

Mr. Barack H. Obama
President of the United States of America
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington D.C. 20500
USA

20 January 2009

Dear Mr. President,

We are at the US occupied base at Menwith Hill, North Yorkshire in the UK - presenting this letter to welcome you and your administration into office. Your statements inspired us during the electoral process and we hope that, with your leadership, the good will of the American people can be translated into positive action. We are also here therefore to publicly plead for early action to redress the appalling humanitarian situation suffered by Palestinians over the past sixty years.

Following the tragedy of 9.11, the Bush administration turned world sympathy into hatred. In the past America was heralded as a beacon of light and a force for good. Sadly that is no longer true.

America's lack of political fairness and unconditional support for Israel has undermined the UN's ability to address the situation in Palestine. Over the last half century, the US has used its Security Council veto dozens of times to prevent resolutions condemning Israel for abusive or hostile actions. With full US support for its actions, Israel has flagrantly ignored over five dozen UN Resolutions condemning or censuring it for its actions against the Palestinian people. Had the UN been able to enforce prior resolutions we believe much suffering could have been avoided.

The Palestinian/Israeli conflict involves an oppressor and an oppressed. When Israel talks of 'defending itself', its cries of victim-hood ring hollow. As the fourth largest weapons exporter and one of the world's largest military forces (per capita), Israel's power dwarfs that of its Arab neighbours. In Gaza, Israel is using state of the art weapons systems (many US funded and supplied) deploying hideous munitions including white phosphorous, depleted uranium, DIME and cluster bombs against civilian targets. This action is a war crime.

After the democratic elections of January 2006 when Palestinians, including the majority of their Christian voters, overwhelmingly elected Hamas, Israel, the US and Europe refused to have discussions with the new government, suspended aid and blocked taxes owed to the Palestinians. Israel then began to assassinate Hamas members, arrest elected officials and arm Fatah.

Since 2006 the people of Gaza have endured an air, land and sea blockade that has denied them sufficient access to medicine, food, clean water and fuel. There have also been frequent attacks on civil structures. Despite this a tentative ceasefire was agreed. Israel broke the ceasefire on 4th December 2008, killing several Gazans. The Palestinians were left with no option but to retaliate - the choice was to die quietly or resist.

We are mainly pacifists but, ultimately, an occupied population has the right to resist- a right recognised under international law.

If it were true that Israel's action is only about homemade rockets fired from Gaza why is Israel continually carrying out assassinations and regular attacks in the West Bank? Why is the West Bank being divided into small, unsustainable areas?

From its inception Israel has stolen land from the Palestinian people through brutal force. Since 1967 the West Bank and Gaza have been occupied by Israeli armed forces. Illegal settlement building has been actively encouraged. Israeli use-only roads have been constructed, as has a separation wall which snakes through the West bank – often following the water tables and separating villages. On a daily basis over 600 road blocks (many mobile) cause grief and suffering to the Palestinian people and are a constant and humiliating reminder of the occupying force. Palestinians are arbitrarily blocked from attending schools, universities, hospitals, their work places, their lands and from visiting family members. Homes are bulldozed flat. The flow of goods and services into and out of these areas is controlled. Israel carries out targeted assassinations and arrests and detains people including children, many of whom are subject to torture. The list of injustices goes on and on.

Hamas have made many approaches to Israel to negotiate a peace settlement. Israel's refusal to talk leads us to the firm conclusion that Israel does not want peace. They want more land, water and the natural gas reserves of Gaza. For this reason Israel refuses to define its borders.

We urge you to act - to stop unconditional support for Israel and to talk to Hamas. There can be a just solution. The outlines of a proper treaty are already clear but it requires an external push to get the Israelis to make the necessary concessions for a just, peaceful and lasting agreement.

But, PEACE WILL NOT HAPPEN WITHOUT YOUR PERSONAL INTERVENTION. Positive intervention on this issue will do more than any act to bring hope and security and to transform attitudes demonstrating that, under your presidency, America is regaining its moral compass.

Please act now.

Thank you and welcome,

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Yours sincerely,

Representing:

York Palestinian Solidarity Campaign – York PSC, P.O. Box 423, York, YO24 4WP

www.palestinecampaign.org

Campaign for the Accountability of American Bases – www.caab.org.uk

York Against the War Group, www.yorkagainstthewar.org.uk