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THE ISRAEL-HAMAS CEASEFIRE (19 JUN 2008 – 4 NOV 2008)

By Dr. David Morrison

The peaceful alternative to Operation Cast Lead that Israel rejected

- Operation Cast Lead, Israel's military assault on Gaza, cost the lives of more than 1,400 Palestinians, including over 400 women and children. 13 Israelis also died, 4 in southern Israel (3 civilians and 1 soldier) by Palestinian rocket and mortar fire out of Gaza and 9 soldiers in Gaza itself, 4 by friendly fire.

- None of this carnage was necessary in order to protect Israeli citizens from rocket and mortar fire out of Gaza. This had been almost completely eliminated by the ceasefire that Israel negotiated with Hamas in June 2008. To maintain this peaceful situation, all Israel had to do was to stick to the terms of the ceasefire agreement it made with Hamas in June 2008. It chose to break it instead.

- From 19 June 2008 until 4 November 2008 during the ceasefire, Hamas didn't fire any rockets or mortar shells out of Gaza and restrained other Palestinian groups from doing so. This was confirmed by Israeli spokesman, Mark Regev, on More4 News on 9 January 2009. The interview is available on YouTube [1].

- Hamas maintained its ceasefire despite the fact that Israel failed to honour its obligations under the ceasefire agreement to lift its economic blockade, which had brought the people of Gaza to the verge of starvation.

- From 19 June 2008 until 4 November 2008, only 19 rockets and 18 mortar shells were fired out of Gaza (all by groups other than Hamas), compared to 1,199 rockets and 1,072 mortar shells in 2008 up to 19 June – which amounts to a reduction of 98% in the frequency of both rockets and mortars. And the rate of firing declined as time went by – in October, only 1 rocket and 1 mortar were fired out of Gaza.

- These basic facts about the ceasefire are indisputable. They are set out in reports by the Israeli Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center [ITIC], reports that are publicly available on the Center's website and are used extensively by the Israeli Government. The figures above are taken from the ITIC report, *Summary of rocket fire and mortar shelling in 2008* [2]

- Mark Regev confirmed the ceasefire's success on More4 News on 9 January 2009. When it was put to him that "there were no Hamas rockets during the ceasefire before November 4, there were no Hamas rockets for 4 months", Regev replied: "That's correct". As a "partner for peace", Hamas could not be faulted – it made a deal with Israel and stuck to it.

- On 4 November 2008 – while the world was watching the election of Barack Obama – Israel made an armed incursion into Gaza, the first since the ceasefire began on 19 June, and killed 7 members of Hamas.

- In retaliation, Hamas resumed firing rockets and mortar shells out of Gaza.

- Israeli Foreign Minister, Tzipi Livni, declared on 31 December: "Last Saturday [27 December] at 11:30, Israel started its military operation in the Gaza Strip – there was no other alternative. For eight years now, Israel has been under attack from the Gaza Strip and it has become worse. Hamas … has been targeting Israel on a daily basis. " [3]

- There, Tzipi Livni told a big lie. There was an alternative: it was to stick to the terms of its ceasefire with Hamas, as a result of which Hamas had fired no rockets or mortar shells out of Gaza from 19 June to 4 November.

- Israel's assault on Gaza did not destroy the capability of Hamas and other groups to fire rockets and mortars out of Gaza: rocket and mortar firing continued after Operation Cast Lead at a much higher rate than during the ceasefire.

Operation Cast Lead, Israel's military assault on Gaza, cost the lives of more than 1,400 Palestinians, including over 400 women and children. 13 Israelis also died, 4 in southern Israel (3 civilians and 1 soldier) by Palestinian rocket and mortar fire out of Gaza and 9 soldiers in Gaza itself, 4 by friendly fire.

References:

[1] uk.youtube.com/watch?v=SILJxPTqjAM

[2] www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/ipc_e007.pdf

[3] www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Speeches+by+Israeli+leaders/2008/FM_Livni_press_conference_IDF_operation_Gaza_31-Dec-2008.htm

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