

BAY AREA WOMEN IN BLACK

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Stands In Silence for the People of Gaza

Israeli military operations inside Gaza have been curtailed, rocket fire on Israel has dropped sharply and Egypt is attempting to broker a ceasefire.

This follows a five-day attack on Gaza which killed 120 Palestinians. Over half were civilians and one in five were children. Three Israelis, one of them a rocket casualty, were also killed. Then the shooting in the Hebrew religious school cost the lives of eight Israeli youths.

The prospects for a ceasefire appear promising in view of fading Israeli popular support for military action against Gaza. According to a recent poll conducted by the Israeli newspaper Ha'aretz, 64% of Israelis say their government should hold direct talks with the Hamas government in Gaza for a ceasefire. A negotiated truce is also attracting support from a growing number of Israeli establishment figures, including Ariel Sharon's former security advisor, an ex-defense minister and a former Mossad boss.



Repeatedly, Hamas has offered Israel a long term ceasefire. On February 23rd, Hamas spokesman Sam Abu Zuhri said that Hamas will consider any initiative that will bring about a ceasefire, and this was offered again two weeks later by Hamas leader Khalid Mish'al.

For a ceasefire to hold, a negotiated truce will have to provide for an end to the "targeted liquidations" of Hamas leaders and an end to the siege of Gaza. The siege has caused crisis conditions: inadequate water, electricity and medicine; widespread hunger, poverty and unemployment; schools and other services destroyed or severely compromised.