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From: [Ismail Zayid](#)

To: [Halifax Herald](#)

Cc: [Bev Dauphinee](#)

Sent: Tuesday, January 06, 2009 12:01 PM

Subject: It is the occupation....

Jan. 6, 2009

The Editor,
The Halifax Herald.

Dear Editor:

Paul Schneidereit [Jan. 6], is at it again, re-writing the history of this conflict, reproducing falsehoods and distortions. He states : " the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will persist through and well beyond the current crisis in Gaza." He is quite right there, for the simple reason that Israel has no intention of complying with international law and terminating its **illegal occupation** of Palestinian land, including, Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem, that has been allowed to stand for over 40 years, in defiance of international law and repeated Security Council resolutions.

He states: "In 2005, Israel pulled completely out of Gaza, hoping disengagement would eventually lead to peaceful co-existence." This pull-out left Gaza completely closed in, denying it access to the outside world, by air, sea or land routes, and transforming Gaza into a large open prison, as confirmed by all international observers.

The disengagement he refers to is well-described by **Dov Weisglass**, the chief advisor to Ariel Sharon, who planned this disengagement. Weisglass stated in reference to the question of creating a Palestinian state after the so-called pull-out: "**Palestinians would have to turn into Finns**" before this could happen. "Effectively, this whole package called the Palestinian state, with all that it entails, has been removed indefinitely from our agenda," he said. "And all this...with a [US] presidential blessing and the ratification of both houses of Congress." Just in case someone may still have illusions, he explains that the proposed Gaza disengagement "is actually formaldehyde. It supplies the amount of formaldehyde that is necessary so there will not be a political process with the Palestinians." As Ephraim Sneh, a Labor member of the Knesset, observed, "Formaldehyde, it should be noted, is the liquid in which dead bodies are preserved." {Haaretz, Oct. 6, 2004}.

As to the breach of the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, it was Israel which first broke this ceasefire on Nov. 4, 2008, as reported by UN and international observers as well as Israeli Peace Group **Gush Shalom**, which confirmed this, on Dec. 27, in its statement: "**It was the State of Israel which broke the truce, in the 'ticking tunnel' raid on the night of the US elections two months ago. Since then the army went on stoking the fires of escalation with calculated raids and killings, whenever the shooting of missiles on Israel decreased.**"

It is time that all Israel's apologists come to understand that peace and security for Israelis and Palestinians will be assured only after Israel is persuaded to comply with international law, the principles of justice and treat the Palestinians as human beings.

Yours sincerely,

Ismail Zayid, MD.

Hamas to blame for current crisis

By PAUL SCHNEIDERREIT

The Chronicle Herald,

Tue. Jan 6 , 2009.

NO matter what anyone says, no matter how forceful or persuasive the arguments, the deep ideological divide in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will persist through and well beyond the current crisis in Gaza.

In fact, that's a war Israel will likely never win.

Meanwhile, Israel has had to deal with a very real practical problem: hundreds – actually thousands – of rockets that have been fired into southern Israel in the last few years, targeting civilians, from inside Gaza.

Hamas apologists will loudly retort that Israeli provocation and general repression of the Palestinians are the catalysts for this "resistance." They'll insist Hamas is actually a peace-loving organization which wants nothing more than to live equitably alongside its Jewish neighbours, but has been forced to arms due to the aggression against its people by the evil Israelis. I don't buy into that line of thinking but many do, enthusiastically.

This fairly common point of view, however, ignores certain realities.

The notion that somehow it's Israel's desire, or in its long-term interest, to have 1.4 million hostile Gazans living across the border is nonsensical. In 2005, Israel pulled completely out of Gaza, hoping disengagement would eventually lead to peaceful co-existence. Critics point out that Israel has never completely relaxed its control over Gaza's borders. Why would it, until it could be certain those organizations sworn to Israel's destruction would not take advantage of the pullout to try to turn Gaza into an armed camp?

Hamas, which took over sole control of the Gaza Strip in a bloody 2007 clash with its rival, Fatah, calls explicitly in its charter for Israel's complete dissolution, along with its replacement with a Palestinian Islamic state.

Hamas apologists, however, don't want us to dwell on such "posturing," as if the group's founding documents should be seen as unimportant trivia.

But such matters are not trivial to Israelis, who actually live next door to Hamas and like-minded groups. That's what many in the West who criticize Israel seem unable to grasp. These are not just ideological debates for Israelis, they are existential ones.

What actually happened in Gaza after the Israeli pullout? Hamas built up its military, smuggling in and stockpiling armaments. Rockets began falling in greater numbers on nearby Israeli communities. Meanwhile, Hamas was behind other provocations, such as tunnel digging into Israel and attacks on IDF posts, like the 2006 kidnapping of soldier Gilad Shalit.

Yes, Israel has responded with violence of its own, directed at Hamas targets that so often are deliberately set deep inside civilian areas. The reason is simple. They are at war with Hamas.

Even during the so-called ceasefire, rockets, admittedly at lower numbers, continued to be fired into Israel from Gaza. Last fall, when yet another tunnel was discovered near an IDF post –

leading to fears of another Hamas kidnapping of Israeli soldiers – and Israel responded with a raid, Hamas blamed Israel. Seriously.

No nation in the world, it's often been said, would stand for its citizens being rocketed from across its borders. Critics argue that Israel cannot achieve its aims – stopping the rocket fire altogether, perhaps toppling Hamas – militarily. But, as the Israeli Middle East analyst Barry Rubin notes, there's also no diplomatic solution when your adversary rejects your right to ever exist in peace. In that case, says Rubin, you must still do something.

Ironically, what has happened in Gaza since the 2005 pullout has also made many Israelis wary of withdrawing entirely from the West Bank.

Israeli backers are deeply cynical now about the ongoing hypocrisy of the UN and the international "outrage" over Israel's strikes in Gaza, because little was ever said about the rocket attacks that occurred for years. Similarly, there is little sting to accusations that Israel's response to the rockets has been "disproportionate." Should Israeli actions be based on the perverse principle that there must be equal suffering on all sides in a war?

Hamas asked for this war. It's interesting to note both Egypt and Fatah have clearly blamed Hamas for pushing Israel into a military reaction. Innocent Gazans should blame Hamas, not Israel, for turning their cities into a war zone.

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