet by Amnesty International, that Palestinian armed groups fired indiscriminate rockets from near hospitals or health facilities, or otherwise used these facilities or areas for military purposes. Israeli civilian property has also been damaged by indiscriminate rockets fired by Palestinian armed groups.

The Palestinian President, Mahmoud Abbas, announced on 26 August that an Israeli and Palestinian ceasefire agreement had been brokered by the Egyptian authorities. Though the precise terms are not known they will reportedly relax Israeli and Egyptian border controls with Gaza as well as allowing humanitarian supplies and construction materials into Gaza, and the widening of Gaza's fishing zone. Movement restrictions on fishing areas, as well as farmland near the Israeli security buffer zone, are already reported to have been relaxed after the ceasefire. Negotiations on other persistent issues including the demand for the release of Palestinian prisoners and detainees held by Israel, the establishment of a seaport and Israel's calls for the disarming of Hamas and other armed groups in Gaza are scheduled to recommence in Cairo in September.

The crippling blockade on Gaza for more than seven years, restricting the movement of people and goods in and out of the Strip has decimated the economy and basic infrastructure. Though Israel is the occupying power in the Gaza Strip since it has effective control over the territory and its population, it has not abided by the obligations of the Fourth Geneva Convention to provide for the welfare of those living under occupation who are considered protected persons; rather, it has hindered Palestinians' fulfilment of their right to an adequate standard of living, including their access to water, sanitation and health care and other essential utilities, all of which are in dire conditions. Amnesty International has condemned the Israeli blockade as collective punishment of the entire Gaza population. Lifting the blockade is Israel's obligation and should not be conditional on a ceasefire; it is an essential element of preventing any recurrence of the conflict.

Operation "Protective Edge" was the third major Israeli offensive against the Gaza Strip in less than six years. Victims of past violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, including war crimes, have not obtained justice, truth and reparation, as required by international law. This impunity fails the victims, and sets the stage for more violations, as demonstrated by war crimes committed by both sides in the hostilities that have just ended.

Name: Population of Gaza Strip

Gender m/f: both

Further information on UA: 203/14 Index: MDE 15/027/2014 Issue Date: 29 August 2014