

COMMENT

The Eyeless in Gaza

WAR IS OVER IN GAZA. SO SAY pro-Israeli Western media reports. But it may be too early for Israel to celebrate their 22 days of the most violent and aggressive bombardment of Palestinians in the small and overcrowded strip of land. In reality Israel has not completely pulled out all its troops as they remained along the Gaza border. Neither is it lifting the siege, raising the question how to bring essential supplies to a people who have been starved of food and deprived of medical care and electricity. Israel claims victory while announcing a ceasefire in its military actions in Gaza. It doesn't mean the end of agony for the Palestinians. Nor does Hamas agree to back out as long as Israeli troops are in Gaza.

Most of the 1.5 million Palestinian people living in the small parcel of land (140 square miles) called Gaza are descendants of people driven from their land in and around Ashkelon and Beersheba by the Israeli army in 1948. They lived under Israeli occupation from 1967, after the Arab-Israeli war, till 2005, when Israel unilaterally withdrew its 8000 settlers to focus on settling the West Bank, where it placed 12000 settlers. However, the military withdrawal of Israel did not mean freedom for the people of Gaza because the access to Gaza, the movement of people in and out of it, its imports and exports remained under the control of Israel. Without any natural resources and prevented from any freedom of movement, Gazans were left as a people dependent on Israel for their economic and basic means of survival.

When in January 2006 the Palestinian people democratically gave a victory to Hamas in the election to the Palestinian Legislative Council, Israel, supported by the US and the European Union, imposed a crippling blockade on Gaza, where Hamas took control. This glaring exposure of the hypocrisy of Western powers that claim to be champions of democracy has resulted in a humanitarian crisis in Gaza: it has caused almost 50 percent unemployment, extreme poverty, severe malnutrition, a breakdown of sanitation, overwhelming scarcity of electricity and gas, the failure of water supply, the almost total breakdown of health care, and a breakdown of transportation. This is the population that Israel has chosen to massacre in the name of its own security because Hamas had been firing some crude and practically ineffective rockets into its territories.

The ceasefire brokered by Egypt in June 2008 to lift the blockade and stop the launching of rockets was broken by Israel on November 4, when unprovoked it invaded by air killing 6 Palestinians. Israel repeated the bombing on November 17 killing 4 others. There is no honest way of exonerating Israel and blaming Hamas for the searing atrocities committed by Israel in Gaza.

At the end Israel cannot win what it has already lost—credibility and peace process initiated by international bodies, including UN. □□□