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Israel resumes indiscriminate killings in Gaza

By Patrick Martin

9 August 2014

Israeli missiles and artillery shells began striking Gaza again Friday, after a 72-hour ceasefire with Hamas, the Islamist ruling party in Gaza, ended at 8 a.m. local time.

Hamas fired a barrage of about 40 rockets into southern Israel after the ceasefire deadline passed. One rocket injured two men and another damaged a house, but most fell harmlessly in open areas. Six were shot down by the “Iron Dome” missile defense system, Israeli officials claim.

The Israeli attacks over the next 12 hours were far more deliberate and lethal, and seemed calculated to demonstrate the complete indifference to world public opinion of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his war cabinet.

Israeli planes, naval warships and artillery fired on at least 47 targets in Gaza, killing at least five people and wounding 22.

An Israeli drone fired on ten-year-old Ibrahim Dawawsa as he was playing outside in the Sheik Radwan neighborhood of Gaza City, his family said. The *New York Times* described the impact of the explosion, “leaving a pool of blood from his skull next to a crushed SuperCola can and an abandoned flip-flop.” Two other boys were injured.

The boys were playing near a mosque that was under construction to repair damage from a previous Israeli attack on Gaza, Operation Cast Lead in 2008-2009. Two-by-fours for the construction were scattered by the missile blast. “What, the boy was shelling Israel with this wood?” a neighbor asked the *Times*, adding bitterly, “I’m sure Israel will say he killed himself.”

Neither the Israeli government nor its Western media apologists bothered to answer the question why three boys playing in a yard would be targeted for drone missile assassination.

Health officials in Gaza have put the death toll from one month of Operation Protective Edge, the official title of the Israeli bombing, artillery and ground attacks, at 1,893 Palestinians, including at least 429 children. UN officials estimate that three quarters of those killed by Israeli attacks were civilians.

An Israeli delegation in Egypt for talks on the Gaza crisis left the country one hour before the expiration of the ceasefire, clearly anticipating the resumption of military action by the Israel Defense Force. Israel made no offer to continue the ceasefire and Netanyahu has flatly rejected any lifting of the tight economic blockade of Gaza, the main demand made by Hamas.

A Palestinian delegation empowered to speak for both Hamas and Fatah, the secular party that rules the West Bank, remained in Egypt for talks held under the auspices of the military dictator and president, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi. The top Hamas negotiator, Mussa Abu Marzook, said “there is no commitment to a ceasefire. We will protect our people with everything we have.”

Several Israeli cabinet ministers issued statements after the latest round of strikes on Gaza began, demanding even more savage attacks on the Palestinian people.

Economy Minister Naftali Bennett, leader of the ultra-right settler party Bayit Yehudi, called for ending talks in Cairo, saying the expiration of the ceasefire was “a moment of truth for Israeli deterrence in the coming years, and the response must be harsh.” He continued, “I remind the Israeli public Protective Edge is not over and Hamas has not been defeated.”

Housing Minister Uri Ariel was more explicit about the goal of the Israeli intervention, declaring, “This reality must change immediately, which will be made possible by clearly defining the objective to the security forces—toppling Hamas once and for all.”

Only two days before, historian Ze’ev Sternhell, a longtime Peace Now activist and critic of Zionism, publicly denounced Bennett and Ariel as “the most dangerous people,” in an interview with the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz*.

Comparing them to the leader of the French neo-fascist National Front, Sternhell said, “They do not understand what human rights are. They truly hate the Arabs, and there is no way for them to coexist with them. They have things in common with Marine Le Pen. In some ways Le Pen is to the left of them.”

While the Netanyahu government discusses whether to resume ground attacks on Gaza, press reports coming out of the blockaded territory paint a horrifying picture of destruction and social deprivation on a mass scale. The electricity, water and sewage systems have been wrecked, and fuel supplies are nonexistent. Nearly half a million people were displaced from their homes.

Palestinian officials have estimated 40,000 homes destroyed or damaged, seven times the number wrecked during Operation Cast Lead five years ago. At least 100 to 120 factories have been destroyed, wiping out the workplaces of thousands of workers. Eighty mosques have been damaged or destroyed, and nearly 150 schools.

The US government has responded to the humanitarian disaster with a swift response—increasing its military aid to the regime that produced it. On Monday, President Obama signed a bill giving Israel \$225 million in emergency aid for the Iron Dome anti-missile system, a measure passed by Congress with near-unanimous support and in record time. This comes after the Pentagon, at Obama's direction, turned over huge quantities of ammunition, bombs and other military materiel to the Israel Defense Forces.