

How United States' Protection Emboldens Israel's Wars and Occupations- MFSA Iowa Chapter SQB Spring 2010

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Operation Cast Lead, the Israeli war on Gaza at the close of the Bush administration, was timed in part we are told to avoid confrontation with the incoming Obama administration. Operation Cast Lead rained missiles, helicopter fire, tank shells and phosphorous on the open air Palestinian prison called Gaza from Dec. 28, 2008 to Jan. 18, 2009. At the end of the 3 weeks approximately 1400 Palestinians were dead, thousands wounded, and much of the infrastructure of the enclosed 25 square miles of land called Gaza lay in ruins. Israel lost 12 military personnel and one civilian.

It seems now the concerns of opposition from the Obama administration were unfounded. Israel's use of U.S. weapons to wage a war of aggression on the people of Gaza has not altered U.S. intent to continue the Bush administration agreement to provide \$3 billion in military aid to Israel in each of the next 10 years.

In spite of some encouraging rhetoric and some initial steps (appointment of George Mitchell as Middle East envoy, and acknowledgment of Palestinian rights in the Cairo speech) The Obama administration has made no effort to hold Israel accountable for its illegal use of U.S. weapons in its Gaza war or in its years long siege of Gaza. Under the Arms Export Control Act U.S. weapons may not be used against civilians and may be used only for "legitimate self defense" purposes. Numerous human rights organizations have cited Israel for the purposeful killing of civilians in its recent war, and its consistent pattern of human rights abuses throughout the occupied territories.

A UN Fact finding mission in the Goldstone Report on the Gaza war notes Israel engaged in "a deliberately disproportionate attack designed to punish, humiliate and terrorize a civilian population, radically diminish its local economic capacity both to work and to provide for itself, and to force upon it an ever increasing sense of dependency and vulnerability."

Rather than use this report to demand Israel comply with international and U.S. law the Obama administration attempted to challenge its legitimacy – not on the facts but with charges of it being unbalanced. To find balance in the Gaza war, the Israeli occupation and human rights abuses, one would have to manufacture it. There is simply no balance to be had between the weapons of destruction (phosphorous, F 16s...) provided by the U.S. and employed by Israel, and the mostly handmade rockets used by Hamas and other militia groups. Further there is no balance of responsibility between the invading occupying army and the defending occupied militia and civilian population. (The Goldstone Report appropriately noted the international law violations committed by Hamas in the firing of rockets into civilian population areas of Israel wherein one civilian may have been killed.)

One year into the Obama administration Israel seems to have lost all concern for what the Obama administration may or may not do in response to Israeli aggression. Israel is at this time increasing its threats toward Iran and there is active discussion in the U.S. about whether U.S. would go to the defense of Israel in case of a war initiated by Israel with Iran. Recent weeks have seen the emergence of discussion within Middle East media and military about a second Gaza war in the planning stages. (Haaretz.com Jan. 21, 2010)

We in the U.S. have a responsibility to demand our government hold Israel responsible for the use to which it puts U.S. weapons and aid. The U.S. Campaign to End the Occupation is working to stop U.S. funding until Israel upholds U.S. and international law.

For more information: www.endtheoccupation.org. To participate in the Iowa based Middle East Peace Education Project contact: Kathleen McQuillen, kmcquillen@afsc.org.