

COLLECTIVE PUNISHMENT IS A WAR CRIME, NOT A PATH TO PEACE!

USLAW, with people and organizations across the political spectrum, is deeply distressed and outraged by the gross violation of human rights and international law taking place in Israel's military assault on Gaza – the third since 2007.

We join the [International Trade Union Confederation](#) (ITUC), and the [IndustriALL Global Union](#) in calling for – an **immediate ceasefire** by all parties; **lifting the blockade** of Gaza; and **implementation of UN resolutions** that enable Palestinians to have a fully sovereign independent state.

- ✓ The siege of Gaza and occupation of Palestine are illegal.
- ✓ Building settlements in occupied Palestine is illegal.
- ✓ Erecting a segregation wall and implementing other apartheid-like practices are illegal.
- ✓ Collective punishment of the civilian population of Gaza is illegal.
- ✓ Using disproportionate military force against a largely unarmed population is illegal.
- ✓ Bombing homes, stores and businesses where no arms are stored or from which no belligerent activity emanates is illegal.
- ✓ Targeting hospitals, schools, and even UN shelters to which unarmed civilians have fled is illegal.

The U.S. gives Israel \$3.1 billion annually (about [one-fifth of all U.S. foreign aid](#)), much of which goes for bombs, missiles and weapons used in attacks like those taking place in Gaza now. The U.S. underwrites 25% of Israel's military budget, even though it has one of the world's most dynamic economies and recently discovered natural gas deposits worth billions. ([The Daily Beast](#), 7/18/14) Our government is committed to provide another \$3.1 billion every year until 2018. In FY2015, aid to Israel proposed by the president will constitute about 55% of all U.S. military aid worldwide. ([If Americans Knew](#))

These are war crimes and crimes against humanity under international law.

Since July 8th when Israel launched its ground invasion of Gaza (dubbed "Operation Protective Edge"),

- For every Israeli civilian killed by rockets fired from Gaza, 465 Palestinian civilians have been killed by Israeli bombs, shelling and military operations in Gaza.
- As of August 11th, 71% of almost 1,960 known Palestinian casualties were civilians (33% were children); only 12% were combatants and 17% could not be identified.
- Women and children constitute half the Palestinian civilians killed.
- In the same period, of 66 Israelis and one Thai national killed; only 3 were civilians.

"The targeting of civilian homes is a violation of international humanitarian law, unless the homes are being used for military purposes. Attacks against military objectives must offer a definite military advantage in the prevailing circumstances, and precautions must be taken to protect civilian lives. The fact that an attempt to warn civilians has been made, does not release the attacker from its obligation to spare civilian lives. A number of incidents, along with the high number of civilian deaths, belie the claim that all necessary precautions are being taken. People – particularly the elderly, sick and those with disabilities – are not given sufficient time to scramble out of their homes. When they do manage to run out into the street, there is nowhere to hide and no way of knowing where the next shell or missile will land."

Statement of UN High Commissioner Navi Pillay to the Human Rights Council 21st Special Session, 23 July 2014.

Israeli citizens receive advance warning of incoming rockets and have shelters built into their homes, workplaces, shopping centers, schools and throughout their communities. Residents of Gaza have no shelters. When they have sought refuge at designated UN shelters, they were no safer. Israel has bombed or shelled 230 schools (of which 25 were totally destroyed), 29 hospitals and health centers (5 hospitals had to close), Gaza's only power plant (inoperable), water and sewage treatment infrastructure, and three UN civilian shelters, the locations of which had been provided to the Israeli government. Israel declared almost half of all of Gaza as a "buffer" (free fire) zone in which any Palestinian is assumed to be a belligerent. One-quarter of Gaza's 1.8 million people have been displaced by the fighting.

Armed resistance by Palestinians will end when the illegal occupation ends. There will be no peace for Israelis or Palestinians if Israel refuses to either recognize an independent Palestinian state or join with Palestinians in full equality within a single state for all people residing in it. ([972mag.com](#), July 11, 2014)

Both Palestinians and Israelis should recognize that there is no military solution to their conflict. The alternative to peaceful coexistence is perpetual conflict and ultimately, mutual destruction.

Billions of dollars the US gives annually to support Israel's military and illegal occupation could be better spent putting our country back to work, repairing the social safety net, building affordable housing, developing sustainable energy alternatives, rebuilding crumbling infrastructure, investing in education, providing healthcare and innumerable other ways that improve our standard of living.

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