

# BAY AREA WOMEN IN BLACK

## ISRAEL'S BLOCKADE OF GAZA

The September 2000 outbreak of the second Palestinian intifada led to an Israeli military blockade of the Gaza Strip. The economic and humanitarian effects were severe and worsened a year later when all entry and exit points were sealed. When Israel left Gaza in 2005, it retained complete control of movement of goods and people via air and sea and at border crossings, including the Egypt-Gaza crossing. In June 2007, Hamas forces defeated an Israeli-and-U.S.-backed coup attempt by Fatah militia. Israel responded by tightening the restrictions it had imposed on Gaza after the Hamas election victory in January 2006.

As a result, exports from Gaza were banned altogether and the entry of goods was reduced to a trickle--mostly humanitarian aid, foodstuff and medical supplies. Most other goods and many basic necessities became unavailable or in short supply, and a growing number of people suffered from malnutrition. A report by the International Red Cross has warned of long-time ramifications on Gaza's malnourished children, including a reduced capacity to learn. Some 80% of the population became dependent on international aid for food, compared to 10% a decade earlier.

At the same time, the entry of fuel and electricity into Gaza was also restricted, with devastating consequences on the already crippled economy. Even before the 22-day Israeli assault on Gaza which began in December 2008, some 90% of Gaza's industry had shut down mainly due to shortages of fuel. The fuel shortage also had grave impacts on public health, sanitation and the environment, as water supplies, sewage treatment and solid waste disposal all require fuel. Untreated sewage had to be dumped into the Mediterranean Sea every day. Some 450,000 Gazans--30% of the population--were unable to access clean water.

The ongoing Israeli blockade of Gaza is preventing reconstruction of water supply and sewage treatment facilities destroyed during the 22-day assault. A 2009 Amnesty International report states, "Israel's blockade has put the already ailing water and sewage systems to crisis point."

Israel's blockade includes not only construction materials, but also an array of goods using a list of banned items so restrictive that an entire truck shipment can be turned back if any banned item is included, such as paper, almonds, chocolate, fabric, light bulbs, matches, musical instruments, clothing, crockery, books, etc., none of which remotely relate to fabrication of rockets. Rocket fire has been disavowed by Hamas and has practically ceased. No casualties have resulted since the January ceasefire. Israel continues to cite the blockade as leverage for the release of the one Israeli soldier held captive by Hamas while its own prisons hold some 11,000 Palestinians.

Thirty-eight United Nation agencies and NGOs have called for "free and uninhibited access for all humanitarian assistance in accordance with international agreements and universally recognized international human rights and humanitarian law standards." It's time for President Obama and our congressional representatives to demand an end to Israel's blockade of Gaza.

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## TAKE ACTION NOW

Ask President Obama and your congressional representatives to end U.S. military aid to Israel and to join international, Palestinian and Israeli human rights organizations in demanding an end to the blockade of Gaza.

**President Barack Obama**  
202-456-1111  
comments@whitehouse.gov

**Representative Barbara Lee**  
Washington Office - 202- 225-2661  
Oakland Office - 510-763-0370

**Senator Barbara Boxer**  
Washington Office - 202-224-3553  
San Francisco Office - 415-403-0100

**Senator Dianne Feinstein**  
Washington Office - 202-224-3841  
San Francisco Office - 415-393-0707

Bay Area Women in Black are Jews and allies who stand against militaristic and fundamentalist leadership in all countries, including our own. We wear black as a sign of mourning for all the Israeli, Palestinian and Iraqi lives that have been lost as a result of war, militarism and violence. As part of the international movement of Women in Black, we seek to transform women's mourning for the dead into a powerful refusal of the inevitability of war.

**Join us at the Grand Lake Theater every Saturday at noon to register your protest and your presence as we continue to urge an end to the U.S. military and financial support for Israel's disastrous occupation.**

The group with flags and signs supporting Israel is San Francisco Voice for Israel (VOI), a local group who oppose Bay Area Women in Black's (BAWIB) criticism of the policies of the Israeli government and military. BAWIB is not anti-Israel. BAWIB believes Israel's occupation is wrong and deprives Palestinians of basic human rights. BAWIB calls for ending the occupation and its violent effects on Israelis and Palestinians. The flyers distributed by VOI do not accurately reflect BAWIB's work.