



# LA Jews for Peace Statement on Gaza

May 26, 2009

The massacre of the Gaza war ended in January 2009, a day before Barack Obama's inauguration, but the desperate and dangerous crisis persists.

- Israel, with the collusion of Egypt and support of the U.S., still holds the Gaza Strip, with its 1.5 million people, under siege. The legal import of food, medical supplies, fuel, and power is limited to small amounts that do not meet the needs of the local population. Legal imports of commercial goods, including everyday needs like razor blades, diapers, children toys, construction materials, machinery, and spare parts, are not allowed. Fishing is only allowed within three miles of shore, areas which are fished-out. And the export of agricultural products is so uncertain that commercial farming has stopped.
- The closure of Gaza forces its residents to rely on a Hamas-regulated tunnel network from Egypt to supply most consumer goods, fuel, and food stuffs beyond the basics that Israel allows. Ironically, the use of these tunnels strengthens Hamas politically and financially, making Israeli-Palestinian peace more remote.
- As part of its winter war plan, Israel destroyed much of the Gaza Strip's infrastructure. Every seventh building was destroyed or damaged, including most factories and civic buildings. Over 3500 housing units were destroyed, forcing people to live in tent encampments, mud huts, or under UN-supplied plastic sheets.
- The reconstruction of Gaza is not proceeding because Israel blocks the entry of construction materials into the Gaza Strip, claiming that Hamas, which governs the area -- after winning the Palestinian elections -- could use these materials for military purposes.
- The war ended without a mutual cease-fire. Although the border has been relatively non-

violent, a cease-fire is needed to give stability to Israelis, as well as to Palestinians.

**LA Jews for Peace** urges the U.S. to work with Egypt and others to facilitate a long-term Israel -- Hamas cease-fire that opens the crossings. This is the essential first step to Palestinian unity, closing the tunnels, and bringing peace, security, and prosperity to both Israelis and Palestinians. Escalating hostility, invasion, and withdrawal without security arrangements do not bring security to either side -- they merely cause human suffering and death.

Israel must comply with UN Security Council Resolution 1860, which calls for "unimpeded provision and distribution throughout Gaza of humanitarian assistance, including food, fuel and medical treatment." To this end, Israel must end its blockade of the Gaza Strip, which is an illegal form of collective punishment. Once the Gaza crossings are open, the import of goods through tunnels from Egypt could stop. The crossings must be opened first because the tunnels are the only source of food and everyday necessities for the 1.5 million people living in the Gaza Strip. Only after the crossings are open, can Hamas close the tunnels.

**LA Jews for Peace** urges the establishment of an international force on the Gaza-Israel border to prevent cross-border attacks and other violations of the cease-fire. If or when such attacks do occur, the international force should determine who did what and when they did it.

Friends of Israel should remember that Israel's only hope for survival as a secure and democratic state lies in a negotiated peace agreement with the Palestinians, not with a short-lived, counter-productive military assault. Eventually Israel will have to talk to the people it bombed in January 2009 and continues to blockade today. Eventually Israel must make compromises for peace.