

Open letter from Jews for Justice for Palestinians to Prime Minister, Gordon Brown MP:

In the light of Israeli air strikes against the Gazan population, Jews for Justice for Palestinians (JfJfP), the largest Jewish peace group in the UK or Europe, has today, Sunday 29 December 2008, released this open letter to Gordon Brown:

Dear Prime Minister

At the time of writing, almost 300 Gazans are dead, hundreds more wounded. The air strikes appear to be aimed indiscriminately at both civilian and military targets. Israel is using its extensive military power to wreak carnage on innocent civilians. This is a condemnable act of mindless violence, and we call upon you and the international community to intervene immediately.

Claiming that this is an action to stop rocket fire is a wholly unpersuasive argument. The six-month ceasefire has been squandered by Israel. The populations of Sderot, Ashkelon and southern Israel have been left unprotected by their own government, which has failed to either build shelters or make a more lasting agreement. The Israeli government is exploiting the understandable fear of their own citizens as an excuse for today's strikes.

The Israeli government steadily sought to break down the ceasefire, not just in Gaza since early November, but also in the West Bank. Israeli forces have carried out an average of 33 incursions, 42 arrests or detentions, 12 woundings and 0.84 killings a week in the West Bank during the ceasefire. The tactic has been to continue attacking Hamas and other militants in the West Bank, provoking responses in Gaza, and to use the responses as the pretext for the massive attacks of the last 24 hours.

On 23rd December Hamas offered to renew the ceasefire if Israel would undertake to open border crossings for supplies of aid and fuel, and halt incursions. For those of us appalled at the collective punishment involved in the ongoing siege, and concerned that Israelis should not fear death or injury from Qassam rockets, that seems a truly reasonable response.

For Israel to reject it bespeaks a bankrupt body politic especially since the army and the politicians are acting against the wishes of the Israeli public. It is after all the civilians on both sides who will bear the brunt of this dangerous folly.

You regard yourself as a strong friend of Israel. When a friend crosses acceptable lines of behaviour as Israel has again done, one has a responsibility to intervene.

Yours sincerely

Sylvia Cohen, International Liaison

Diana Neslen, Campaigns Co-ordinator

for Jews for Justice for Palestinians