

Gaza and the Crimes of Hosni Mubarak

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As staggering as the statistics detailing Gaza's destruction may be, they still do not present a complete picture of the unique travesties and tragedies suffered by individuals, families, neighborhoods and villages during Israel's savage 22-day assault on the tiny territory. Yet, they bear repeating. From the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (www.pcbs.gov.ps) and various NGOs:

- 1,334 killed, one-third of them children (more children than 'militants' were killed)
- 5,450 injured, one-third of them children
- 100,000 displaced, 50,000 made homeless
- 4,100 residential homes and buildings destroyed, 17,000 damaged (together accounting for 14 percent of all buildings in Gaza)
- 29 destroyed educational institutions, including the American International School
- 92 destroyed or damaged mosques

- 1,500 destroyed shops, factories and other commercial facilities

- 20 destroyed ambulances
- 35-60% of agricultural land ruined
- \$1.9 billion in total estimated damages

In the face of such massive devastation and hardship—and this after the crippling 18-month siege had already reduced Gaza to a state of bare subsistence—the behavior and actions of the regime of Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak remain as contemptible after the war as they were before.

On Dec. 25, just two days prior to the onset of the vicious aerial bombardment of Gaza, Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni met with Mubarak in Cairo. It is understood that Egypt gave the green light for the attack in the hope that the ruling (and democratically-elected) Islamist group Hamas would be toppled and the more pliant Fatah faction, led by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, would supplant it.

Rafah crossing sealed

The reasons for Mubarak's animus toward Hamas, and by extension, for his reprehensible decision to keep the vital Rafah border crossing with Gaza closed to humanitarian supplies was [explained earlier](#).

Apologists for the dictator will say the 2005 agreement between Israel, the Palestinian

Authority (PA) and the European Union (EU) that regulates movement across the border prohibits it from being opened in the absence of PA and EU observers.

It makes no mention, however, of barring critical humanitarian goods from reaching the territory, where conditions were becoming ever more desperate. Additionally, Egypt was a non-signatory to the treaty, which had already expired after one year and was never renewed.

If keeping the Rafah crossing—the only gateway to non-Israeli territory from Gaza—closed before and during the war was not a criminal act, doing so in its aftermath must surely be.

Preventing Gaza’s children from obtaining medical care

Reporting for *The National*, [Jonathan Cook details](#) four cases of children in Gaza who required urgent, life-saving surgery in France, but were denied entry into Egypt via Rafah. As the aunt of the one of the war’s child casualties remarked, “Each morning we arrived at the crossing and the Egyptian soldiers cursed us and told us to go away.”

Doctors accompanying the children were allowed to pass into Egypt, but the ambulances carrying them were not. Their exclusion was attributed to the Palestinian health ministry in Ramallah who did not authorize their exit, stating there was “no more reason to refer any more children for treatment abroad.” Egyptian authorities abided by their ruling, not wanting to create diplomatic trouble.

But that is no excuse.

First, Hamas, democratically elected to power in the 2006 Palestinian parliamentary elections, is the legitimate governing authority. Second, the term of Mahmoud Abbas as president of the PA expired on Jan. 9. Finally, emergency medical situations always take precedent over (alleged) bureaucratic considerations. Those in control of the Rafah crossing must be held directly responsible.

Feeding Israeli soldiers, not Gaza’s people

In light of catastrophic circumstances due to lack of basic foodstuffs (75 percent of Gaza’s children are thought to be malnourished and 30 percent are stunted in growth), a [recent report](#) by the popular Egyptian weekly *Al-Osboa* was all the more shocking. It revealed that an Egyptian company was allowed to provide Israel Defense Force soldiers with food during the war while Gazans were starving.

Iranian Red Crescent ship kept offshore

An Iranian ship sent by the country’s Red Crescent Society carrying 2,000 tons of medical supplies and other humanitarian aid for Gaza continues to be anchored 15 miles off Gaza’s

shore. It had already been intercepted and prevented by the Israeli navy from reaching Gaza. Now, it awaits permission to dock in the Egyptian port of Al-Areesh to unload its cargo. To date, permission has not been granted.

In light of the above, blistering criticism of the Egyptian regime's behavior has come from Hezbollah leader Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah:

"[Egypt] told the Arab and Islamic world that the Rafah border was opened and it was not ... The opening of the Rafah crossing is crucial to the Palestinian people, the Resistance and the living conditions there ... its closure is one of the biggest crimes in history."

The reply from the Egyptian government was all too predictable:

"Hassan Nasrallah's criticism of Egypt confirms once more that he is nothing more than an agent of the Iranian regime and takes his orders from Tehran."

Irrespective of whether Nasrallah takes orders from Tehran or Tokyo, there were no substantive answers to his accusations. Instead, Egypt reverted to parroting tired anti-Iranian rhetoric which increasingly is falling on deaf ears.

Abetting the siege of Gaza, giving sanction to the Israeli onslaught and its crimes against humanity, and afterward, preventing aid from getting into the territory and the injured from getting out, are all egregious offenses.

Just as many call for Olmert, Barak, Livni and the generals and soldiers who participated in this war to be prosecuted for violating international law and committing war crimes, Mubarak's own complicity makes him equally liable in facing similar charges.

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