



## US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation

"We aim to change those US policies that both sustain Israel's 41-year occupation of the Palestinian West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem, and deny equal rights for all."

# Talking Points on Israel's Attacks on Gaza

## BACKGROUND

- During the first four days of Israel's air assault on Gaza, **more than 375 people have been killed, of whom at least 60 are civilians (including women and children), and around 1,700, most of whom are civilians, have been critically injured.**
- This is the deadliest attack on the Gaza Strip and indeed on the Palestinian people as a whole since the 1967 war in which Israel occupied the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and East Jerusalem.
- The population of Gaza today is more than 1.5 million people, over 80% of whom are refugees (many still living in camps) after their expulsion from their homes and villages by Israel in 1948. It is among the most densely populated areas on earth.

## WHO BROKE THE TRUCE?

- **The UN's Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territories noted** in his press release (Dec. 30, 2008) "The breakdown of a truce between Hamas and Israel had been observed for several months by both sides. **The truce was maintained by Hamas despite the failure of Israel to fulfill its obligation under the agreement to improve the living conditions of the people of Gaza.** The recent upsurge of violence occurred after an Israeli incursion that killed several alleged militants within Gaza".

## VIOLATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL LAW

**The Fourth Geneva Convention (Article 33) prohibits collective punishment under any circumstances.** While Palestinian rocket attacks against civilian targets in Israel are illegal, that rocket fire (which had created very few casualties until Israel's recent escalation) does not give Israel the right to punish the entire 1.5 million civilian people of the Gaza Strip. Israel is violating the Geneva Conventions when it denies them free and sufficient access to food, medicine, clean water, etc., and certainly when it launches massive airstrikes against the crowded Gaza Strip.

**Under international law, any military force must be necessary and proportionate.**

- Dropping hundreds of tons of bombs on one of the world's most densely populated areas does not meet this standard. Targeting civilians in collective punishment is never justified.
- **These Israeli attacks come on top of a brutal 18 months siege of the Gaza Strip, which has created a humanitarian catastrophe of dire proportions for its 1.5 million Palestinian residents** as a result of Israel's restrictions on access to food, fuel, medicine, electricity, and other necessities of life. The siege itself violated Israel's obligations as the Occupying Power – which is required by the Geneva Conventions to provide the occupied population with all the necessities of life, including food, water, education, health care, recreation, and more.

## DIDN'T ISRAEL END ITS OCCUPATION OF GAZA?

· In 2005 Israel withdrew its settlers and military troops from their permanent presence in Gaza. But Israel is still the military occupier of the Gaza Strip through its control of all entry and exit points, borders, air space, and territorial waters. Occupation is defined as control of a territory by another country; that defines exactly Israel's relationship to Gaza. Movement of people, food, water, fuel, and medicine in and out of the Gaza Strip has been virtually non-existent, a siege which has resulted in a humanitarian catastrophe of dire proportions.

## WHAT HAS THE U.S. GOT TO DO WITH IT?

- Israel carries out these attacks with F16 fighter jets, Apache helicopters, naval gunboats, and missiles produced in the United States and paid for with almost \$3 billion a year in U.S. taxpayer money.
  - o From 2001-2006, the United States transferred more than \$200 million of F-16 spare parts to Israel and more than \$100 million in helicopter spare parts
  - o In 2008, the United States gave Israel 186 million gallons of JP-8 aviation jet fuel (while Americans were paying \$5 a gallon at the pump) and signed a contract to transfer \$1.9 billion in littoral combat ships to the Israeli navy
  - o Last year, in a violation of the Arms Export Control Act, the United States signed a \$1.3 billion contract with Raytheon to transfer thousands of TOW, Hellfire, and "bunker buster" missiles

**The Bush Administration and its doctrine** of arbitrary preventative and disproportionate military action against civilians **have implicitly and explicitly endorsed the Israeli attacks.** And the United States remains complicit in Israeli violations of U.S. and international law through its continual provision of military aid and through its protection of Israel in the United Nations, which prevents Israel from being held accountable by the international community.

## WILL PRESIDENT OBAMA BE ANY DIFFERENT?

- **President-Elect Obama has promised to respect the rule of law, re-establishing the United States' reputation and standing in the world,** but only consistent pressure will make it possible to hold President-Elect Obama to his promises. The incoming Obama Administration should not be locked into an ill-informed and counter-productive policy that turns a blind eye to Israeli war crimes.
- **The incoming administration should move forward with a policy that respects the need for human rights and security for ALL parties involved and chart a new course for the United States that respects our international obligations.**