

Israel's Wanton Aggression On Gaza

By [Stephen Lendman](#)

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Theme: [Crimes against Humanity](#)

In-depth Report: [PALESTINE](#)

It's not the first time and won't be the last. On December 27, AP reported that:

"Israeli aircraft struck Hamas security compounds across Gaza on Saturday in unprecedented waves of simultaneous attacks, and Hamas and medics reported dozens of people were killed."

Haaretz headlined:

"Israel launched (Operation Case Lead) Saturday morning (at around 11:30AM with no warning) the start of a massive offensive against Qassam rocket and mortar fire on its southern communities, targeting dozens of buildings belonging to the ruling Hamas militant group."

Aljazeera.net reported that "Israeli missiles target Gaza," and continued:

"Israel has launched air strikes on Hamas installations across the Gaza Strip, killing at least 155 people and causing heavy damage, according to officials and witnesses."

"At least 30 missiles (later over 100 reported) were fired at targets on Saturday (morning), with the head of emergency services in Gaza saying at least 200 people were also wounded." By Sunday afternoon, Ma'an News reported much higher numbers – at least 285 known dead, more expected, and over 900 injured, many seriously.

Among the dead was Gaza's police chief, Tawfiq Jabber, after a missile struck a police graduation ceremony in Gaza City. Other "casualties" (presumed killed) were governor of the Al-Wusta (central) Districts, Ahmad Abu Aashur, and commander of Security and Protection Services (in the government police), Ismail Al-Ja'bari.

The Strip's interior ministry reported that all Gaza security compounds were destroyed. According to Hamas' deputy leader, Mousa Abu Marzook: So far "the aggression (hasn't) stop(ped)....they are targeting all the police headquarters and offices. We will defend our people, we will retaliate against this aggression....our military will retaliate."

Marzook asked the international community to condemn Israel's wanton state terrorism. "Nobody in this world can accept what happened....the international community (must) stand against this and say that it is not acceptable." Former Palestinian information minister, Mustafa Barghouthi, said: Israel didn't attack Hamas, it attacked "the whole population and the free will of the people of Gaza. (Israel is guilty of) war crimes." Hamas' leader, Ismail Haniyeh, said "Palestine has never witnessed an uglier massacre."

In Damascus, Khled Meshal, Hamas' political leader in exile, said Hamas pursued "all

peaceful options without results” in calling for new Intifada resistance. The Arab League was tepid in its response. It called an “emergency” Sunday meeting in Cairo, then postponed it until Wednesday, December 31.

Meanwhile, the raids continue; the death and injury toll mounts; vast amounts of despair, anger, and destruction as well; and Fatah leader and Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas (from Cairo) blamed Hamas for the violence. That provoked outrage from Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoum. He accused Abbas of “downplay(ing) the sufferings of our people in Gaza, belittl(ing) their pains, (and) providing justification of the holocaust and war waged by Israel.”

As always, most of the dead and wounded are civilian men, women and children. No matter, according to Israeli military spokesman Avi Benayahu saying: Saturday’s attack is “only the beginning. The operation was launched following the violation of the terms of the lull by Hamas and the unceasing attacks by Hamas authorities on Israeli civilians in the south of the country.”

In fact, “attacks” were the pretext, not the cause of Israel’s aggression. Since Hamas won a majority in the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) in January 2006, Israel, Washington and the West withheld recognition and more. All outside aid was cut off, an economic embargo and sanctions were imposed, and the legitimate government was isolated and vilified.

The leading candidate to become Israel’s next prime minister, Tzipi Livni, vows as a “strategic objective” to overthrow Hamas by military, economic and diplomatic means. Her main opponent, Benjamin Netanyahu, pledges to “topple the Hamas regime” and end its effective resistance against an oppressive occupation.

All along, Hamas has been conciliatory to no avail. Earlier in the year, its leaders agreed to a ceasefire and observed months of it unilaterally, despite repeated Israeli violations and Gaza being under siege. On November 4, it ended after the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) entered the Strip (without cause) and killed six Hamas officers supposedly to close off tunnels close to the Kisufim roadblock. Thereafter, in spite of both sides calling for peace, IDF hostilities continued.

Israel is a serial aggressor. Hamas responds in self-defense as international law allows. Article 51 of the UN Charter permits the “right of individual or collective self-defense (against an armed attack) until the Security Council has taken measures to maintain international peace and security.”

On December 21, 1965, the UN General Assembly adopted Res. 2131 titled: “Declaration on the Inadmissibility of Intervention in the Domestic Affairs of States and the Protection of Their Independence and Sovereignty.” It called armed intervention, subversion, and all forms of indirect intervention synonymous with aggression and, for the first time, recognized “the legitimacy of struggle by the people under colonial rules (including occupation) to exercise their rights to self-determination and independence.”

On November 22, 1974, the General Assembly passed Res. 3236 recognizing that Palestinians have the same right to self-determination as other sovereign states.

On June 8, 1977, Protocol 1 to the August 1949 Geneva Conventions was passed - “relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts.” It declared the legitimacy of

armed struggle (or resistance) to achieve self-determination as long as no proscribed methods are used. Further, “all states (are urged) to provide material and moral assistance to the national liberation movements in colonial territories (including occupied people seeking freedom).”

Rarely do Palestinians get any, and, since 1967, have been some of the most isolated people in the world. For Gazans, no outside aid gets in, except for what Israel occasionally lets UN and humanitarian agencies supply and the little coming through tunnels on Egypt’s border. It’s never enough and falls woefully short of minimum amounts needed to survive. The result is a growing humanitarian crisis, an entire people on the verge of breakdown, compounded by mass slaughter, destruction, and it’s “only beginning” according to the IDF spokesman.

The world community is silent and lets Israel do as it pleases – despite repeated international law violations, willful acts of aggression, grievous harm to four million people under occupation, including 1.5 million under a medieval Gaza siege, now under attack.

Reports were that EU nations and Russia called for (but didn’t demand) an end to hostilities. According to Reuters, Washington urged Israel to avoid civilian casualties but stopped short of calling for an end to the attacks. White House spokesman Gordon Johndroe blamed Palestinians in saying “ Hamas’ continued rocket attacks into Israel must cease if the violence is to stop.” Unsaid was that they respond to IDF violence or that until December 27 no Israeli was killed or injured.

Blame the Victim, Not the Aggressor

On Saturday, Condoleeza Rice accused Hamas for the violence. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon could only express “deep alarm,” and where was Barack Obama? An AP photo showed him on vacation “working out” at the Semper Fit Center at the Marine Corp Base Hawaii in Kailua, Hawaii on Saturday, and CBS News reported that he’s “closely monitoring global events, including the situation in Gaza, but there is one president at a time,” according to Brooke Anderson, his chief national security spokesperson.

In a July 2008 interview, The New York Times asked Obama if Israel should negotiate with Hamas in Gaza. He replied that “I don’t think any country would find it acceptable to have missiles raining down on the heads of their citizens....I expect Israelis to do (all they can to stop them)....In terms of negotiating with Hamas, it is very hard to negotiate with a group that is not representative of a nation state, does not recognize your right to exist, (and) has consistently used terror as a weapon. Hamas is a terrorist organization....it’s hard for Israel to negotiate with a country like that.”

Hamas was democratically elected. It’s the legitimate Palestinian government. It’s falsely called a terrorist organization, and it has every right to resist an illegal occupation under international law. It observed a unilateral ceasefire for months and extended peace overtures numerous times in the past. Israel spurned them by dividing Gaza and the West Bank, co-opting Mamoud Abbas, inciting Fatah against Hamas, isolating Gaza, and pursuing a policy of aggression, killings, targeted assassinations, mass incarcerations, and torture with full support from Washington, the West, and (from his comments above) the incoming Obama administration.

The UN Refugee Works Relief Agency’s (UNWRA) operations head for Palestinian refugees,

John Ging, expressed outraged on what's happening. Earlier he said: Gazans got nothing from the months of ceasefire. There was no "restoration of a dignified existence. We had our supplies restricted (during the period) to the point where we were left in a very vulnerable and precarious position" with very little food left until it ran out.

The Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) campaigns for Palestinian justice in areas of civil, human and political rights according to international law. Along with the Palestine Return Centre (PRC), the Palestinian Forum of Britain (PFB), the British Muslim Initiative (BMI), Stop the War, Friends of al Aqsa, the Muslim Association of Britain (MAB), and Respect, Islamic Human Rights Commission it organized emergency protests opposite Israel's London Embassy on December 28 and 29 to demand an end of the Gaza siege and ongoing aggression. The urgency was highlighted by saying: Israel's Cynicism (Is) Supported by the West's Complicity" as it called for public solidarity to end it.

For her part, Israeli foreign minister Tzipi Livni ordered the Ministry to "take emergency measures (to) open an aggressive and diplomatic international public relations campaign," according to Haaretz. In other words, Israel will spin its wanton aggression into justifiable self-defense and get dominant media help to sell it.

On December 27, The New York Times took the lead. It reported that "Israeli airstrikes hit Hamas security facilities in Gaza on Saturday in a crushing response to the group's rocket fire....Israeli military officials (called the attack) an effort to force Hamas to end its rocket barrages into southern Israel. Thousands of Israelis hurried into bomb shelters amid the hail of rockets," making it seem like Israel resembled London during the blitz when, in fact, Hamas attacks are mere pin pricks and only respond to first-strike Israeli attacks.

The Times and dominant media are silent on this. They continue spreading spurious lies about Hamas being "officially committed to Israel's destruction, and when it won Palestinian legislative elections in 2006 and then 'forcibly' took over Gaza in 2007, it said it would not recognize Israel, honor previous Palestinian Authority commitments to it, or end its violence against Israelis."

All of the above is untrue. The Times continues to report falsely. Hamas wants peace, has repeatedly been conciliatory, and its founder, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, said earlier that armed struggle would end "if the Zionists ended (their) occupation of Palestinian territories and stopped killing Palestinian women, children and innocent civilians."

Israel rejects all overtures. More recently, Hamas offered peace and Israeli recognition in return for a Palestinian state inside pre-1967 borders - its Occupied Territories that it's entitled to under international law.

As early as 1988, the PLO under Yasser Arafat accepted a two-state solution with Palestinians willing to settle for only 22% of their pre-1948 homeland - a generous offer that, if accepted, would have had two sovereign states living peacefully alongside each other as neighbors.

Israel rejects this out of hand. It chooses dominance over peace, violence over reconciliation, and imperial conquest above the rule of law. It's colonizing the West Bank, ethnically cleansing the population, and continues to terrorize Gaza. "The newspaper of record" is selective about "fit news to print," so uncomfortable truths are suppressed. It reported that one Israeli was killed Saturday and another four wounded, one seriously, but

didn't explain that previous rocket attacks caused no deaths or injuries.

After many months of siege compounded by ongoing attacks, Gaza is gravely affected, but so is the West Bank. Under the Fatah government, no rockets are launched, yet Israel maintains a violent occupation, continues to seize Palestinian land, expand its illegal settlements, and lets its residents terrorize Palestinians with impunity, even in cases of wanton killings and destruction of property.

Early Reports on the Ground and from Israel

On Saturday, Haaretz reported that 60 warplanes hit 50 targets simultaneously, then 20 more "struck 50 Palestinian rocket launchers in an effort to minimize Hamas' retaliatory strikes." The attack hit civilians with the IDF stating that those near targeted sites were "liable to get hurt." Some were children leaving school when the strikes were launched.

Haaretz writer Amos Harel called them "the harshest IDF assault on Gaza since the territory was captured during the Six-Day War in 1967." Palestinian sources described a massive attack, like "shock and awe," destroying about 40 targets in three to five minutes. The IDF spent months picking sites, and dozens more may "come under attack in the coming days. Little to no weight was apparently devoted to the question of harming innocent civilians. From Israel's standpoint, Hamas" brought this on itself. In Pentagon-speak, civilians are "collateral damage," but pictures of the slaughter show otherwise - stark evidence of crimes of war and against humanity that no authority will punish.

Also at issue is whether IDF ground forces will follow the air attacks, and if so, it won't be the first time. The right-wing Jerusalem Post quoted president Shimon Peres saying: "Israel will take all steps demanded of it to stop the rocket fire (but) we will not go into Gaza. There are other ways - we didn't leave Gaza in order to go back."

The Ma'an News Agency reported (through Monday AM) at least 310 killed and over 1000 wounded with medical sources saying arrivals at Gaza City hospitals are in "pieces." In addition, the Head of Emergency and ambulance department, Muawiya Hassanain, confirmed that medical crews continued pulling dozens from under rubble.

Things are desperate as he asked all Arab states for aid in the form of medications and operating supplies for those too badly injured to be moved. Hospital corridors are filled with bodies and gurneys, and local morgues are out of space.

Israeli defense minister and former prime minister, Ehud Barak, declared Gaza's 20 square kilometers a "special military zone" - a classification just short of a declaration of war. It already is for its people, and here's how Al-Azhar University professor Said Abdelwahed described conditions late Saturday:

"It is horrible outside! Minutes ago I heard the hissing of a Palestinian Qassam rocket, then another one accompanied by an explosion. It seems that the second one was hit by an Israeli aircraft that may have been targeting the Palestinian group. The news now is saying that an Israeli Apache helicopter has targeted a recreation ground with fish ponds."

"Al-Shifa hospital said that there are more than 195 dead and over 570 injured there. Every minute the number of casualties goes up. These are the figures in Gaza, but there are still no official statements from other towns and villages and refugee camps. Near our apartment, my youngest son was waiting for his school bus when the preventive security

department was hit 50 meters from where he was standing. Two men and two young girls died immediately.”

“It is utterly dark now. I am operating a small generator to contact the world via internet. Tonight everyone in Gaza is scared. It’s totally dark (there’s no power); children cry from fear; (at least) 206 people are dead. They (and the injured) line the floor at Al-Shifa hospital, but (it’s) poorly equipped. (Its) administration called on people to donate blood. The teachers’ syndicate declared a three days strike in protest....”

“Just in, Israeli aircraft (Saturday night) hit places east of Gaza City where a number of people were killed and injured. Casualties are rising. People remain under rubble. One mother lost two young daughters and a son as they were heading to school.”

“Tonight is cold mainly for those whose windows (were) shattered by explosions.” With Gaza under siege, “there is no glass available” to replace them. “In the apartment building where I live, 7 apartments witness freezing cold nights. They use blankets to cover in the place of the broken windows. Hundreds of homes” are in the same condition. Hamas’ leader Ismail Haniyeh “gave a televised speech....to raise morale and to reconfirm that Hamas will not surrender. The death toll reached 210” and number of seriously injured is now up to 200. Another air raid” is now in progress north of Gaza City.

UNRWA Expresses “Horror”

The UN Relief and Works Agency commissioner Karen AbuZayd was outraged over Israel’s attack, the mass killings and destruction, and expressed her “deep sadness at the terrible loss in human life.” She reminded Israel that it’s a signatory to “international conventions that protect non-combatants in times of conflict (and added that) these conventions are worthless if they are not upheld.” A statement said that UNRWA will “exert all efforts to respond as quickly as possible to relieve suffering and pain (and added that today’s attacks follow) weeks of a tight blockade that prevented UNRWA and other humanitarian agencies from assisting the population (that’s) unable to (meet) their basic needs, and now” they’re under attack.

The Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHD) Expresses Outrage in Calling for An Immediate End of the Attacks.

It blamed the suffering in Israel and Gaza “squarely with successive Israeli governments” in citing 41 years of “increasingly oppressive Israeli Occupation without a hint that a sovereign and viable Palestinian state will ever emerge.”

Why so? Because Israel and Washington won’t tolerate one beyond the fiction of isolated, surrounded, impoverished, and impotent bantustan outposts that IDF forces can enter at will and wreak havoc on a helpless population.

Hamas and Islamic Jihad Response

After the air strikes, Hamas ordered its Al-Qassam Brigades to respond “by any means necessary.” Spokesman Fawzi Barhoum called for a “massive response” and for renewal of others inside Israel. Islamic Jihad leader Khaled Al-Batsh called Israel’s attack “open war.” He also condemned the world community and Arab states for their “silence on such massacres” and vowed that Israel “would never make the resistance factions surrender.”

West Bank Protests

Demonstrations erupted across the West Bank, including in Bethlehem, Ramallah city center, the Ad-Duheisha refugee camp, Hebron, Tulkarem, and East Jerusalem. Violent clashes broke out between Palestinian youths and IDF forces in Shufat refugee camp on the northern outskirts of East Jerusalem. Also in Qalandia, Ar-Ram and Al-Isawiya. Dozens of injuries and arrests were reported. Black flags were hung around the city and a commercial strike was declared.

Tulkarem governor Talal Duweikat and Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) member Hasan Khriesah joined hundreds of others in the streets. The city declared a day of mourning in response.

In Hebron, hundreds of university students protested for an end to violence. They chanted anti-occupation slogans and called for Fatah and Hamas to unify for a common purpose. The group marched to the Bab Az-Zawiyah neighborhood where confrontations erupted with IDF forces, and they, in turn fired suffocating amounts of tear gas.

In Ramallah, Fatah organized a rally for hundreds and called for a general strike to close all city shops for the day. Demonstrators and international community institutions raised banners with slogans saying "one blood, one nation, Gaza and we are with you." Ministry of Prisoners Affairs, Ziyad Abu Ein, called on all Palestinians to unite in dark days. PLC member Mustafa Barghouthi called Israeli violence "their harshest crimes against Palestinians" and condemned world and Arab leaders for their silence.

In Bethlehem, protests erupted in the Ad-Duheisha refugee camp (south of the city) and a larger crowd assembled in the city.

A December 27 Palestinian press release read:

"A demonstration to condemn the massacres being committed in Gaza."

"Palestinian Civil Society organizations in the Bethlehem area, people of various political affiliations, Christians, and Muslims, and all people of conscience in the Bethlehem area are gathering at 5PM (Saturday) in front of the Church of Nativity and Omar's mosque in Bethlehem."

Through Sunday afternoon, around 300 people were massacred by bombing besieged Gaza. Over 1000 were reported injured as well. The victims include men, women, and children, and the numbers keeps rising. "Join us today as we call for ending the massacres, ending the siege on Gaza, for reconciliation between all Palestinians, and for freedom."

Signed:

Khalid AlAZza
Dr. Mazin Qumsiyeh
Dr. Abdelfattah Abusrour

The Union of Health Work Committees - Gaza - Late Saturday Press Release - from Executive Director Yousef Momeusa

After two waves of Israeli air attacks, "television footage showed dead bodies scattered on a

road and wounded and dead being carried away by distraught rescuers. There was widespread damage to buildings.” The number of dead exceed 200 and is rising. At “least 750 were wounded, 125 with critical injuries.” Updated numbers are much higher and continue climbing.

“The military operation makes the Palestinian blood fall like rain. As a consequence, the civilian population in the cities of Rafah, Khan-Younis, middle camps, Gaza City, Beit-Hanoun and Beit-Lahiya and in the refugee camp of Jabalia are suffering from the most horrible onslaught of Israeli military power....The number of dead and injured are increasing by the minute.”

“The infrastructure is being destroyed leaving many areas without power and water. Medical supplies in the hospital are largely exhausted (and) food supplies are dwindling.” A real health crisis looms. UHWC is working “around the clock at the risk to themselves to deal with the crisis....The entire world is witnessing these scandalous and outrageous acts, and yet no concrete steps have been taken!!”

“UHWC asks you to issue a strong Last Appeal Statement condemning Israel’s human rights violations against the Palestinian people and to demand a cessation of this military offensive....There are no political considerations which can justify the silence of the international community any longer.”

Signed,

Dr. Yousef Momeusa
Executive Director

Professor Said Abdelwahed of Al-Azhar University, Gaza
on the End of the Six-Month Ceasefire

Prior to Israel’s December 27 attack, he feared the worst and said it “means escalation; bombardment, air raids. It means military activities on the border. The last six months brought big pressures on our social life, on resources, all due to the Israeli siege.” With it were high prices on goods able to enter from Egypt through tunnels that for the most part Israel allows given the dire situation on the ground.

“I can’t see any progress being made towards a united Palestinian government. I think both sides” lose out as a result, “but Israel takes (full) advantage....The students (at my university) are deprived of many things. They are disappointed young people with no hope or future in front of them, so they are in bad shape.”

Abdelwahed mentions a Gaza City health worker “expect(ing) the situation to deteriorate (further): more incursions and more military operations in border areas. While the world is busy with Christmas, Israel can take action. (Already) we have 16 hours of power cuts a day. Hospitals have to run generators for hours at a stretch, which they weren’t designed for. So they break down - and because of the closure we have no spare parts....I cannot see the internal situation improving soon. We’re short of everything. Eighty per cent of people in Gaza (rely) on food assistance. It’s a big problem.” It’s now much bigger.

At 11PM on Saturday, Abdelwahed reported new air raids were in progress concentrating on the “eastern parts of the city of Gaza. One woman lost 10 of her family. Only she and a daughter remain alive. The daughter couldn’t speak to the media because she didn’t

(understand) what happened. Panic is everywhere in the city and we anticipate (worse still) to come. Demonstrations erupted in Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon.” The death toll keeps climbing. “An Israeli caller just rang us up. My youngest son answered. The caller threatened that if I have any weapons they will hit my place!!!”

There have been “five air raids in 10 minutes. Targets are societies and groups of social works in thickly populated areas. One mosque was hit as well. I am without electricity for 30 hours so far. I am still operating a small generator to contact the world via internet.”

Abdelwahed sent this email on Sunday. “My family and I are okay but stressed....the building adjacent to (ours) was hit by a small rocket from a helicopter. (The) situation is horrible and people are really panicked.”

“Last night, F16s targeted Al-Aqsa satellite channel and leveled it to the ground.” Surrounding buildings are impossible to live in. “One small mosque across the street from Al-Shifa Hospital was (demolished).” Homes were badly damaged as well, one “belong(ing) to a friend of mine; he told me that what he witnessed was hard to describe in words....Also his sister was severely injured.”

A medical doctor friend “told me that the death toll climbed to about 500 (though the media reports around 300) and more than 1000 injured.” Israelis are targeting Rafah tunnels. “Hundreds of Palestinians stormed the Egyptian border with a bulldozer and on foot but failed to (get across) as the Egyptians shot live at them.”

A “new air raid on different targets (reported) minutes ago. Many died and injured. My window glass (is) shattered. (The) Customs house and passport department have been demolished minutes ago. Aircraft are still in the sky operating.”

“F16s (just) destroyed the largest security building in Gaza....Four missiles leveled the building to the ground; also police stations were hit and totally destroyed today. (We’re hearing that many areas) were targeted by Israeli warplanes. Large numbers of civilians, including children died and were injured in today’s attacks. At Rafah border, one Palestinian was shot dead (by the Egyptians). The situation on the border is terribly bad. An Israeli ground attack seems possible.”

Ma’an News Agency Updated Timeline Late Saturday Through Mid-Day Sunday, December 28 and 29

— 10:15PM - 2 more air strikes; at least 3 killed and 4 injured in Zaitoun neighborhood, Gaza City, and Jabalia in the north;

— 11:30PM - Israeli air strikes hit the Al-Mansura neighborhood east of Gaza City; 3 Hamas Al-Qassam Brigades deaths are reported;

— 11:50PM - air strikes hit Khan Younis in southern Gaza and several northern areas;

— 1:01AM Sunday - Israeli jets strike the security room in front of Al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza City; a close by mosque is hit killing at least 2 and injuring 7;

— 6:30AM - a medical storehouse in the Al-Junayna neighborhood and a fuel storage facility with diesel and benzene in the Tal As-Sultan area are hit - both near Rafah in the south; buildings and vital civilian supplies were destroyed; at least 3 deaths were reported;

- 6:45AM - Gaza City's Shuja'iyya neighborhood is bombed; several were injured and a police center destroyed;
- 8:00AM - Hamas police headquarters was attacked in the evacuated Israeli kfar Darum and Al-Matahin settlements;
- 10AM - a police station in the Shuja'iyya Gaza City neighborhood was bombed; also three homes in the Tal Al-Hawa neighborhood west of the city were destroyed;
- 10:30AM - a jeep in Gaza City's Zaitoun neighborhood was attacked killing one child; a second strike targeted the Jabalia area; no casualties were reported so far;
- 11:00AM - the temporary headquarters of the Rafah governorate was bombed injuring several people; the original building was destroyed on Saturday;
- 11:45AM - the government municipal council offices were bombed in Beit Hanoun in northern Gaza; several injuries were reported;
- Noon - the As-Saraya government compound was attacked, killing one child and injuring several others;
- Monday, December 28 - Israel's assaults continue with no letup; Haaretz reported that the Islamic University and another government compound in Gaza City were destroyed; other targets hit included a guest palace and at least some residential homes; "at first light Monday, strong winds blew black smoke from the bombed sites in Gaza City over deserted streets," punctuated by new explosions; Ehud Olmert spokesman Mark Regev said military action would continue until Israel "no longer (fears) terror (from) rocket barrages."

Throughout the attacks, images and reports on the ground are horrific and disturbing. All around is death and destruction. Amputated bodies fill Al-Shifa Hospital hallways. In one corner, a dead seven-year old boy is in a cardboard box because the hospital ran out of sheets to cover him.

One man is dazed after watching his son killed during the police graduation ceremony. Another father stood next to his son as he was decapitated. He's still screaming. In a hospital waiting room, a mother is silent after her son was pronounced dead.

Carnage is everywhere, inside and on the streets - body parts, blood, strewn clothing and other items. Twelve-year old Ayaman is screaming as his father tries not to let him see the bodies of his brother and uncle torn to pieces under sheets.

Yaha Muheisen stops searching for his son's body and Nawal Al-Lad'a can't find her two sons bodies in the hospital so she searches through rubble.

Gaza medical personnel confirm that the majority of the dead are civilians, including men, women and children. Most were torn to shreds. Bodies continue to be pulled from rubble. Some Palestinians say images resemble the 1982 (Beirut) Sabra and Shitila massacres of about 3000 men, women, children and infants during a 62-hour (proxy) Phalange militia force rampage while the IDF stood by and let it happen.

Ariel Sharon was defense minister at the time. After Israel invaded Lebanon in 1981, he authorized the operation, and in his autobiography confirmed that he negotiated it with

Lebanon's president-elect Bashir Gemayel. Afterward, journalist Robert Fisk called it "one of the most shocking war crimes of the 20th century." Another in Gaza remains ongoing.

Israeli journalist Gideon Levy wrote that "The neighborhood bully strikes again....Once again, Israel's violent responses....exceed all proportion and cross every red line of humaneness, morality, international law and wisdom. What began yesterday in Gaza is a war crime....Once again the commentators sat in television studios and hailed the combat jets" that killed the innocent. "Once again, they urged (not) letting up....Once again, they described" disturbing images as a "difficult scene....When the bully is on a rampage, nobody can stop him."

Journalist Amira Hass called Gaza "Little Baghdad, bombs everywhere, smoke, fire, people not knowing where to hide, fear everywhere, rage and hatred." She wrote painfully of carnage and death, of the living searching for loved ones, of no electricity, no gas, no flour, no bread for the past week, just despair and destruction as Israeli attacks continue.

Harold Pinter on Israel

On December 24 at age 78, Harold Pinter lost his long battle with cancer. He was the most influential playwright of his generation, the 2005 Nobel laureate for literature, a voice of political protest, and a passionate campaigner against human rights abuses. The Nobel academy citation called him an author "who in his plays uncovers the precipice under everyday prattle and forces entry into oppression's closed room." For some, he was a "permanent public nuisance, a questioner of accepted truths, both in life and art."

Too ill with cancer, he recorded his award ceremony speech on videotape, voiced strong opposition to the Iraq war, Britain's role in it, and called the invasion a "bandit act, an act of blatant state terrorism, demonstrating absolute contempt for the concept of international law." Would he say less about Israel's current assault?

Pinter was Jewish, a critic of Israel's illegal occupation, and its brutality inflicted on Gazans. He was one of 105 prominent Jewish signers of an April 2008 "We're not celebrating Israel's Anniversary" petition. Its last paragraph read:

"We cannot celebrate the birthday of a state founded on terrorism, massacres and the dispossession of another people from their land. We cannot celebrate the birthday of a state that even now engages in ethnic cleansing, that violates international law, that is inflicting a monstrous collective punishment on (Gaza) civilians and that continues to deny to Palestinians their human rights and national aspirations." Pinter called George Bush a "mass murderer." He felt no different about merciless Israeli leaders.

A Possible Ground Invasion?

On Sunday, Haaretz reported that the IDF "will call 6500 reservists to duty, as part of the largest Israeli offensive on (Gaza) since it" seized the Territory in 1967. Defense officials said that the call-up is part of military preparations for a possible escalation of fighting. Meanwhile, IDF infantry and armored troops (including tanks) man Gaza's border for a possible ground invasion, and Israeli defense minister Ehud Barak warned that "The operation will be deeper and expanded as much as necessary."

"The Bloodiest Day in the History of Occupation"

That's from a Palestinian Centre for Human Rights PCHR) December 27 press release that "condemn(ed) in the strongest terms the war waged by" the IDF on Gaza. As it's done many times before, PCHR calls on the international community and High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War to intervene immediately, to stop the killings, and to end the unprecedented devastation and deteriorated humanitarian conditions in Gaza.

The Gaza-based One Democratic State Group called for "all civil society organizations and freedom loving people to act immediately (to pressure their governments) to end diplomatic ties with Apartheid Israel and institute sanctions against it." It's press release headlined: "Stop the Massacre in Gaza - Boycott Israel Now!"

The "Stench of Death Hangs Over Gaza," wrote Ola Attallah, IslamOnline correspondent from Gaza City. Can we sense it, smell it, feel it, anguish over it, and decide once and for all this won't stand! If not now, when? If not us, who? If wanton butchery isn't incentive enough, what is?

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