

Political tensions inside Gaza Strip escalate into full blown invasion

BY ELIZABETH DETMAR
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Since the early 19th century, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains one of the most fierce and violent political arguments that disrupt the Middle East. Both lengthy and intricate, this clash of cultures has generated some of the most serious humanitarian crises. The most recent chapter to this bloody story began in June of 2008 with the signing of a peace treaty.

Israel and Hamas, a Palestinian military/political group, signed an Egyptian-brokered, six-month ceasefire treaty on June 19 for the Gaza Strip, a disputed territory that has been so for the past few decades. The Hamas faction believed that the terms of this peace treaty would signify an end to their launching rockets into Israel in exchange for the removal of the Israeli blockade, a trade and communications barrier between Israel and the Gaza Strip that consequently reduced the amount of humanitarian aid brought into the area.

On June 24, however, Israel raided Nablus, a city on the West Bank out of the ceasefire area, killing two people. In response, an Islamic Jihad fired three rockets from the Gaza strip into Israel, injuring two citizens. Israel then closed the Gaza border, an action the Hamas claimed as "backtracking on the calm." The Hamas issued a

statement urging all Palestinian factions to abide by the truce. Even so, rocket attacks continued at a rate of two per month. Israel maintained her blockade, only allowing about 70-90 trucks to enter with goods each day, a small fraction of what would pass without the barrier.

On November 4, the situation intensified when the Israeli military raided Hamas-dug tunnels, killing six Hamas members. Israel claimed the raid was intended for the capture of six Israelis, but the Israel Defense Force also suspected the tunnels were being used to smuggle rockets to the Hamas. Rockets launched into Israel by Hamas increased to pre-treaty levels.

With the ceasefire treaty about to expire, Israel offered an extension if Hamas agreed to adhere to its original conditions. After it did expire on Dec. 19, Hamas announced the following day they would not extend the ceasefire treaty because of the continuation of the Israel blockade. Other attempts were made by both sides to resurrect the treaty, but all the while rockets and mortar shells rained down on Israel. On Dec. 25, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert warned Hamas to stop their barrage on Israel.

"I am telling them now, it may be the last minute, I'm telling them stop it. We are stronger," said Olmert.

Israel launched its military

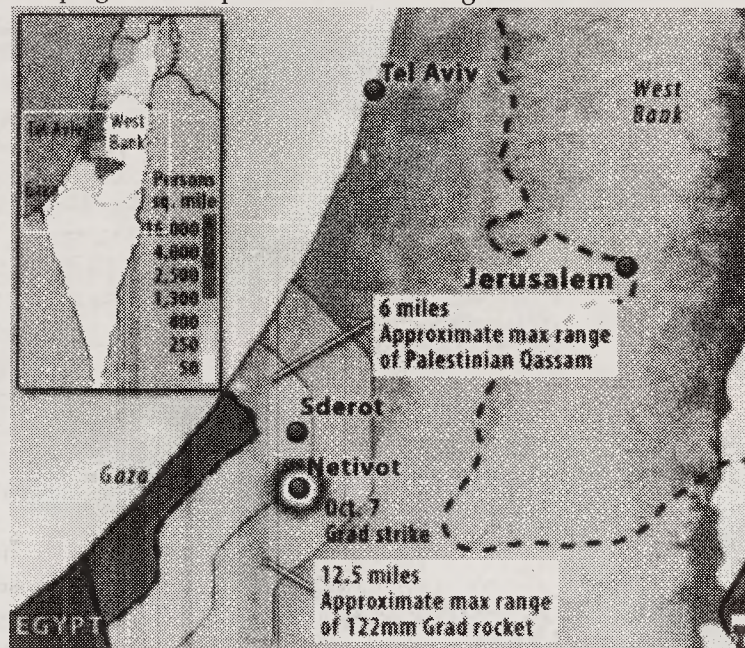
operation on Dec. 27 with the Israeli Air Force destroying Hamas headquarters and military bases. Over 200 Palestinians were killed and 1,000 wounded. Air strikes continue, and as of Jan. 15, 2009, 2,360 air strikes have occurred. On Dec. 28, 2008, Israeli infantry were positioned at the Gaza border, and on Jan. 3, 2009, troops were ordered to move into the city to capture areas where rockets had been launched. More troops were deployed, and on Jan. 11, they moved into the suburbs of Gaza City. Attacks persisted, and on Jan. 15, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency headquarters was shelled. Consequently, the UN decided to stop their flow of humanitarian aid in and outside of the Gaza Strip. During the three stages of invasions, Hamas continued launching rockets.

Israel's campaign objective is not just to halt rocket attacks, but to annihilate the Hamas completely. Despite pleas of other countries, Israel has refused to stop their attack, regardless of the serious humanitarian crisis. So far, over 1,000 Palestinians have been killed and over 3,000 injured. Casualties include not only Hamas members, but also civilians and children.

Whether the current Israel-Gaza conflict will be resolved in ten days or ten months, the main objective for other countries is to concentrate on the humanitarian crisis. Though this situation

will be recorded in history books as one of most violent campaigns of the past few de-

cadecades, this chapter is still only one of many involving the enduring Israel-Palestinian feud.



Below: Due to the Israel blockade, health, water, and energy infrastructure were at dangerous lows in Gaza even before the invasion began. Tens of thousands of Palestinians remain refugees displaced from their home. *Internet graphic.*



Harvard expands financial aid packages to help students from low-income families

BY BEN LONG
Staff Writer

While Harvard has always been synonymous with the Ivy League and a high quality education, it has also been known for being pricey. Still maintaining the rigor of its curriculum, the institution's sweeping changes introduced in December of 2008 aim to combat the obstacles keeping low and middle-income students away.

As the richest university in the world, Harvard has decided to use \$120 million from their total \$35 billion endowment to help make the college more affordable. As it stands, students with families making \$180,000 per year would be forced to pay nearly \$30,000 per year in tuition; however, after new changes take effect, they will only be forced to pay one tenth of their total income.

For families making less

than \$180,000, a Harvard education is much less expensive. The amount of money owed per year is calculated on a sliding scale from \$180,000 down to \$60,000, at which time tuition is completely free. These new policies should lower tuition for nearly 70 percent of Harvard's student body who presently are eligible for financial aid. Now Harvard will assume the full tuition.

Harvard has even taken a step further to make sure that no student in the class of 2012 will have any debt by switching from a system of student loans to full grants. Another big aid for students is that Harvard will stop looking at the value of family assets like houses when calculating their income and financial aid.

Such dramatic changes in financial policies are a follow-up to 2007 adjustments aimed at Harvard's Graduate School of

Design. These modifications made it possible for international students seeking master's degrees to benefit from the same financial aid as American students.

Besides the School of Design, Harvard has taken major steps to eliminate debt for their law students, who are notorious for high levels of debt at graduation. Concerned that students were being forced into unwanted positions so that they could pay off student debt, Harvard has instituted new programs for those individuals looking to serve their community. Such new programs will waive tuition fees for third-year students who pledge to spend five years working for the government or for non-profit agencies.

Harvard Medical School also just announced it will fully waive family commitments for those making less than \$120,000

per year. In addition to this policy, Harvard Medical School will stop looking into family's retirement funds when calculating the financial aid eligible.

With an economy on a downward spiral, families are finding these new plans especially helpful. The policies have gained such notoriety that many other Ivy League schools with extremely high endowments are altering their policies as well. Dartmouth and Columbia, for instance, have recently announced they will emulate Harvard by fully eliminating student loans and instead replacing them with grants.

Problems with these policies, however, are occurring at smaller schools that are unable to afford such tuition reductions; consequently, Texas Tech, Benedictine University, and Wright State are choosing incentives like tuition freezes. Some smaller universities are

actually feeling pressure from lower-income students who are upset about their inability to match the new policies of Harvard.

Overall, Harvard has decided to make a huge leap forward in their financial aid policies. In only the past six years, this prestigious institution has experienced a 60 percent increase in the amount of financial aid disbursed to students and their families.

Such new policies show that Harvard's commitments not only provide one of the best educational experiences available, but also make this experience affordable to all students. Because of Harvard's financial expansion and restructuring, the university should expect a large increase in lower and middle-income students who may have otherwise attended public schools that traditionally offer educations at a lower cost.