

BAY AREA WOMEN IN BLACK

CRISIS IN GAZA

What is unfolding in Gaza is a battleground between U.S. and Israeli local proxies (Fatah) and those who oppose them (Hamas). It is very hard to condone or cheer the way that Hamas took over Gaza. Broadly speaking, it is not Hamas' vision for Palestine that is worrying, rather it is the means used, which we hope are not rooted in their policy or will be repeated. To its credit, however, Hamas' methods are part of an arsenal that has enabled it in the past to be the only active force attempting to stop the total destruction of Palestine.

But one cannot condemn the means if one does not offer an alternative. Standing idle while the American-Israeli vision of strangling the [Gaza] Strip to death, cleansing half of the West Bank from its indigenous population and threatening the rest of the Palestinians--inside Israel and in the other parts of the West Bank--with transfer, is not an option. It's tantamount to 'decent' people's silence during the Holocaust.

Israeli historian, Ilan Pappé, 6/18/07

Located near the sea and on the road to Egypt, Gaza was an integral part of Palestine until 1948. Gaza became a huge refugee camp after 1948 when Israel and Egypt imposed restrictive policies which prevented movement out of the area leaving Gaza densely populated and without adequate economic infrastructure to support its people. In 1967, Israel occupied Gaza and the Palestinians were once again allowed to enter Israel as unskilled and underpaid workers. Over time, as the Palestinians tried to assert their right of existence, the right of movement became subject to Israel's good will.

During these past 60 years, the people of Gaza have suffered as "internees, hostages or prisoners in an impossible human space."

In 2006, the Palestinians conducted a democratic election heralded by the international community, including the U.S., as "the most democratic ever in the Middle East." Yet, when Hamas was declared the people's choice, the U.S. and much of the Western world abandoned the Palestinians, cut off aid to Gaza and the West Bank, and Israel froze disbursements of Palestinian tax money. The Gaza crisis today arises from this history.



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RECENT EVENTS

AUGUST 2005

- * Israel unilaterally withdraws its military force and settlement from Gaza.

JANUARY 2006

- * Palestinians elect Hamas, which shares its power with Fatah, and sets priority on domestic issues of economic improvement, restoration of law and order in Gaza as well as fighting corruption of the old administration.
- * Hamas allows President Abbas and the PLO to continue negotiations with Israel.
- * Hamas proposes to cease all armed action against Israel if it would agree to peace negotiations. Israel refuses.

SPRING 2006

- * Israel begins daily bombing of Gaza, tightens restrictions in and out of Gaza by land and implements a sea and air blockade.
- * Israel begins systematic arrests of Hamas members of parliament.

FALL 2006

- * Muhammad Dahlan, present Security Adviser of President Abbas, provokes Hamas government, attacking militias and refusing to allow control of Palestinian police forces. Hamas seeks to contain violence.
- * Dahlan requests arms from Israel to fight Hamas.
- * The U.S. pushes Fatah leadership to launch a military offensive against Hamas.

SPRING 2007

- * Israel approves shipment of weapons for Fatah militias in Gaza. Some are sold to Hamas by corrupt Fatah leaders.
- * Hamas defeats Fatah in Gaza. Fatah retreats to West Bank and organizes separate Palestinian government in West Bank.
- * The U.S. resumes aid to West Bank only and Israel declares it will unfreeze tax money to West Bank only.

Gaza is increasingly isolated economically, diplomatically and militarily as Palestinians assert their right of self-determination, subject again to brutal Israeli aggression intensifying the already horrifying humanitarian crisis.

Sources: www.imemc.org; <http://electronicintifada.net>

Bay Area Women in Black are Jews and allies who stand against militaristic and fundamentalist leadership in all countries, including our own. We wear black as a sign of mourning for all the Iraqi, Israeli and Palestinian lives that have been lost as a result of war, militarization and violence. As part of the international movement of Women in Black, we seek to transform women's mourning for the dead into a powerful refusal of the inevitability of war.