

6/1/08

Friends of Palestine WA  
P.O. Box 1410  
West Perth WA 6872  
Ph: 0407 850 962

Stephen Smith MP  
953 Beaufort St  
Inglewood WA 6052

Dear Stephen Smith

We strongly object to your government's unjust position on the current slaughter taking place in Gaza at the hands of the Israeli army, air force and navy.

Though you have for reasons unknown chosen to remain silent on the massacre, a departmental spokesperson made the following statement on your behalf:

*"Australia strongly condemns the firing of rockets and mortars into southern Israel by Hamas and other militant groups. While recognising Israel's right to defend itself from such indiscriminate attacks, we urge both Israel and Hamas to make every effort to avoid causing suffering to innocent civilians."*

In her role as Acting Prime Minister, Julia Gillard has made a statement expressing the same position:

*"Clearly the act of aggression was engaged in by Hamas which commenced shelling with rockets and mortars into Israel. That is what breached the ceasefire, and Israel responded."*

Such a formulation of the current events taking place in Gaza flies in the face of historical reality, objective facts, and the most basic of human reasoning.

For starters, *it is not true that Hamas broke their six-month ceasefire.* In reality, Israel breached the ceasefire on November 6<sup>th</sup> when ground troops invaded the Gaza Strip, killing one Hamas militant and another five militants in a subsequent air strike. Furthermore, the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* carried a report on 27<sup>th</sup> December which provided evidence that military planning for the current assault on Gaza began six months ago. The plan was then given executive approval by Prime Minister Ehud Olmert on November 19<sup>th</sup>, *well before any alleged breach of the ceasefire by Hamas.*

All the evidence overwhelmingly points to the fact Operation Cast Lead is a deliberate, calculated use of force designed to destroy the last remaining vestiges of social and civilian infrastructure in Gaza. Hence the targeting of the Islamic University of Gaza, the American International School in northern Gaza, police stations, mosques, government

ministries, apartment blocks, ambulance drivers, doctors, paramedics, factories, warehouses, a fruit market in Gaza City, a radio station and a television station, *all of which are obviously civilian targets.*

While your government throws its full support behind Israel's brutal assault on Gaza, thousands of people in the tiny coastal territory are suffering horrible deaths and injuries as a result of that assault. So far 507 people have died. At least 75 of them were children. Many of these children were mutilated beyond recognition by 500-pound bombs dropped by F-16 fighter jets provided by your close ally the United States. Over 2700 people have been injured, many of them badly maimed and likely to die from their injuries given the chronic lack of medical services in Gaza as a direct result of the illegal 18-month blockade of the coastal strip by the Israeli government.

The massacre of innocent civilians, and resistance fighters, who after all are exercising their legal right to oppose the occupation and siege of their homes and communities, will continue to escalate unless ordinary people around the world and governments such as yours stand up to these wanton acts of brutality being perpetrated by the Israeli armed forces.

We call on the Australian government to:

-condemn the Israeli slaughter of civilians and resistance fighters in Gaza by any and all means necessary; via Australia's seat at the United Nations, the mass media, and various diplomatic channels

-demand the lifting of the siege of Gaza which has caused such utter devastation to the 1.5 million people living there

-sever all cultural, economic, diplomatic, political, and military ties with Israel immediately in response to the massacre taking place in Gaza and the ongoing siege and occupation of the people of Palestine

-organise immediately a massive airlift of vital medical aid, food aid and other necessary supplies to ameliorate the terrible suffering of the people of Gaza.

Signed by the many Friends of Palestine in Western Australia