

Chronology: Which Side Violated the Israel-Gaza Ceasefire?

The Bush Administration and The New York Times v. Amnesty International

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In-depth Report: [PALESTINE](#)

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Introduction

June 18, 2008

Israel has approved a ceasefire to end months of bitter clashes with the Palestinian Islamist movement Hamas in Gaza, Israeli officials have confirmed. ***Under the terms of the truce, which is set to begin Thursday (June 19), Israel will ease its blockade on the Gaza Strip.*** At the same time, talks to release an Israeli soldier [Gilad Shalit] held by Hamas would intensify, an Israeli official said. ***Hamas, which controls Gaza, says it is confident that all militants will abide by the truce [by not firing rockets into southern Israel].*** The agreement is supposed to last six months. (Emphasis added) ("Israel Agrees to Gaza Ceasefire," BBC, June 18, 2008)

December 28, 2008

"The United States strongly condemns the repeated rocket and mortar attacks against Israel and holds Hamas responsible for breaking the cease-fire and for the renewal of violence in Gaza." U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. ("White House Puts Onus on Hamas to End Escalation of Violence," *New York Times*, December 28, 2008)

December 30, 2008

"Israel must defend itself. And Hamas must bear responsibility for ending a six-month cease-fire this month with a barrage of rocket attacks into Israeli territory." ("War Over Gaza," *New York Times* editorial, December 30, 2008)

Ceasefire Chronology: (See November 5 and December 28 Entries Below For Direct References to Breaking the Ceasefire)

July 4, 2008

A humanitarian crisis is engulfing Gaza-not the result of a natural disaster but entirely man-made and avoidable. The tightening of the Israeli blockade since June 2007 has left the population, 1.5 million Palestinians, trapped and with few resources. They are surviving, but only just. Some 80 per cent depend on the trickle of international aid that the Israeli government allows in.

In the first five months of 2008 some 380 Palestinians, more than a third of them unarmed

civilians and including more than 60 children, were killed by the Israeli army, almost all of them in the Gaza Strip. In the same period 25 Israelis, 16 of them civilians, were killed by Palestinian armed groups.

A ceasefire between Israeli forces and Palestinian armed groups came into force on 19 June and at the time of writing it looked uncertain. Israeli officials however, insisted that Gaza's border remains sealed so long as Hamas does not release the Israeli soldier they are holding. Some 8,500 Palestinians are detained in Israeli jails. Of these, 900 are from the Gaza Strip, all of whom have been denied visits by their families since June 2007.

Palestinian armed groups in Gaza continue to hold an Israeli soldier, who was captured in June 2006, and to deny him access to the International Committee of the Red Cross. ("Gaza Blockage: Collective Punishment," Amnesty International, July 4, 2008)

August 14, 2008

Some 400 Palestinian students may lose their university places and scholarships unless the Israeli authorities allow them to leave the Gaza Strip before the new academic year, which starts in the next few weeks. The students have enrolled to study subjects including law, sciences, business and medicine.

At least 37 of the students have university places and scholarships in Europe and North America, while hundreds of others are due to travel to universities in countries in the Middle East and elsewhere. Several of these students have been denied permission to leave Gaza since last year. ("Freedom of Movement, Right to Education Denied," Amnesty International, August 14, 2008)

August 15, 2008

Amnesty International has described as scandalous the Israeli army's account of firing a tank shell that killed Reuters cameraman Fadel Shana as a "sound" decision. The army reached the conclusion as part of a so-called investigation into the killing of the journalist and three other unarmed civilians, including 2 children, on 16 April 2008.

The army's so-called investigation lacked any semblance of impartiality and Amnesty International called for an independent and impartial investigation into the killing. The organization said that the army's conclusion can only reinforce the culture of impunity that has led to so many reckless and disproportionate killings of children and other unarmed civilians by Israeli forces in Gaza.

Fadel Shana worked for Reuters press agency and was in a car clearly marked as Press. He and his colleague left the car, wearing visible Press flak-jackets and he was killed by an Israeli tank he was filming. The tank fired a shell at Shana, which also hit the civilians, including children, and injured his colleague and others around him. ("Army's So-Called Inquiry into Cameraman's Killing in Gaza a Scandal," Amnesty International, August 15, 2008)

August 22, 2008

With the exception of Karima Abu Dalal (who was finally able to leave Gaza through an exceptional arrangement via the border with Egypt after many months' delay to her treatment for Hodgkin's lymphoma) all the critically ill patients named above are still being

denied permission to leave Gaza for treatment abroad.

The Israeli authorities are refusing to allow these and hundreds of other patients to leave Gaza to obtain specialized treatment unavailable in Gaza, for undisclosed and unsubstantiated security reasons. Dozens of patients have died in recent months following delays to, or denials of, permits to leave Gaza. ("Further Information on Medical Concern," Amnesty International, August 22, 2008)

August 27, 2008

With Gaza locked down and cut off from the outside world by a stifling Israeli blockade, 46 peace activists from the world over set sail for Gaza on 22 August to, in their words, "break the siege that Israel has imposed on the civilian population of Gaza..., to express our solidarity with the suffering people of Gaza, and to create a free and regular channel between Gaza and the outside world."

The blockade imposed by Israel on the Gaza Strip over a year ago has left the entire population of 1.5 million Palestinians trapped with dwindling resources and an economy in ruins. Some 80 per cent of the population now depend on the trickle of international aid that the Israeli army allows in. This humanitarian crisis is man-made and entirely avoidable.

The Israeli authorities argue that the blockade on Gaza is in response to Palestinian attacks, especially the indiscriminate rockets fired from Gaza at the nearby Israeli town of Sderot. These and other Palestinian attacks killed 25 Israelis in the first half of this year; in the same period Israeli forces killed 400 Palestinians.

However, the Israeli blockade does not target the Palestinian armed groups responsible for attacks-it collectively punishes the entire population of Gaza.

Though a ceasefire between Israeli forces and Palestinian armed groups has held in Gaza since 19 June 2008, the Israeli blockade remains in place.

Israel has banned exports from Gaza altogether and has reduced entry of fuel and goods to a trickle-mostly humanitarian aid, foodstuff and medical supplies. Basic necessities are in short supply or not available at all in Gaza. The shortages have pushed up food prices at a time when people can least afford to pay more. A growing number of Gazans have been pushed into extreme poverty and suffer from malnutrition.

With the ceasefire holding, the suffering in Gaza has fallen off the international news agenda. However, Amnesty International members continue to campaign, calling:

on the Israeli authorities to immediately lift the blockade, allow unhindered passage into Gaza of sufficient quantities of fuel, electricity and other necessities; and allow those who want to leave Gaza to do so, notably patients in need of medical treatment not available in Gaza and students enrolled in universities abroad, and also to allow them later to return; on Palestinian armed groups not to resume rocket and other attacks on Israeli civilians. ("Trapped: Collective Punishment in Gaza," Amnesty International, August 27, 2008)

August 29, 2008

The Israeli authorities are still denying scores of critically ill patients the authorization they

need to leave Gaza for medical treatment that is unavailable in Gaza. Hospitals in Gaza continue to lack vital medical equipment and trained personnel to carry out advanced medical treatment, including many surgical operations and the provision of chemotherapy for cancer patients. Even those patients who are given permission to leave Gaza for treatment are often suffering as a result of delays in receiving exit permits, which contribute to a decline in patient's health and emotional well-being.

Interrogation by the General Security Service

Over the past year, the denial of permits to seriously ill patients has primarily been based on undisclosed security reasons. Some patients from Gaza testified to Amnesty International that they were openly told in interviews with the Israeli General Security Service (GSS) [Israel's counterintelligence and internal security service, also known as Shin Bet] at the Erez Crossing point at the northern border with Israel that they would not receive treatment in Israel unless they become informants for the GSS. As Physicians for Human Rights-Israel (PHR-Israel) describes in a recent report, "patients are detained for interrogation at Erez Crossing, and requested either to provide information or to act as collaborators on a regular basis as a condition for permission to exit Gaza for medical treatment."

The report provides testimonies that PHR-Israel has received from a number of patients that demonstrate this practice. According to PHR-Israel, rejection or approval of a patient's request to leave Gaza for treatment almost entirely depends on the GSS who are taking advantage of the vulnerability of patients who have no other means of accessing medical care.

Even patients who already have an exit permit from the authorities to cross into Israel at Erez are being denied permission to leave Gaza after an "unsatisfactory" interrogation. This policy by the GSS of questioning patients in exchange for entry into Israel appears to have become a formal part of the exit procedure for patients and is reportedly discouraging some patients from attempting to leave Gaza in the first place. ("Health Professional Action: Patients From Gaza Are Still Denied Access to Medical Treatment in Israel," Amnesty International, August 29, 2008)

October 16, 2008

The children named above [ages 5 months, 1.2 years, 1.2 years, 1.5 years, 5 years, and 6 years] suffer from serious heart conditions including congenital heart defects commonly known as holes in the heart. All the children need urgent surgery that cannot be provided in Gaza, which lacks both the necessary medical facilities and specialists. The children were due to be operated on by a team of British heart specialists at Makassad Hospital in East Jerusalem during the week beginning 4 October 2008. They were not able to leave the Gaza Strip because the Israeli authorities refused permissions to their mothers/grandmothers to leave Gaza to accompany them. Soheb Wael Alqasas has already missed six appointments for his surgery in recent months because his mother and grandmother were repeatedly refused permits to accompany him to the hospital in Jerusalem.

A team of Italian heart specialists will be conducting a week of paediatric cardiac surgery at the Makassad Hospital from 6 November. It is imperative that the six children are able to attend the Makassad Hospital in time to undergo surgery by the visiting team of specialists. For this to be possible their relatives must be allowed to travel with them to the hospital in Jerusalem. ("Medical Concern," Amnesty International, October 16, 2008)

November 5, 2008

A spate of Israeli and Palestinian attacks and counter-attacks in the past 24 hours could spell the end of a five-and-a-half-month ceasefire. This would once again put the civilian populations of Gaza and southern Israel in the line of fire.

The killing of six Palestinian militants in Gaza by Israeli forces in a ground incursion and air strikes on 4 November was followed by a barrage of dozens of Palestinian rockets on nearby towns and villages in the south of Israel. The Palestinian attacks caused no casualties or damage, but there is a real risk that any further armed actions by either side would risk igniting another deadly campaign.

The ceasefire was agreed between Israel and Hamas last June and has been in force since then. It has been the single most important factor in reducing civilian casualties and attacks on civilians to the lowest level since the outbreak of the uprising (intifada) more than eight years ago.

The ceasefire has brought enormous improvements in the quality of life in Sderot and other Israeli villages near Gaza, where before the ceasefire residents lived in fear of the next Palestinian rocket strike. However, nearby in the Gaza Strip the Israeli blockade remains in place and the population has so far seen few dividends from the ceasefire. Since June 2007, the entire population of 1.5 million Palestinians has been trapped in Gaza, with dwindling resources and an economy in ruins. Some 80 percent of the population now depend on the trickle of international aid that the Israeli army allows in. (Emphasis added) ("Gaza Ceasefire at Risk," Amnesty International, November 5, 2008)

November 14, 2008

The Israeli army has completely blocked the delivery of urgently needed humanitarian aid and medical supplies to the Gaza Strip for more than a week. Very little fuel has been allowed in. Amnesty International urged the Israeli authorities on Friday to allow their immediate passage.

"This latest tightening of the Israeli blockade has made an already dire humanitarian situation markedly worse. It is nothing short of collective punishment on Gaza's civilian population and it must stop immediately," said Philip Luther, Deputy Director of Amnesty International's Middle East and North Africa Programme.

Eighty per cent of the population of Gaza has been dependent on the trickle of humanitarian aid previously allowed into Gaza until Wednesday, 5 November. Industrial fuel, which is donated by the European Union and needed to power Gaza's power plant, has also been blocked, causing a blackout in large parts of Gaza. The United Nations Relief and Work Agency (UNRWA), the main UN aid agency, which provides humanitarian assistance to close to one million Palestinian refugees in Gaza, announced on Thursday that its supplies had run out. At the same time, the Israeli authorities have been denying access to Gaza to foreign journalists for a week and a convoy of European diplomats were likewise refused entry on Thursday. "Gaza is cut off from the outside world and Israel is seemingly not keen for the world to see the suffering that its blockade is causing the one and a half million Palestinians who are virtually trapped there," said Philip Luther. The breakdown last week of a five-and-a-half-month ceasefire between Israeli forces and Palestinian militants in Gaza has

generated a renewed wave of violence. The killing of six Palestinian militants in Israeli air strikes and ground attacks on 4 November prompted a barrage of Palestinian rockets on nearby Israeli towns and villages.

Five other Palestinian militants have been killed by Israeli forces in recent days. Palestinian rocket attacks have continued. No Israeli casualties had been reported until earlier today, when one Israeli was lightly wounded by shrapnel in an attack on the Israeli city of Sderot. ("Israeli Army Blocks Deliveries to Gaza," Amnesty International, November 14, 2008)

November 17, 2008

The impediments faced by Palestinians in Gaza in obtaining access to health care continue to be a cause for serious concern. The Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip has caused a further deterioration in the humanitarian situation, health and sanitation problems, as well as extreme poverty and malnutrition.

With only a few exceptions, the entire population of 1.5 million people are trapped in Gaza. Students are unable to attend university studies and jobs abroad and critically ill patients in need of medical care that is unavailable in local hospitals are often prevented from leaving Gaza. ("Health Professional Action: Crushing the Right to Health," Amnesty International, November 17, 2008)

November 17, 2008

The Israeli army allowed a limited number of trucks carrying humanitarian assistance into Gaza for the first time in two weeks on Monday. However, the long-term nature of the blockade and restrictions on the flow of goods into Gaza has led to a situation where reserves have long been depleted.

"What is necessary, at a minimum, is for Israel to allow regular and unhindered flow of humanitarian aid, medical supplies and other basic necessities into Gaza," said Donatella Rovera, Amnesty International researcher on Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. ("Israeli Army Relaxes Restrictions on Humanitarian Aid to Gaza," Amnesty International, November 17, 2008)

December 5, 2008

The Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip is having ever more serious consequences on its population. In the past month the supply of humanitarian aid and basic necessities to Gaza has been reduced from a trickle to an intermittent drip. The blockade has become tighter than ever since the breakdown of a five-and-a-half-month ceasefire between Israeli forces and Palestinian militants on 5 November.

"The Israeli authorities might be allowing through enough for the survival of Gaza's population, but this is nowhere near enough for the 1.5 million inhabitants of Gaza to live with dignity," said Donatella Rovera, Amnesty International's researcher on Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

As supplies are being further withheld, most mills have shut down because they have little or no grain. People who have long been deprived of many food items now cannot even find bread at times. Reserves of food have long been depleted and the meagre quantities allowed into Gaza are not even enough to meet the immediate needs. Families never know

if they will have food for their children the following day.

When people do have food, they generally have no cooking gas or electricity with which to cook it. Last week, less than 10 per cent of the weekly requirement of cooking gas was allowed into Gaza. ("Gaza Reduced to Bare Survival," Amnesty International, December 5, 2008)

December 28, 2008

Amnesty International has called on Israeli forces and Palestinian armed groups to immediately halt the unlawful attacks carried out as part of the escalation of violence which has caused the death of some 280 Palestinians and one Israeli civilian since December 27.

This is the highest level of Palestinian fatalities and casualties in four decades of Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Scores of unarmed civilians, as well as police personnel who were not directly participating in the hostilities, are among the Palestinian victims of the Israeli bombardment in the Gaza Strip.

"Such disproportionate use of force by Israel is unlawful and risks igniting further violence in the whole region," said Amnesty International. "The escalation of violence comes at a time when the civilian population already faces a daily struggle for survival due to the Israeli blockade which has prevented even food and medicines from entering Gaza."

" Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups, for their part, share responsibility for the escalation. Their continuous rocket attacks on towns and villages in southern Israel are unlawful and can never be justified," Amnesty International said.

This latest Israeli onslaught brings the number of Palestinians killed by Israeli forces this year to some 650, at least a third of whom are unarmed civilians, including 70 children. In the same period, Palestinian armed groups have killed 25 Israelis, 16 of them civilians, including four children.

The ceasefire effectively ended after six Palestinian militants were killed by Israeli forces in Gaza force on 4 November and a barrage of Palestinians rockets were launched on nearby towns and villages in the south of Israel. (Emphasis added) ("Civilians Must Be Protected in Gaza and Israel," Amnesty International, December 28, 2008)

Howard Friel is coauthor with Richard Falk of [Israel-Palestine on Record: How The New York Times Misreports Conflict in the Middle East](#) (Verso, 2007), and with Falk of [The Record of the Paper: How The New York Times Misreports U.S. Foreign Policy](#) (Verso, 2004)

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