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Posted January 7, 2009 | 04:53 PM (EST)

Proportionality and Disproportionality: A Guide to Arguments about Gaza


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A ceasefire between Israel and Hamas seems imminent, although how long it will last is anyone's guess. One thing is fairly certain: even as the guns fall silent the charges and counter-charges of violations of international law will continue. Already the airwaves are full of talk that

Israel's "disproportionate" response is a flagrant violation of international law. The Palestinian Authority has claimed, in addition, that Israel's actions constitute "aggression against the Palestinian people," and a "crime against humanity." (See [CNN's Jim Clancy's interview](#) with the Palestinian Authority's Ambassador to the United Nations, Riyan Mansour, January 3, 2009). In this climate, it might be wise to take a deep breath and consider international law not as a propaganda tool but as a guide to reasoned behavior. Here is what such an approach reveals:

1. In international law, the concepts of proportionality and necessity are intertwined. If the action is not necessary for a legitimate military objective (security against armed attack), then it is inherently disproportionate. Was Israel's response to more than a thousand rocket attacks by Hamas, which were bound to continue upon Hamas' refusal to renew the ceasefire with Israel, a legitimate military objective? In answering this question, context is all important. Hamas had declared that its objective in sponsoring suicide bombings in Israel, and more recently in the indiscriminate use of rockets against Israeli population centers, was nothing less than the destruction of the state of Israel. Some might dismiss this aim as not worthy of being taken seriously. But those who would dismiss Hamas' stated objectives do not give the organization sufficient credit for its commitments and abilities. Hamas does not operate in a vacuum. It is supported ideologically and militarily, if not directed, by the mullahs who rule Iran. They have sworn that the destruction of Israel is a top priority. The international community has recognized that they are developing nuclear weapons to give them that capability. Iran's proxy troops are Hezbollah in Lebanon to the north of Israel, with a capacity to fire tens of thousands of Iranian manufactured rockets wherever it chooses; and Hamas in Gaza to Israel's south, able to direct sufficient indiscriminate firepower to intimidate a million Israeli citizens into living lives that vacillate between air raid sirens and the rush to shelters. In this context, an Israeli military response to Hamas' decision to let the rockets rain again was clearly justifiable.

2. The fundamental aim of international humanitarian law is to draw a distinction between combatants and non-combatants. In its authoritative ruling, *Advisory Opinion on the Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons* (1996), the International Court of Justice held that: "states must never make civilians the object of attack and must consequently, never use weapons that are incapable of distinguishing between civilian and military targets." Moreover, it prohibited employment of weapons for "uselessly aggravating their [civilian] suffering."

Applying these principles, did Hamas needlessly cause large scale civilian suffering? Did Israel needlessly cause such suffering?

Clearly, Hamas' attacks intentionally drew no distinction between combatants and non-combatants. Indeed, Hamas deliberately targeted Israeli civilians. By various accounts, Hamas also deliberately placed and fired those weapons from schools and public areas, thus endangering Palestinian lives.

Accordingly, the use of such weapons by Hamas was a war crime. It is immaterial whether Hamas is a state or non-state: either can be guilty of war crimes. Nor, of course, is it any defense to the firing of those weapons to contend that they were undertaken in response to Israel's economic "boycott" of Gaza. First, there is no international law requiring one state to open up its borders for commerce with another state or entity. Secondly, by Hamas' own admission, it is in a state of war with Israel and economic boycotts are the least offensive measure one can take in a state of war.

With regard to Israel, were it demonstrated that particular Israeli air strikes "uselessly" aggravated Palestinian civilian suffering, and that the commanding officers knew or should have known this, they would be subject to prosecution for war crimes. But the particular should not be confused with the general. It is irresponsible to speak of "aggression" in the context of self defense against rocket attacks, or to contend that such a response is a "crime against humanity."

3. International law requires that peaceful means must be exhausted before resort to force.

Assuming, although highly questionable, that Hamas merely sought an end to Israel's occupation of the West Bank rather than Israel's destruction; might Israel not have avoided Hamas' termination of the ceasefire if Israel had eased up on its territorial demands in order to resolve Israeli-Palestinian differences? But neither Israel, nor the Palestinian Authority, was willing to make important concessions. Moreover, all serious observers knew that a massive Israeli strike would inevitably follow the continuation of rocket attacks. Thus, even looking at Hamas' actions in the most charitable light, peace is not achieved through the barrel of a gun or the plume of a fired missile.

4. Finally, international law does not require the least destructive military response, only the response least destructive to civilians. As the war came, Israel was left with the daunting responsibility of protecting its own citizens while avoiding useless Palestinian suffering. Could this have been accomplished by a less destructive alternative to Israel's bombing in the middle of Gaza - i.e. by cutting of Gaza's access to weapons in the south of Gaza by making that border impenetrable? This is a question of tactics and means and until the smoke of fire clears we will never know the answer as to whether the building of large underground barriers (in Egypt with Egypt's permission) was a viable alternative. Regardless, it would be incumbent upon anyone arguing that Israeli military and political commanders knew of viable alternatives (short of surrender) to stopping the rocket attacks to demonstrate that, in fact, such alternatives existed.

Allan Gerson is the author of Israel, The West Bank and International Law. He served as counsel to the US Delegation to the United Nations and currently practices law in Washington, D.C.

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Scroll down for video GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip — Israel seized control of high-rise buildings and attacked houses, mosques and smuggling tunnels as it pressed...



Diplomatic Pressure On Israel, Hamas Intensifies

UPDATE 6 pm Heavy fighting broke out in Gaza's populated streets Monday night as Israel dismissed calls for a truce, reports the Telegraph. Explosions were...



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GAZA CITY, Gaza — France and Egypt announced an initiative to stop the fighting in Gaza late Tuesday, hours after Israeli mortar shells exploded near...

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Day Four: Gaza War Postings

I've been zigzagging my way between Israel and the West Bank to avoid IDF checkpoints. When we enter the Palestinian territories where emotions run high, my Palestinian driver almost has a fit when he finds out that my cameraman is an Israeli.



Photos From Israel That You Won't See on the News

Israel is not media savvy — we have installed warning systems and bomb shelters. No casualties means no photos, which means that many incidents aren't even covered by the media.



To Succeed in Israel/Palestine Where Clinton Failed, Obama Needs a History Lesson

If Obama limits his negotiating horizons to the failed visions of his Clinton-era Mideast team, the situation in Israel-Palestine is going to get a lot worse in the coming years.



The CNN-NPR-NYT Middle East Conspiracy

When people complain about bias in the media, it's always bias *against* their own point of view, and never *in favor* of their side. Nowhere is this more true than in coverage of the Middle East.



No Exit for Civilians in Gaza in the Midst of War

In similar situations around the world, civilians caught in the midst of conflict would have the option of seeking safety in neighboring countries as refugees. Gazans have no such option.



Evidence Grows That Israel is Using White Phosphorus in Gaza

Today, at least two UN officials have flatly declared that three or more white phosphorous shells were part of the attack today that set a UN building and compound ablaze in Gaza City.



Gaza Death Toll: 375 Palestinian, 4 Israeli

Israeli politicians continue to labor under delusions that this military operation can "clean up" their "problem" once and for all.



Israel, Stop! Just. Stop.

Killing lots of people on the other side is not only ineffective, it is counterproductive. It hurts your cause. It gets more of your own people killed in the long run. Israel, you are so better than this.



Israel and Gaza: Stop the Violence Now!

Israelis and Palestinians have been trying to prove to each other that they can survive never ending violence, an eternal occupation, and a perpetual cycle of denial that the two cannot exist together.



Changing the Reality in Gaza

Counting on international pressure to bring a quick end to the Israeli onslaught may prove to be misplaced as Israel is now determined to never allow a return to the status quo ante.



Understanding the Gaza Catastrophe

The people of Gaza are victims of geopolitics at its inhumane worst: producing what Israel itself calls a 'total war' against an essentially defenseless society.



Gaza: Lessons We Should Have Learned

The horrors that are unfolding in Gaza are but a tragic replay of past confrontations.



Arab-Israeli Rage

More than anything, it seems that the Arab world needs to produce it's version of Martin Luther King or Mahatma Gandhi that can smartly and gracefully lead their people to a dignified future.



Hamas and the Death of a Better Future

To me, Gaza is personal. As an Israeli infantry officer, I served in Gaza before, during, and after the 2005 Disengagement.



In Gaza, A Doctor's Voice Tells of Shaking Houses, Breaking Windows

Four days after Israeli air attacks against the Gaza Strip began, hospitals are already overwhelmed by the influx of wounded patients.



Al Jazeera English Beats Israel's Ban on Reporters in Gaza with Exclusive Coverage

Some may call it propaganda but I call it hardcore reporting. If you are not watching Al Jazeera English's coverage of the War on Gaza, you are missing much, if not, most of the story.



Why Aren't More Americans Dancing To Israel's Tune?

The surprising trend in American opinion on Gaza may be because the same pundits who are cheerleading Israel's assault once sold the occupation of Iraq, and with a nearly identical set of arguments.



A Minnesota College Newspaper Editor on Israel-Hamas Conflict, from Tel Aviv

There are 6 sets of parents in America right now who might be wishing that their kids weren't college newspaper editors.



Israel as Mini-Me

We are both settler states – the Puritans, who escaped oppression in the Old World only to mete out oppression in the New, unfolded their Zionist project in the 17th century with their "city built upon a hill" as the New Jerusalem.



Maybe Hamas is Not so Stupid

Judged as a piece of political theater, Hamas has succeeded in presenting Israel as the golem on the block.



Israel: Attacks on Gaza will Likely Backfire

If you're a civilian living in Gaza and an Israeli missile strikes your home killing your loved ones what are you to do? . Chances are you're going to take up arms and attack anyone and everyone you feel is responsible for the death of your family.



Gaza: The War On Children

Israel has accused Hamas of intentionally attacking from civilian-populated areas, driving up casualties among non-combatants to provoke anger against Israel. But do children have to pay the price?



The Future of Civilization

No war, no military action, no act of self-defense or revenge has a legitimacy that exempts the perpetrators from responsibility for the consequences they create.



What Was Israel Supposed to Do?

Every day now, I hear someone saying, "What was Israel supposed to do? Hamas keeps firing rockets into their country." So, here is a quick list of the things they were supposed to do.



Jews are Soul-Searching About Madoff – What About Gaza?

The future of Judaism and the moral standing of the US Jewish community are being threatened. It is happening in Gaza. And unfortunately there is far too little handwringing about it in the Jewish leadership.



Did Israel Use Disproportionate Force?

The tide of public opinion seems to invariably side with the underdog, regardless of who's to blame. Hence, Israel now finds itself in the awkward yet familiar position of defending its actions.



More Birth Pangs in the Middle East?

Israel finds itself in a similar position the United States found itself in Vietnam: The more it flexes its military muscle the politically weaker it becomes vis-à-vis a determined, largely civilian enemy.



Israel's Extensive PR Campaign

Last Friday, at the height of the attacks, Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak announced without a hint of irony: "We are peace seekers."



What Was Hamas Thinking? Understanding the Events in Gaza

So what are Hamas's strategic imperatives? Hamas still behaves like a traditional guerrilla or terrorist group – such groups are interested in relative, not absolute, victory.

Accused of Funding Hamas, Controversial Charity Collects Money in



[Lebanon for Palestinians in Gaza \(VIDEO\)](#)

On Beirut's waterfront road, young men dressed in green jackets with the Etelaf Al-Khair logo on their backs are handing out fliers with images of bloodied Palestinian children and holding donation boxes.



[Georgetown Newspaper Editor Reports on Sderot-Gaza, and Recording With Rockets](#)

In a recording studio in Sderot, a few miles east of Israel's Gaza strip, Sergio Arditi felt the steady pulse of Rock and Roll give way to the sporadic vibration of bombs.



[Israel: There Has To Be A Better Way](#)

The war between Israel and Hamas is not as two-dimensional as the United States Senate would like to believe. This is a complex and asymmetric war that will not end favorably for either side.



[Where Is Israel Going?](#)

Does the Gaza war improve Israel's long-term (or even short-term) situation? I am not questioning Israel's right to respond. But that is the wrong question.



[Israel's Blitzkrieg on Gaza Proves Politically Expedient, Disproportionate and Unstoppable](#)

While the threat of rockets launched from Gaza can seem menacing, or even "terrorizing," it is incomparable to the terror that millions of Palestinians endure on a daily basis.



[Famed Israeli Journalist Decries Civilian Casualties in Gaza -- But Who is Amira Hass?](#)

Hass is not only an Israeli but both of her parents are Holocaust survivors. She has become the most prominent Israeli journalist to make it her mission to report as often as possible from Gaza and the West Bank.



[Defending Condi: Olmert Shames Himself in Kick-in-the-Teeth Attack on Rice](#)

Olmert's statements certainly send a signal to many in the incoming Obama administration that while there are convergent American and Israeli interests - friendship and trust are eroding.



[The Phony War Crimes Accusation Against Israel](#)

If Israel were ever to be charged with "war crimes," that would mark the end of international human rights law as a neutral arbitrator of conduct.



[Palestine's Guernica and the Myths of Israeli Victimhood](#)

After hundreds dead and counting, it is Israel who refuses to re-enter talks over a cease-fire. They are not intent on securing peace as they claim; it is more and more clear that they are seeking regime change -- whatever the cost.



[Israel May Win in Gaza, Hamas Won't Lose and Moderate Arab Leaders and Obama Will Worry](#)

With or without intention, Israel has incited millions across the Arab world to praise Syria and Iran, both dedicated to the Palestinian cause, and perhaps just as many to condemn Egypt and more moderate countries.



[Christmas Spirit Shattered in the Holy Land](#)

A tense atmosphere in anticipation of more bad news and an air of sadness has engulfed East Jerusalem in the aftermath of the Gaza attacks. The spirit of Christmas has all but died.



[Calling Out Bush's War in Gaza](#)

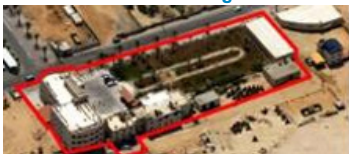
Is it in the interest of humanity that we Americans engage in the charade that the Israeli government is an autonomous actor in this matter?



[Fanaticism and Contempt](#)

Once the master of revolutionary war, Israel cannot seem to grasp the essential nature of asymmetrical warfare.

[IDF Photos of Hamas Targets in Gaza Before Strike](#)



Israel Defense Forces released aerial photos of the Hamas facilities targeted by fighter pilots on Saturday's **Operation Cast Lead**. The red outline indicates the Hamas facilities targeted.



[America is Primarily at Fault for the Conflict in Gaza](#)

The Bush administration demanded -- against the advice of nearly every expert in the field and the Israeli government -- that the Palestinians hold elections. They did. Hamas won.



[Bomb A Ghetto, Raise A Cheer -- The Video](#)

On January 11, an estimated 10,000 people rallied in front of the Israeli consulate in New York in support of Israel's attack on Gaza. The event was a festive affair that began and ended with singing and joyous dancing.

[Gaza on YouTube: Film at 11!](#)



In lieu of actual reporting, all you have to do is log on to the Israel Defense Forces' YouTube Channel and you can see images of Israel pummeling Gaza, and sit in on "the first ever" Twitter press conference.

[NY Times Responds Weakly Today to Israel's 'Incursion' – As Shells Kill Dozens at U.N. School](#)



It takes until paragraph #8 for the *Times*, to mention that, by the way, Israel "must" allow foreign journalists access to Gaza, especially since its highest court so ordered.

[Gazans in Peril](#)



The human tragedy that has befallen Gaza's Palestinians – Hamas supporters or not – warrants every American to take cognizance because of its consequences for a durable Middle East peace.

[Hold Your Fire: Children and Civilians In Gaza](#)



If the killing of unarmed civilians by terrorist groups is wrong, Israel's killing of unarmed Palestinian civilians and our defense of Israel's conduct cannot be right.

[War Diary from Sderot](#)



Not in my name and not for me did you go into this war. The bloodbath in Gaza is not in my name nor for my security. Behind this accursed leadership of Hamas live human beings.

[Overwhelming Force Is the Only Way to Fight Terrorists](#)



The destruction of Hamas benefits the Palestinians far more than the Israelis. It is they that must live under the cruelty of an organization that terrorizes its citizens even more than its enemies.

[Israel's Invasion Inspires One-Sided Commentary in U.S. Media](#)



The invasion, to no one's surprise, did begin today – so any further criticism will now come too late. But as in the past, U.S. media coverage and commentary has overwhelmingly backed Israeli actions.

[After Years in Exile, My Grandfather Returns to Gaza](#)



My family had been trying to speak with my grandfather since Saturday, after Israel began its onslaught on Gaza. But we haven't managed to reach him.

[Gaza and the Obama Effect – Ending the War](#)



It might be pushing the envelope to call Obama the peacemaker here, but it's hard to deny that his impending entrance to the world stage has an effect.

[Killing the Messenger: Targeting the Press in Gaza](#)



As is with the current situation with Gaza, when Israel is performing air strikes, everyone is vulnerable – militants, civilians, and journalists alike.

[Obama's Silence](#)



As January 20 approaches, Obama will have to make a lonely decision - to remember his 2007 words about Palestinian suffering and his campaign pledge to talk unconditionally with adversaries.

[How Propaganda Hijacked Israeli Strategy in Gaza](#)



While Israel's explicit goal is to cease all attacks on southern Israel, senior IDF and intelligence officials have privately signaled that this is unrealistic, even with a ground invasion.

[Jordanian MPs Burn Israeli Flag](#)



Nationalist MPs shared together in a clear act of national consensus as they torched the Israeli flag at the outset of the parliament's session Sunday.

[Video Reveals that a Lack of Moral Center Is Central to Hamas's War Strategy](#)



The whole world is quick to condemn Israel for civilian deaths in Gaza, but there is utter silence over Hamas's blatant disregard for the lives of its own citizens.

[Israel/Palestine Debate Is Shifting](#)



With each fresh round of bombing, Israel's reputation gets worse, allowing growing numbers of people who might never have said a critical word about that country to finally speak up.

[Goodnight My Love, See You in Heaven – Diary From an Aid Worker in Gaza](#)



The situation has now reached such a critical point that doctors frequently confront dilemmas such as these – to treat the child who is bleeding to death or the baby who has severe head injuries?

[The U.N.'s Richard Falk: Gaza a Victim of Geopolitics](#)



The people of Gaza are victims of geopolitics at its inhumane worst: producing what Israel itself calls a "total war" against an essentially defenseless society that lacks any defensive military capability whatsoever.

[Israel in Gaza: Three Wrong Arguments](#)



The Reid/McConnell resolution is a perfect articulation of one voice in the American debate over Israel's actions in Gaza. Here are a few objections that should be raised.

[Dead Children in School Uniforms In Gaza City: A Naagana Thought](#)



David Susskind on Colonel Shalita in Gaza City: A Groggling Thought

I wish I could parse the politics and figure out where I stand on this shiny new conflict, but I'm stuck on its opening act.



Israel, Gaza and Iran: Trapping Obama in Imagined Fault Lines

While there certainly is an underlying rivalry between Israel and Iran that has come to fuel many other otherwise unrelated conflicts in the region, not every war Israel fights is related to Iran.



The True Story Behind This War is Not the One Israel is Telling

The Israeli government wants peace, but only one imposed on its own terms, based on the acceptance of defeat by the Palestinians.



Weighing Proportionality in Gaza

The losses on both sides will be all in vain if the final outcome of the war does not substantially improve both the prospects for an eventual Israeli-Palestinian peace.



I've Seen This One Before

The only thing more predictable than a Jets football season is the ongoing saga that is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.



Reportage from Israel/Gaza

We can't ignore this fact: Gaza is becoming not the embryo of the so-desired Palestinian State, but the advance base of a total war against the Jewish State.



Obama -- Please Say Something!

In just over two weeks Obama will be unable to avoid saying something and the world will be looking to him and demanding to hear his opinion on the crisis in Gaza.

Reading The Pictures: Is That A Snuff Film The Israeli Air Force Has Posted On YouTube?



What troubles me most is how the IDF, in the name of transparency and smart public relations, has not only posted quite a few videos of bombing runs, but continues to show one in question.



How Israel is Wrong and the Palestinians are Misguided

Israel is occupying the West Bank (and effectively Gaza because they control the borders, the airspace, etc.). What are they going to do with it -- hold on to it forever?



Lessons Learned from the 2006 War Being Implemented in Gaza

While many have spoken about the lessons Hamas has learned from Hezbollah over the years, it appears the Israeli political and military establishment has learned one or two of its own.



It's Overtime for Hamas' Leaders and Time for Them to Go

As long as Hamas rules its Gaza roost with its iron fist, any hope for a two state solution is just not in the cards. Hamas plays with a crooked deck.



Kuwait's Political Machinations Lower U.S. Stocks as War on Gaza Raises Oil Prices

As the American dollar declines and bombs drop on Gaza, the likeliness of regional countries becoming drawn into the conflict are mounting.



Has Israel Revived Hamas?

It is abundantly clear that Hamas movement has been brought back from near political defeat while moderate Arab leaders have been forced to back away from their support for any reconciliation with Israel.



American Jewish Responses to Gaza: Old & New

In the past several years, the emergence of pro-peace American Jewish organizations has provided an alternative voice on critical Middle East issues.



Hamas Is Largely to Blame for Israel's Gaza Offensive

How is it that Hamas, a terrorist organization that refused to extend the truce and fired rockets at civilians on a daily basis, gets so much sympathy, with Israel condemned for defending itself?



Israel's Risk

What we're watching in Gaza is not so much low-intensity warfare as the continued fracture of the post-Soviet international order.



Why Do So Few Speak Up for Gaza?

Why is it that there is such widespread acceptance, beginning with the apologetic arguments of George Bush, that whatever Israel does is always justified as necessary to the survival of the Jewish state?



Why Israel Was Right to Invade Gaza

How should Israel attempt to protect its people, long-term, if it merely acts defensively in a tit-for-tat manner? That would be a horribly naïve response given its history.

Brzezinski: Obama Must Press Agreement on Israelis and Palestinians



BRZYZINSKI: Obama Had a 2008 Agreement on Israeli and Palestinian
 In order to get beyond the superficial analyses one might find on *Morning Joe*, I called up Zbigniew Brzezinski to offer him a serious opportunity to talk about Obama and the Israeli-Hamas conflict.



Gaza Clouds Obama's Prospects

Clearly, Hamas and its hard-line supporters in the region reject the goal of an Israel at peace with its neighbors and secure within its boundaries.



Gaza, Qaddafi, And Starbucks

Along with the images of bloodied children, scenes of destruction and carnage in Gaza, debates on Arab disunity have increased in the Arab media.



Obama's Silence on Gaza is Deafening

Obama has massive political capital, and could have injected himself into the crisis before it happened and could have lent his credibility to a situation that has spiraled dangerously out of control.



Attack on Gaza: As Usual, U.S. Media (And Most Liberals) Silent -- As Israeli Newspaper Raises Doubts

The foreign press, and even *Haaretz* in Israel, carries more balanced accounts than the American media.



Israel's President Shimon Peres, On the Attacks in Gaza

Peres: "It is the first time in the history of Israel that we, the Israelis, cannot understand the motives or the purposes of the ones who are shooting at us. It is the most unreasonable war, done by the most unreasonable warriors."



My Kuffiyeh Says I Care

It's New Years Eve in Beirut, and everyone is wondering what to do. In times of war, going about one's usual business can be a form of protest. In times of solidarity, the code of conduct is vague.



Israel, Hamas, Gaza: Plenty of Us in America Just Need to Shut Up

Something labeled "Subject: Fwd: Some Differences Between Hamas and the Nazi Party" showed up in my inbox Monday night.



Selective Memory Is a Problem when dealing with the Israeli- Palestinian Conflict

Irrespective of time and chronology, trading land for peace continues to be the most logical and appropriate way to address the conflict which has bridged the 20th and 21st centuries.



Obama Camp "Prepared To Talk To Hamas," Says the *Guardian*

The Obama administration's emphasis on "talk" with Hamas will bring a significant moral shift in U.S. policy -- but it will not do away with some of the core grievances vis-a-vis U.S.-Israel relations.



Mitchell Bard is Wrong On Israel

Hamas did not start this conflict. Here's an extensive time line of events, making clear that Israel broke the ceasefire, not Hamas.



AP Reporter Watches Own Home Destroyed, via YouTube, in Gaza

In one of the most moving accounts of the war in Gaza, Ibrahim Barzak, the AP's chief correspondent there for 17 years, today wrote of watching his own home destroyed on YouTube.



Protesters in Beirut Demand Action from Arab Leaders on Gaza, Focusing on Egypt as Demonstrations Rise (VIDEO)

Millions across the Arab world are demonstrating, demanding that Arab governments do more to support Palestinians trapped in Gaza.



Eyeless in Gaza

I wish I didn't believe that the events now unfolding in the Middle East are too complicated for unalloyed outrage. I wish the arguments of only one side rang wholly true to me.



Ceasefire

The first reason for a ceasefire now is to stop the killing. The second is to ensure that a year or two from now we are not all wishing that Hamas was still in charge.



Livni and Barak's Gaza Calculus

If hundreds of innocent deaths helps secure a real security mandate for the moderate-to-dovish Kadima/Labor and Israeli-Palestinian peace, that's political calculus Livni and Barak were willing to take.



Iraqi Parliamentarian to His People: "It's Not Between Palestinians and Israelis, it's Between Terrorists and Moderates"

I spoke over the phone with Iraqi Parliamentarian Mithal al-Alusi, head of the Iraqi Nation Party in Baghdad -- he says, interestingly, a significant number of Iraqis are not reflexively anti-Israel and pro-Palestinian.



What's Next on Gaza/Israel and Why Americans Should Care

So here we are, in a dangerous escalatory cycle that is already sweeping the region, with scores of Palestinian dead, horrific images, a highly-charged blame-game and no obvious exit-strategy. What needs to happen next?

Was Israel Punked by Hamas? Are Progressives Attacking Israel Being



Punked too?

The only way the Israeli and Palestinian people have a shot at peace is for outsiders to put pressure on both sides to make it happen and to stop the violence. It can be done.



Israel and Hamas: Two to Tango

What is going on in Gaza is that it is not the result of a sudden decision or an immediate and intolerable provocation by one side or the other – this thing has been in the planning by both sides for months.



Even in Sderot, Israelis Say No to Endless War

The people I met in Sderot were not calling for war, they were calling for negotiation. They knew that they would be the ones to catch the brunt of an attack on Gaza, not Tel Aviv, not Jerusalem.



Hamas Is Responsible for the Civilian Casualties in Gaza

By choosing tactical advantages over the safety of its citizens, the terrorist organization chose its military goals over the safety of its fellow Palestinians in Gaza.



Indifference to the Dead and Dying

Collectively punishing the mothers and children of Gaza does not just violate international law, it does not just kill the people of Gaza, it kills any chance of a future peace.



The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Is An Ancient Story

I've been living in Israel now for almost a decade, and have survived biological warfare threats from Saddam, Intifada #2, terror attacks targeting Israeli civilians, and the war with Lebanon. But today, I feel pissed off.



Self-Deception and the Assault on Gaza

From the civilian deaths in Gaza will spring more hatred and terrorism. Yet no people are so prone as Americans and Israelis to think admiringly of our own good intentions.



Letter From Beersheva

I am here in Beersheva – on the "almost" frontlines of the conflict with Hamas – to tell you the first thing to do when missiles start to fall nearby, is your diet.



How to Defeat Hamas – Face Up to the Truth

Making Hamas into a unique demon is pure propaganda. But no form of Islamic extremism will end until moderate Muslims stand up for their religion.



Two Paths Ahead for the Palestinians: Nonviolence vs. Violence

There are only two paths ahead, one for Hamas and one for the Israelis, that each must take in order to solve this conflict once and for all.



In the Shadow of Airstrikes in Jerusalem

With the coming war and intifada on my mind, I realize that thousands of rockets have been fired into Israel in recent years, yet because we in Jerusalem don't get hit by them, it has always seemed removed.



It's Time for a Sustained Focus on a Lasting Middle East Peace

What we continue to lack is the kind of real political solution to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict that could finally make a "ceasefire" endure.



Gaza: Fight at the End of the Tunnel?

Any ceasefire must include an ironclad commitment by Egypt to cooperate fully with Israel to shut Hamas' tunnel network once and for all whatever Hamas' political or military wings decide tomorrow in Cairo.



The Lesson Israel Should Have Never Learned

Israel, torn in anger and exaggerated feelings of vulnerability, is unlikely to stop bombing until it realizes that it has once again shot itself in the foot.

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