

December 27, 2008: Operation Cast Lead , Israel's brutal offensive against the Gaza Strip.

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Theme: [Crimes against Humanity](#)
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Today, December 27, marks the second anniversary of Operation Cast Lead, Israel's brutal offensive against the Gaza Strip. In 22 days of relentless air and land attacks, more than 1400 Gazans, mostly civilians, were killed in what the United Nations 'Goldstone Report' described as war crimes, and crimes against humanity.

Two years later, the perpetrator – Israel – remains unpunished. Two years later, Gaza remains in ruins, largely due to the reluctance of the international community to stand up to the bully, and deliver the materials necessary for Gaza's reconstruction.

For all of their resources, and all of their moral authority the United Nations and numerous other international humanitarian organizations have failed to deliver more than rhetoric, leaving it to the ordinary citizens of the world, in the form of humanitarian aid convoys, to break the blockade of Gaza and deliver essential medicines, educational resources and equipment to its suffering population. This is a fraction of what they need – water and sewage treatment systems, cement and building materials to repair and rebuild homes, hospitals, schools and public buildings, energy to generate electricity, even just flour to make bread are all desperately required – and blocked by Israel.

The international community meekly accepts the dictates of this rogue state, and its imposition of an illegal, immoral and inhuman blockade. They observe it, act in complicity with it, and fail to defy it by establishing an aid corridor through Egypt or directly by sea into Gaza, to deliver the materials they themselves require to fulfill their own independent and impartial functions and mandates as humanitarian assistance providers.

Meanwhile, yet another civilian aid convoy is arriving in Gaza – this time from Asia. Another group of world citizens disgusted with their governments', their NGOs' and international organizations' miserable failure to alleviate the suffering and reconstruct any semblance of normality in Gaza, another group of world citizens expressing their support for and solidarity with the victims of Israel's rampant expansionism and cruel disregard for international law, let alone minimum standards of human decency. Another group of world citizens showing their courage and doing the job their governments, their international bodies, their humanitarian relief agencies should be doing, but aren't.

The illegal blockade must be lifted immediately – or be defied by all, including the UN and other international organizations, such that essential assistance is delivered to Gaza, immediately.

Israel must be held accountable for its war crimes. As Israeli tanks mobilize along the Gaza border and air-strikes and land incursions increase, suggesting another major offensive is imminent, we should remember what happened two years ago today – and do our best to make sure it does not happen again.

These stories from Gazan youth demand no less.

Julie Webb-Pullman is a New Zealand based freelance writer who has reported for Scoop since 2003. She was selected to be part of the Kiwi contingent on the Viva Palestina Convoy – a.k.a. Kia Ora Gaza. Mohammed Rabah Suliman, Rawan Nasser Yaghi, and Sarah Ali are young Gazans who survived the Israeli offensive ‘Operation Cast Lead’, and have survived the blockade – so far.

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