

# Gaza Ceasefire: Palestine Holds Strong in the Face of U.S.-Backed Israeli Terror

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*A ceasefire agreement between the Hamas-led Palestinian government in Gaza and Israel was announced today, Nov. 21, in Cairo by U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Egyptian Foreign Minister Mohammed Kamel Amr.*

*Clinton made an emergency trip to the Middle East with the aim of brokering a truce, a clear sign of the Obama administration's fears that the continuation of the brutal Israeli assault on Gaza was endangering U.S. imperialist interests in the region.*



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Since Israel's latest intense bombing campaign began last week, Clinton, President Obama, and Republican and Democratic congressional leaders have repeatedly expressed all-out support for the Israeli side, while pointedly ignoring far higher Palestinian casualties.

The House of Representatives "passed" a resolution expressing its "unwavering commitment" to Israel. House Resolution 813 was introduced at 12:04 p.m. on Nov. 16, and declared adopted at 12:05 p.m. the same day!

Since Nov. 14, at least 146 Palestinians have been killed, more than 1,000 wounded, and much of Gaza's infrastructure and public facilities destroyed by a coordinated air, sea and land-based bombardment. On the Israeli side, there have been five killed and more than 100 wounded.

To hear U.S. officials talk, you would think it was the other way around. But despite their obscenely pro-Israel rhetoric, it was also clear that Washington was fearful that a new Israeli ground invasion of Gaza might provoke rebellions in Egypt, Jordan and other neighboring Arab countries, and possibly lead to a wider war.

Despite the death and destruction inflicted by Israel, and despite the fact that it has no air force, navy, armored units or anti-aircraft defenses, the Palestinian forces have not been defeated. Virtually all news reports from inside Gaza reflect a strong determination to resist among the population.

The terms of the temporary agreement reportedly call for a halt to the fighting, an end to Israeli targeted assassinations of Palestinian leaders, and undefined steps to lift the Israeli blockade that has inflicted massive suffering on the 1.6 million Palestinians in Gaza.

Lifting the blockade is a critical issue for the people of Gaza. Whether there will be any real movement toward ending the blockade remains in doubt, as does the durability of the truce as a whole.

#### ISRAEL'S BLOCKADE: USING FOOD AS A WEAPON

While Israel withdrew its settlers and bases from Gaza in 2005, it has kept the area surrounded and blockaded ever since. As result, half of all school children are malnourished and two-thirds of infants are anemic. Eighty percent of Gaza's population are refugees — those driven out of other parts of Palestine by the Zionist military forces in 1948 and their descendants.

After the Hamas party won the January 2006 Palestinian parliamentary election, Israel imposed a complete blockade on Gaza, with the support of the United States, European Union and the client government of Hosni Mubarak in Egypt. That the aim of the blockade was to make the people of Gaza suffer was highlighted by an article in the Israeli newspaper Haaretz the following month. It reported on a meeting of top Israeli government officials where the top advisor to then-Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, Dov Weisglass, said: "It's like an appointment with a dietician. The Palestinians will get a lot thinner but won't die." According to the Haaretz report, the assembled officials "rolled with laughter," at Weisglass's grotesque "joke."

#### THE MYTH OF ISRAEL AS VICTIM

In the 1960s, the Black Panther Party had a saying about racist cops justifying their routine killing and brutalizing of Black people by "masquerading as the victim of an unprovoked attack." It is a description that perfectly fits Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu and his predecessors going back to the creation of the Israeli state in 1948.

In the U.S. corporate media, Israel is invariably depicted as the "victim." Its brutal and cowardly military assaults are justified as "retaliation," inferring that Israel's actions are "self-defense." Over and over, since the early 1950s, successive Israeli governments have staged provocations to prompt responses that could then be used to justify massive attacks while presenting Israel as the "victim of an unprovoked attack." The aim has generally been to gain new territory and/or crush any state or movement perceived as a threat to Israeli military domination.

This familiar pattern was repeated in November 2008. The murder of five Palestinian civilians on the day after the 2008 U.S. election broke a ceasefire and set in motion a train of events that led to an all-out assault on Gaza by the Israeli military. A vast array of weaponry, including white phosphorous and depleted uranium munitions, was unleashed on a trapped population. More than 1,400 Palestinians were killed, while Israeli forces had 13 killed -- a ratio of more than 100 to 1.

This time, the fatal shooting of a mentally disabled young man on Nov. 5 and a 12-year-old boy on Nov. 9, both killed by the Israeli army inside Gaza, set off the new round of fighting. Then, on Nov. 14, Israel assassinated a top Hamas leader, Ahmed Al-Jaabari, the very same day that he had been presented with a proposal for a long-term ceasefire by a joint Israeli-Egyptian commission.

These provocations were no doubt approved at the highest level of the Israeli government.

The extreme right-wing Netanyahu-Lieberman government desired a new conflict both to further devastate the Palestinian infrastructure in Gaza and to advance their political prospects in the January 2013 Israeli election. That hundreds of Palestinians and some Israelis as well would die in order to achieve these objectives was incidental to the Israeli leaders.

Whether the present ceasefire holds and for how long can't be known at this point. The only real long-term solution to the crisis is an end to colonial occupation and real self-determination for the Palestinian people, including the right to return to their homeland.

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