

Operation “Cast Lead” - One Year Later, Justice Still Eludes Palestinians

By [Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East](#)

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Organizations and individuals around the world mark the one year anniversary of Israel’s “War on Gaza,” which began Dec. 27th, 2008 and lasted 22 days. The anniversary will be marked throughout the week by vigils at Israeli embassies and consulates around the world, as well as by the Gaza Freedom March: an internationally-organized March involving 1,500 internationals and 50,000 Gazans at the Erez border crossing in Gaza.

Israel’s offensive last year – code-named “Operation Cast Lead” – lasted for over three weeks, and left some 1,400 Palestinians, largely civilians, dead. More than 5,000 Palestinians were wounded, and 15% of all Gaza buildings destroyed or damaged. At the end of the 22 days, fifty thousand people were left homeless, 400,000 without water, and dozens of schools, mosques, factories and other key facilities had been damaged or destroyed. All told, the devastation in Gaza amounted to more than \$2 billion in damage. Thirteen Israelis also died (three civilian, ten soldiers – four of whom died in friendly fire).

Over a dozen reports published over the past year by Human Rights Organizations have found that war crimes, and possibly crimes against humanity, were committed during “Operation Cast Lead”. Israel’s illegal use of weapons, disproportionate force and targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure are the primary actions mentioned in these reports, although more violations are documented. The report of UN Fact-finding Mission, referred to as the “Goldstone Report”, is the most comprehensive of these, and urged the Israelis and Palestinians to conduct independent investigations, and also urged the lifting of the crippling Israeli blockade of Gaza that continues to this day.

Canadian for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME) is disappointed that one year later, justice continues to elude Palestinians. “With the compelling evidence presented by the Human Rights organizations”, asserts CJPME director, Thomas Woodley, “we would have hoped that more action would have been taken by the International community to seek justice for the victims of last year’s assault, and for the ongoing military occupation and siege.” Woodley expressed bewilderment at the Canadian government’s lack of a principled stance on Human Rights in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories. “Since 2007, Canada has remained silent as Israel collectively punishes 1.5 million Gazans through attacks and economic and humanitarian strangulation,” explained Woodley.

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