



PRESS RELEASE

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April 9, 2009

For Immediate Release

LOCAL GRASSROOTS COALITION CALLS ON CONGRESSMEN BINGAMAN, UDALL AND HEINRICH TO SUSPEND WEAPONS SALES TO ISRAEL

ALBUQUERQUE, NM – The Albuquerque-based Coalition to Stop \$30 Billion to Israel issued calls today for a suspension of military aid to Israel in response to charges that Israel may have violated U.S. and International Law in its recent attack on the Gaza Strip. The Coalition is publicizing its message via 10 small billboards scattered across Albuquerque. The billboards (image shown below) feature images of a young Palestinian girl and an Israeli tank along with the message: **“Tell Congress: Stop Killing Children, End Military Aid to Israel.”** Billboard locations include 1415 Indian School NE, 5500 2nd Street NW, and 112 Coors NW.



According to fact sheets researched and compiled by the Coalition, the U.S. agreed to provide Israel with \$30 billion in military aid over a ten year period. Israel received its first subsidy in 2008. The Coalition says the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) used some of this aid in its December 27, 2008 to January 18, 2009 assault against Gaza and may have committed war crimes. More than 1,400 Palestinians, including over 300 children and 900 civilians were killed during the assault, dubbed Operation Cast Lead. The military aid, which amounts to \$3 billion per year of taxpayer money that Americans can ill afford, appears to be in violation of the Arms Export Control Act and the Foreign Assistance Act. The Coalition calls on the voters of Albuquerque to call or write Senators Jeff Bingaman and Tom Udall and Representative Martin Heinrich and demand that U.S. military aid to Israel be suspended. The Coalition also asks voters in Congressional Districts 2 and 3 to contact their representatives with the same message.



Quotes from several Coalition Members:

Dr. Lori Rudolph, an American Jew who travels to Palestine frequently is a mental health consultant, trainer and fundraiser for the Ibdaa Cultural Center at Dheisheh Refugee Camp: “The deaths of more than 1,400 Palestinians in Gaza due to the recent Israeli assault were aided and abetted by U.S.-manufactured weapons. The Israeli siege and occupation—and the humanitarian crises they are causing—are enforced with U.S. weapons, making every single U.S. taxpayer an accessory to Israel’s crimes.”

Rich Forer is a Jewish American who until recently was a member of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC): “In the past two years I have been studying the history of the conflict between the Palestinian people and the state of Israel, focusing primarily on Israeli historians whose research is derived from Israeli State and Central Zionist archives. To my surprise, I have discovered that the history taught to Jewish schoolchildren is a gross distortion of the facts that has served to demonize the Palestinians. There can be no peace until Israel begins to treat the Palestinian people with a reasonable degree of humanity. The recent invasion of the Gaza Strip was a monstrous act of inhumanity leaving over 300 children dead. The United States must end its military aid to Israel and demand that Israel begin sincere and honest negotiations with the goal of a peace treaty that restores dignity to both sides of the conflict.”

Susan Schuurman, who received a master’s degree from UNM in the History of the Middle East, focuses on local connections to the carnage in Gaza: “New Mexico has many links to the Israeli military: Lockheed Martin, Boeing, Raytheon, Los Alamos and Sandia National Labs, Kirtland Air Force Base, White Sands Missile Range, and research conducted at UNM and New Mexico Tech. We are researching these ties and hope that when employees learn how their work plays a role in the suffering of the Palestinian people, they will put pressure on their employers and members of Congress to suspend weapons sales to Israel.”

Armen Chakerian, member of the Middle East Peace and Justice Alliance: “Israel says their invasion of Gaza was a response to rocket attacks, but nothing justifies the Israeli military taking the lives of 300 children. In fact, those homemade rockets had not killed a single Israeli during the previous six months.”



Hebah Ahmed, a member of the local Muslim Community and mother of two, has been disturbed by the sub-human image of Palestinians and Middle Easterners that is portrayed in American society: “We are mothers and fathers, sons and daughters. We bleed when hurt and we ache when our children are killed. I beg my fellow Americans to value all human life as equal. U.S. weapons should be used for legitimate self defense, not for invasions and occupation, whose victims are primarily children and civilians.”

Kathy and Bill Christison, former CIA analysts and contributors to Counterpunch.org, have been studying the Middle East for over 35 years and have written three books and numerous articles on Palestine-Israel. They will leave later this month for their seventh visit to Palestine-Israel since 2003: “We both believe that the strong U.S.-Israeli partnership, and particularly the massive amounts of U.S. aid to Israel, seriously distort U.S. national interests.”

Mary Gossage, a Muslim and U.S. Army veteran, together with a friend living in Dheisheh Refugee Camp created the first Palestinian Refugee Camp website so Dheisheh children could gain online access to the outside world. It went live 14 May 1998 in commemoration of 50 years of Nakba. “Drawing Americans’ attention to the heartaches and injustices of the past 60+ years has done little to alleviate the problems, or to clarify the role our nation plays in creating them. Perhaps drawing attention to our collective pocketbook along with our violations of both U.S. and International laws will.”

Sally-Alice Thompson is a representative of Veterans for Peace. “As members of Veterans For Peace, we wholeheartedly endorse the VFP Statement of Principles, which includes: restraining our government from intervening in the internal affairs of other nations, and seeking justice for...victims of war. For these and other reasons we oppose borrowing money from China to give to Israel.”

Sally McMillan, representing the Albuquerque chapter of United Nations Association, says: “It doesn't serve U.S. interests to provide military aid to Israel when Israel's actions violate human rights and are in violation of international law. There's a saying ‘Our friends are part of who we are’, and the rest of the world, especially Arab countries, identify us with these Israeli violations.”

Rita Erickson, an eyewitness to the suffering via several visits to relatives who live in the region, said: “If American's saw the WALL the Israeli government is building or witnessed the system of Apartheid the Israelis have created to squeeze even more Palestinians off of their land and brutally limit their ability to



live normal lives, they would wonder why Palestinians have not done more to resist the oppressive conditions under which the Israelis have forced them to live for decades. Americans would be outraged if they knew that their tax dollars prevent students from going to school, farmers from tending their land, pregnant women from access to hospitals. And they would be shocked at the number of people who die as a result of arbitrary decisions made by young soldiers at check points. There simply is no justification for the racist policies practiced by the Israeli government to maintain a Jewish state.”

Bob Anderson, of Stop the War Machine, connects the attack on Gaza with the military industrial complex that President Eisenhower warned about in 1961. "How can we as a nation turn our heads as hundreds of children are slaughtered and pretend this is justified? Many New Mexico arms manufacturers and the war bases in New Mexico support and supply the Israeli war machine with weapons and intelligence for profit. Stop the War Machine has said repeatedly to the local military industries that war profiteering must stop, that our country must help the people of Palestine with positive resources from our country, not with death and destruction. Free the people of Palestine from the U.S./Israeli war axis."

The Coalition to Stop \$30 Billion to Israel consists of the following local grassroots organizations:

- Albuquerque Unitarian Universalist Fellowship Social Concerns Committee
- Amnesty International, Chapter 101, Albuquerque
- Another Jewish Voice, Albuquerque (AJV)
- Middle East Peace and Justice Alliance (MEPJA)
- Stop the War Machine (SWM)
- United Nations Association (UNA ABQ Chapter)
- Veterans for Peace (VFP), Albuquerque
- Muslim Women Outreach (MWO)
- Irish Freedom Committee (Ronan MacLochlainn Cumann Chapter)