

BAY AREA WOMEN IN BLACK

TWO ISRAELI LIES ABOUT THE ASSAULT ON GAZA

The 22-day Israeli assault on Gaza, using U.S.-supplied weapons paid for with our tax dollars, killed over 1,300 Palestinians, including an estimated 900 civilians. In the same period three Israeli civilians and ten soldiers were killed. Since 2004, rockets launched from Gaza caused the death of 15 Israelis. Israel has made several false claims in defense of its assault on Gaza. Two of these are:

Lie #1: Hamas violated the June 2008 truce.

Hamas is a Palestinian political party that won the January 2006 election. It has a military wing which had ceased its activities well before the election. Soon after the election, Israel imposed severe restrictions on delivery of food, medicine and fuel to Gaza under an air, land and sea blockade, and the Israeli military assassinated officials of this democratically elected government with air-to-ground missiles. Hamas retaliated by firing homemade rockets which reached nearby Israeli towns and terrorized the inhabitants.

During this period, Hamas repeatedly offered to negotiate a permanent truce with Israel. A truce was finally agreed upon in June 2008 under which Hamas was supposed to stop the rocket attacks and Israel was supposed to end its blockade. According to the *New York Times*, Hamas was "largely successful" in stopping the rockets, although some were fired by groups other than Hamas. However, Israel refused to ease its blockade, and, on November 4th, it sealed Gaza's borders and launched a commando attack which killed six Palestinians, effectively ending the truce.

Lie #2: Israel's military campaign in Gaza only targeted rocket launching sites and sought to protect innocent civilians.

The Gaza Strip is one of the most densely populated places in the world. Under international law, the presence of militants within a civilian population does not deprive civilians of their protected status. Hence, any assault on civilians under the guise of targeting militants is a war crime. The Israeli assault targeted schools, hospitals, homes, mosques and ambulances. It also targeted a United Nations warehouse destroying hundreds of tons of food and medical supplies. There was no way for Gazans to escape the onslaught--the borders had been sealed. This is not protection of civilians. It is criminal collective punishment.

