

Greater Lansing Network Against War & Injustice (GLNAWI) on the Israel-Palestine Conflict & Gaza

January 2009

We welcome the news of a ceasefire in Gaza, but believe that the underlying problem remains the Israeli military occupation and blockade of Palestinian territory. We call on politicians to clearly and unequivocally oppose the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories, namely the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem.

We are dedicated to Israelis and Palestinians living in peace with justice.

We deplore attacks upon Israeli and Palestinian citizens regardless of the reasons given for them. We strongly support efforts to bring about peace, which will be achieved through constructive dialogue and negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians with regional and international support as opposed to the endless round of attacks on civilians.

We understand the need of Israelis to live in peace, but cannot condone its excessive use of force to achieve that goal. As when the State of Michigan acted against apartheid in South Africa, we urge legislation and action to address violations of human rights and international law by the government of Israel.

We endorse the Michigan Professors Against Occupation "Gaza Statement," cited below:

We condemn in the strongest possible terms the Israeli bombardment and invasion of the Gaza Strip. The Israeli assault on Gaza has caused at least thirteen hundred Palestinian deaths, with many thousands of wounded, and the massive destruction of civilian infrastructure. Although the Israeli government and its US supporters indicate that Israel is responding to Hamas rocket fire, the military operation, codenamed "Operation Casting Lead," constituted a disproportionate retaliatory action that indiscriminately targeted the entire population of the Gaza Strip, and resulted in crimes against humanity, according to human rights organizations.

Since 1967, Israel has committed with impunity numerous war crimes and human rights violations in the occupied Palestinian territories. The international community failed to respond substantially to Israel's life-stifling blockade and its devastating invasion of Gaza. Furthermore, US politicians in both parties have given support to Israel's military operation, justifying what many other international observers view as an excessive use of force on a largely defenseless civilian population.

We are particularly appalled at the violence of the destruction wrought on innocent victims, including the illegal and brutal use of white phosphorus, as reported by Amnesty International. Human Rights Watch reported on December 27, 2008 that an Israeli air-to-ground missile struck a group of students leaving the Gaza Training College, killing eight and wounding 19 others. On December 29, 2008, Israel bombed the Islamic University of Gaza, and on January 6, 2009, Israel bombed a UN-operated school in Jabaliya refugee camp killing at least 40 people. These attacks and many others violate rights guaranteed in international conventions and constitute crimes against humanity.

Despite its disengagement from Gaza in 2005, Israel remains the occupying power according to international law, and retains control of Gaza's land borders, air space and sea ports. Israel has the responsibility to secure the safety of Palestinian civilians and to abide by the Geneva Convention and other instruments of international law.

It is urgent that we join with others around the world seeking peace and justice in the Middle East and call for an immediate and lasting cease-fire, a lifting of the blockade of Gaza and ultimately an end to the Israeli occupation of Gaza and the West Bank.

We oppose the continual rearmament of both sides of this conflict. In particular we oppose the U.S. expenditure of three billion dollars every year for armaments to Israel, as well as more than a billion to Egypt and half a billion to Jordan. We call upon our representatives to work to prevent any further conflict in the region, to end all arms shipments and military aid that only exacerbates the situation and perpetuates the conflict. There will be no long-term resolution by force of arms, but by patient negotiation and by respect for international conventions intended to protect civilians.

We call on a refocusing of U.S. policy that will entail expenditures aimed at rebuilding the region and compensating those who have lost so much. We believe that the US government should open negotiations with all parties to the conflict, including Hamas, which must be treated as the democratically elected representatives of the Palestinian people, and not an illegal, terrorist organization. ***Above all, we call for a policy of negotiation, not war.***