



PEACE BUREAU URGES STRONGER PROTESTS AGAINST ISRAEL'S GAZA WAR

Geneva, January 14, 2009. Last weekend's mass protests across the world against Israel's savage (and illegal) attacks on the Gaza population were an important reminder to governments on all continents that this is an issue with global ramifications and one that ordinary citizens feel extremely angry about. The 'second superpower' that brought 10 million onto the streets on 15 February 2003 (to protest the threatened war on Iraq) is stirring once again.

How many more mosques, schools, relief convoys, and ordinary homes will be targeted? How many more children bombed to bits? The ominous threat of a 'third phase' of the military operation suggests the Gaza bodycount will go even higher before Obama's inauguration brings this butchery to an end (current figures give nearly 1000 Palestinian dead, 4,400 wounded, 90,000 displaced).

It is true that Israeli civilians are also being targeted and that every country has the right to defend its borders and its citizens against attack. But it also has the primary duty to defend itself by diplomacy and dialogue, and the current Israeli leadership seems utterly unwilling to use those tools. The fundamental issue is the occupation of what Palestinians view as their land. The less extreme elements of the Hamas leadership have been willing to consider a two-state solution based on the 1967 borders. But the tragic consequence of the current invasion and slaughter is that it will make it far harder for either of the Palestinian factions or Arab opinion to contemplate sitting down with the Israelis. And terrorist attacks will go on. In the longer term, Israel – and its Western backers - will not be more secure.

Along with peace movements across the globe, IPB believes that militarism rarely solves anything – usually it drives conflicts up, rather than down, the spiral of violence. Meanwhile billions of dollars are wasted that could have been spent tackling the challenges of poverty, injustice, climate change and more. How much has this operation cost so far? How much will it cost to repair?

There is much that has to be done now, and urgently. Millions are carrying out acts of solidarity in their own ways in communities across the world. IPB highlights just three areas:

1. **Protests** must be intensified so that governments are obliged to respond more vigorously through their own relations with Israel.
2. **An immediate ceasefire** must be brokered, opening the way for **talks** on the fundamental issues. These should begin under the auspices of the Quartet, and clearly this is a priority task for President Obama.
3. **Humanitarian aid** and support for the longer term reconstruction and development process must be rapidly stepped up, so that as soon as the borders are fully opened from any side essential supplies and necessary expertise can reach the entire Gaza population.

The International Peace Bureau is dedicated to the vision of a World Without War. We are a Nobel Peace Laureate (1910) and over the years 13 of our officers have been recipients of the Nobel Peace Prize. Our 300 member organisations in 70 countries, and individual members, form a global network bringing together expertise and campaigning experience in a common cause. Our current main programme centres on *Sustainable Disarmament for Sustainable Development*. We welcome your participation.