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continued from inside

After all, already in 1988 the PLO accepted the two-state solution in which a Palestinian state would arise on only 22% of historic Palestine, alongside the state of Israel on the other 78%. A truly generous offer.

In Israel, however, the effort is to hide its preference for control over peace. Framing its attacks as a response to rockets from Gaza, exploiting an immediate trigger to effectively conceal deeper political intentions and policies, does that. It also conceals Israeli violations of the cease-fire. The fact that the rocket attacks could have been avoided altogether through a genuine political process means that the people of southern Israel are being held hostage by their government as well. Their suffering, and the suffering of the people of Gaza and the rest of the Occupied Territories, must be placed

squarely at the feet of the Israeli government.

Israel cannot expect security for its people and political normalcy as long as it occupies Palestinian lands and continues its attempt to impose its permanent rule over the Palestinians by military force. We call on the Israeli government to end its aggression immediately and enter into genuine political negotiations with a united Palestinian leadership. We call on the international community to end its sanctions on Gaza immediately in accordance with international law, initiate an effective political process to end the Israeli Occupation and bring about a just peace - which reflects the will of the Israeli and Palestinian peoples.

The Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (www.icahd.org) is based in Jerusalem and has chapters in the United Kingdom (www.icahduk.org) and the United States (www.icahdusa.org).



On January 6, Israeli tank shells exploded at a United Nations school for refugees, killing more than 40 Palestinians who had taken refuge inside the school. Photo: Aljazeera.net

a vigil for GAZA



The father of Anwer abu Salem, killed in the Israeli offensive, mourns his son's death. Photo: Eman Mohammed/Save the Children

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"Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter."

—MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.



RASHID KHALIDI makes a few essential points missing from the conversation about Israel's attack on the Gaza Strip.

Nearly everything you've been led to believe about Gaza is wrong.

THE GAZANS. Most of the people living in Gaza are not there by choice. The majority of the 1.5 million people crammed into the roughly 140 square miles of the Gaza Strip belong to families that came from towns and villages outside Gaza like Ashkelon and Beersheba. They were driven to Gaza by the Israeli Army in 1948.

THE OCCUPATION. The Gazans have lived under Israeli occupation since the Six-Day War in 1967. Israel is still widely considered to be an occupying power, even though it removed its troops and settlers from the strip in 2005. Israel still controls access to the area, imports and exports, and the movement of people in and out. Israel has control over Gaza's air space and sea coast, and its forces enter the area at will. As the occupying power, Israel has the responsibility under the Fourth Geneva Convention to see to the welfare of the civilian population of the Gaza Strip.

THE BLOCKADE. Israel's blockade of the strip, with the

support of the United States and the European Union, has grown increasingly stringent since Hamas won the Palestinian Legislative Council elections in January 2006. Fuel, electricity, imports, exports and the movement of people in and out of the Strip have been slowly choked off, leading to life-threatening problems of sanitation, health, water supply and transportation. The blockade has subjected many to unemployment,

penury and malnutrition. This amounts to the collective punishment—with the tacit support of the United States—of a civilian population for exercising its democratic rights.

THE CEASE-FIRE. Lifting the blockade, along with a cessation of rocket fire, was one of the key terms of the June cease-fire between Israel and Hamas. This accord led to a reduction in rockets fired from



Even before the latest rise in violence, 50,000 of Gaza's children were malnourished, 70% had a vitamin A deficiency and almost half of children under age two were anaemic due to the blockade. Source: Save the Children UK, December 30, 2008.

Gaza from hundreds in May and June to a total of less than 20 in the subsequent four months (according to Israeli government figures). The cease-fire broke down when Israeli forces launched major air and ground attacks in early November; six Hamas operatives were reported killed.

WAR CRIMES. The targeting of civilians, whether by Hamas or by Israel, is potentially a war crime. Every human life is precious. But the numbers speak for themselves: Nearly 700 Palestinians, most of them civilians, have been killed since the conflict broke out at the end of last year. In contrast, there have been around a dozen Israelis killed, many of them soldiers. Negotiation is a much more effective way to deal with rockets and other forms of violence. This might have been able to happen had Israel fulfilled the terms of the June cease-fire and lifted its blockade of the Gaza Strip.

This war on the people of Gaza isn't really about rockets. Nor is it about "restoring Israel's deterrence," as the Israeli press might have you believe. Far more revealing are the words of Moshe Yaalon, then the Israeli Defense Forces chief of staff, in 2002: "The Palestinians must be made to understand in the deepest recesses of their consciousness that they are a defeated people."

Rashid Khalidi, a professor of Arab studies at Columbia, is the author of the forthcoming "Sowing Crisis: The Cold War and American Dominance in the Middle East." This article was originally published in The New York Times on January 7, 2009.

The Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions Press Release



December 27, 2008. Let's be crystal clear. Israel's massive attacks on Gaza today have one overarching goal: conflict management. How to end rocket attacks on Israel from a besieged and starving Gaza without ending the impetus for those attacks, 41 years of increasingly oppressive Israeli Occupation without a hint that asovereign and viable Palestinian state will ever emerge.

Indeed, the Occupation, in which Israel controls Gaza under a violent siege which violates fundamental human rights and international law, is not even mentioned in Israel's PR campaign. Speaking to the international community, Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni insists that no country would tolerate its citizens being attacked, a seemingly reasonable statement were it not for Israeli sanctions

on Gaza supported by the US and Europe—sanctions that preceded the rocket fire on Israel—or the fact of Israeli Occupation in general. Solely focusing on the rocket attacks conceals the political policy that led to them: "The Hamas government in Gaza must be toppled," Livni has said repeatedly. "The means to do this must be military, economic and diplomatic."

The responsibility for the suffering both in Israel and Gaza rests squarely with successive Israeli governments, Labor, Likud and Kadima alike. Had there been a genuine political process (remember, the closure of Gaza began in 1989), Israelis and Palestinians could have been living together in peace and prosperity already for 20 years.

continued on back