

US Media Bias, Human Rights, and the Hamas Government in Gaza

by Janeen Rashmawi, Nelson Calderon, Sarah Maddox, Christina Long, Andrew Hobbs, and Peter Phillips

The world is witnessing a terrible human rights crime in Gaza, where a million and a half human beings are being imprisoned with almost no access to the outside world. An entire population is being brutally punished.

—Jimmy Carter, 2008

In June of 2007, Israel imposed full sanctions on the Gaza strip, creating a virtual prison camp of 1.5 million people. Food, fuel, medical supplies, and basic essentials are all in short supply. Intermittent electricity makes daily work mostly impossible, resulting in an almost total collapse of the economic infrastructure, massive human suffering, and daily deaths. This study reviews the history of the Gaza strip over the past two and half years and the US television news coverage of this human rights tragedy in the Middle East.

Nora Barrows-Friedman reports from the Jebaliya Refugee Camp, Gaza, June 11, 2008: “In the brightly painted new intensive care unit wing of al-Awda, northern Gaza’s only emergency medical facility in the massive Jebaliya refugee camp, doctors, nurses, aides, and administrators are ready to provide emergency surgery services for the area’s 300,000 people.

But the metal bed frames remain empty of patients—and of mattresses, and IV bags, and heart monitors, and other basic supplies needed at a basic medical facility. The equipment has been purchased, but remains in the occupied West Bank city Ramallah, prevented by Israel from being taken into Gaza. ‘In the last year, the service burden on al-Awda was tripled. We had difficulty, especially after the Fatah-

Hamas fighting, and through the closures beginning last year,' says Nehal Mehanna, program officer at al-Awda tells IPS as she walks around the empty rooms. 'Israel is not letting certain medication and supplies into Gaza, through any checkpoint. For example, we have been waiting for seven months to have the operation tables to be shipped and enter Gaza through the Erez checkpoint—the equipment is only one hour away by car, but we've been waiting for seven months. Sometimes we can get supplies through the Red Cross, but they're helping many organizations at the same time. They have limited supplies. It's a long, complicated procedure, and it all has to be approved by the Israeli authorities.'

According to doctors in Gaza, over 180 patients have died as a result of lack of essential supplies since the Israeli-led blockade began in June 2007. Palestinians seeking medical treatment for cancer, heart disease, and kidney failure, among other illnesses, cannot access the services they need—as Israel has prevented chemotherapy, heart, and dialysis medications from entering Gaza. They have to look for treatment abroad, either in Egypt or in Israel. But since the blockade, even with written permission and international coordination, Israel has shut the borders to Palestinian patients coming from Gaza, resulting in many preventable deaths.

'We try to provide the best services we can,' Mehanna tells IPS. 'We have a colleague here, a nurse at the hospital, who has kidney failure. She has received written permission four times to leave and get treatment in Egypt, but the Israelis have prevented her from leaving. We hope she can get out and get treatment. She's our friend. It's a difficult situation.'

Al-Awda hospital staff says they are quickly running out of anesthesia. The hospital's pharmacist, Dr. Akram Naffar, shows IPS his small cache of anesthetic medications, small boxes stacked on a spare white shelf at the back of the storage room. 'We only have enough left for two, maybe three weeks,' Naffar says. 'I don't know what will happen at the end of the month. We can only live day by day.'

Naffar tells IPS that if another massive Israeli attack comes soon, people may not get even present levels of treatment.

'When other hospitals around Gaza have medicine we need for an operation, or for emergency services, we trade with them,' Naffar tells IPS. He says this is both a dangerous and a demoralizing system, but there is no alternative until the Israeli blockade is lifted.

Mehanna tells IPS that the medical staff at al-Awda is under extreme stress. ‘We try to provide as much care as we can,’ she says. ‘We have a procedure for receiving medicines and supplies. We make a list every six months and update it, but lately we’ve needed more and more emergency medications. We have an obstetrics department, and we need labor and delivery medication. Also for emergency needs—we anticipate more Israeli incursions and attacks, so we need to be ready.’

Riyad al-Adassi, of the Union of Health Work Committees in Gaza City, expects the situation to get much worse. ‘A hundred and eighty patients died in twelve months, and this number is expected to increase day by day. In the past, 300 to 400 patients a day used to travel abroad to get treatment. Now, we can hardly get thirty people to travel out of Gaza. They’re prevented from leaving. There are many waiting lists to get special permission from the Israeli side.’

IPS asked al-Adassi to define the effects of Israel’s policies towards Gaza from the health workers’ perspective. ‘Palestinians are dehumanized. In the past, we used to have a concept of freedom, having a state, fighting for our rights. Now, it’s shifted to providing for our families and surviving. We live in a jungle—and the concept of living in a jungle is to try and adapt to survive. All of us are frustrated and suppressed. This is not healthy at all, even for Israel itself. At a certain point, it will explode. And who will take responsibility? Those with the keys to the occupation.’”

Circumstances in Gaza are significantly under-covered by the US media. Other than NPR’s *All Things Considered*, May 16, 2006, and the *Washington Times*, January 22, 2000, no mention of the health care crisis in Gaza has occurred in US corporate media over the past two and half years, since Hamas democratically won the Palestinian general election in January 2006. Americans know very little about this de facto prison camp of 1.5 million people in the Gaza strip.

The following is a short historical timeline of the Gaza situation since January 2006:

2006

January 25: Hamas wins Palestinian general elections gaining seventy-six of 132 seats.

January 29: Western governments threaten to halt financial aid to Palestinians.

January 30: The UN, EU, US and Russia announce “all members of a future Palestinian government must be committed to non-violence, recognition of Israel, and acceptance of previous agreements and obligations.”

March 18: Hamas submits its cabinet to President Mahmoud Abbas (twenty-four ministers including eight MPs). In response, the US, EU, and Israel boycott the new government and say they will suspend aid to the government.

April 16: Iran announces an offer of \$50 million in aid to the Palestinian Authority.

May 8: Three Palestinians are killed and ten wounded in clashes in southern Gaza, near Khan Yunis, between rival Hamas and Fatah supporters.

May 17: Hamas deploys a new 3,000-strong force on the streets of Gaza.

May 11: Prominent Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails release a document calling for a national unity government between Hamas and Fatah.

June 3: A new security force loyal to Abbas is deployed in the West Bank.

June 16: The EU endorses a new policy to channel aid directly to the Palestinians, bypassing the Hamas government.

June 25: Palestinian fighters launch an attack in Israel that results in the deaths of two Israeli soldiers and the capture of another, Corporal Gilad Shalit.

June 27: Hamas and Fatah reach an agreement based on the May 11 prisoners’ document, which includes the forming of a national unity government.

June 28: Israel launches Operation Summer Rains, in what it claims is an attempt to recover the captured Corporal Shalit. The ongoing operation initially consists of heavy bombardment of bridges, roads, and the only power station in Gaza. Hundreds of Palestinians are killed during aerial and ground attacks over the following months.

June 29: Israel detains sixty-four Hamas officials, including eight Palestinian Authority cabinet ministers and up to twenty members of the Palestinian Legislative Council.

September 1: Abbas says Hamas and Fatah have agreed on the principles of a power-sharing government and may soon form a new cabinet to lead the Palestinian Authority. Under the plan, Abbas is to dissolve the current Hamas-led cabinet within forty-eight hours.

September 8: UN officials say Gaza is at “breaking point” after months of economic sanctions and Israeli attacks.

September 23: The agreement breaks down. It is reported to be Hamas’ refusal to recognize Israel at the heart of the continued disagreements.

October 1: Eight people are killed in Gaza in factional fighting between Hamas and Fatah as a new wave of violence erupts.

October: A number of mediation attempts take place. Egypt and Qatar send their foreign ministers to meet both sides. Other Palestinian groups such as Islamic Jihad and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine mediate between the two sides to stop the clashes.

November 13: Following talks between Hamas and Fatah, both sides agree to form a government of technocrats unaligned with either party. Muhammad Shbeir, a Gaza academic who is close to Hamas but not a party-member, accepts the offer to head the government.

November 14: Hamas again asserts that it will not recognize Israel and the agreement stalls.

December 15: Hamas accuses Fatah of involvement in a gun attack on Ismail Haniyah, Palestinian prime minister, as he crosses the border from Egypt into Gaza.

December 16: Abbas calls for new elections as a solution to the ongoing crisis.

2007

January 21: Abbas meets Khaled Meshaal of Hamas in Damascus in response to an invitation by Bashar al-Assad, the Syrian president.

January 30: Fatah and Hamas reach a ceasefire agreement mediated by Egypt after a series of clashes lead to the death of thirty-two Palestinians. Both sides welcome a Saudi initiative to meet in Mecca.

February 8: Hamas and Fatah agree to a deal in Mecca to end factional warfare that has killed scores of Palestinians and to form a coalition, hoping this would lead Western powers to lift crippling sanctions imposed on the Hamas-led government.

February 9: The Quartet welcomes the role of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in reaching the agreement to form a Palestinian National Unity government. It later reaffirms that it must obey international demands to recognize Israel, renounce violence, and abide by previous peace agreements.

February 15: Haniyah and his cabinet resign. Haniyah is re-appointed by Abbas and begins the process of forming a new Palestinian unity government.

March 15: Palestinians reach agreement on the formation of the government.

March 20: Jacob Walles, the US consul-general to Jerusalem, meets Salam Fayad, the Palestinian finance minister, marking the first contact between the US and the recently formed Palestinian Unity government.

March 21: The EU and UN hold talks with non-Hamas cabinet ministers.

March 22: Fighting erupts again between Hamas and Fatah fighters, with one Fatah fighter killed and seven people injured.

April 10: US announces it is to give Abbas \$60 million to boost his presidential guard and for other security expenses.

April 23: Interior Minister Hani al-Qawasmi resigns, citing resistance to his planned reforms for the security services.

April 24: The Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, the military wing of Hamas, fires scores of rockets into Israel, saying a truce “no longer exists.” At the same time, the Hamas-led Palestinian government calls for the truce to be restored.

April 30: Palestinian teachers hold a one-day strike over unpaid wages. This prompts Azzam al-Ahmad, the deputy prime minister and a member of Fatah, to suggest that the unity government be disbanded if the Western embargo is not lifted.

May 10: Unity government deploys a joint Hamas-Fatah police force to deal with growing lawlessness in Gaza.

May 11: Clashes erupt between Fatah and Hamas factions.

May 13: Factions agree to a truce, brokered by Egypt, but skirmishes continue to be reported and the ceasefire quickly disintegrates. Over the next few days, ceasefires are continually agreed to but broken hours later. Meanwhile Israel continues to bomb Gaza in response to rockets fired by Hamas fighters.

May 24: Abbas calls for Hamas rockets to be stopped, but is rebuffed as factional fighting continues.

May 30: The UN Security Council calls for an “immediate end” to the faction fighting in Gaza.

June 7: A Fatah fighter is killed, the first person killed in internal fighting in more than two weeks.

June 10: Further clashes between the rival factions leave more dead and scores injured.

June 12: Fatah declares it is withdrawing from the unity government until there is an end to recurring street battles.

June 13: Hamas’ Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigade, which has gained ground across much of Gaza, orders Fatah security forces to surrender their weapons. The group launches attacks on a number of Fatah bases.

June 14: Abbas sacks the Hamas-led unity government and declares a state of emergency. Haniya defies Abbas and promises the government will continue to function.

June 15: Hamas seizes several senior officials and appears effectively in control of Gaza. The group declares an amnesty for Fatah fighters.

June 16: Abbas, in the West Bank, signs a decree allowing a Palestinian emergency government to take office without parliamentary approval. Fayad, an independent parliamentarian, is made prime minister. The Palestinian territories have become split between the West Bank, controlled by Fatah; and Gaza, run by Hamas.

2008

January: Israel announces that it will close all border crossings into Gaza, intensifying a six-month blockade imposed on the territory.

It says this is in response to continued rocket fire from the territory. Severe fuel and food shortages are reported in Gaza.

Managers at Gaza's only power plant, which supplies a third of the territory's electrical supplies, shut down its generators saying there is a lack of fuel. UN officials in Gaza say the measure amounts to collective punishment of the territory's population of 1.5 million people.

At night, much of Gaza City is plunged into darkness because of electrical shortages.

Palestinians hold candlelight vigils in the city protesting the embargo.

Israeli officials insist there is enough fuel to keep the power plant running and blame Hamas, Gaza's de facto rulers, of staging the crisis.

Palestinian Leader Mahmoud Abbas wins international support for a proposal to take responsibility for the Palestinian side of all Gaza's crossings. However Hamas says that past arrangements imposing a blockade on Gaza were "history" and it must have a role in future border control.

Hamas fighters co-operate with Egyptian forces to patch up parts of the frontier barrier. People continue to pass into Egypt through Rafah, though in greatly reduced numbers.

Shops in eastern Sinai start running low on supplies, prompting complaints from local people about the situation.

Egyptian roadblocks in the Sinai Peninsula prevent thousands of Palestinians from traveling to mainland Egypt.

Rival Palestinian delegations head for Cairo, where Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas says talks with Hamas are out of the question unless it ends its "coup d'etat" in Gaza.

February: Egyptian forces use barbed wire and metal barricades to seal the last remaining gap on the Egyptian side of the frontier at Rafah, ending twelve days of freedom of movement for Palestinians.

The Egyptian authorities say their nationals, visiting Gaza and Gazans who traveled to Egypt, would be allowed to return home.

Senior Hamas leader Mahmoud Zahhar says Hamas has reached an understanding with Egypt to control the breached border between

Egypt and Gaza. This is denied by Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, who lost control of Gaza in June and refuses to negotiate with the de facto rulers, Hamas.

March 2008: Israeli occupational forces kill over 120 Palestinians in one week, twenty-seven of which are children.

Sources

BBC, Al Jazeera, and Reuters.

US MEDIA COVERAGE OF HAMAS

The *New York Times* ran a front page story June 15, 2008 entitled, “A Year Reshapes Hamas and Gaza,” by Ethan Bronner. The article focuses on how the Hamas government is enforcing strict laws, such as those prohibiting kissing in public and improper behavior in the streets. Essentially the article criticizes the Hamas government as fundamentally extremist, but acknowledges that it is more solidly in place than ever. Bonner writes, “Whereas Hamas says it will never recognize Israel, its leaders say that if Israel returned to the 1967 borders, granted a Palestinian state in Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and dealt with the rights of refugees, Hamas would declare a long-term truce. This is not much different from what the rest of the Arab world says or the Fatah positions in peace talks with Israel.”

Given that the *New York Times* acknowledges that Hamas is willing to accept the existence of the State of Israel and that Hamas’ position really isn’t any more radical than many other Arab states, why do so many Americans see Hamas as a terrorist organization dedicated to Israel’s total destruction?

The words “Palestinians” or “Hamas” are translated into “terrorists” and “violence” in the minds of many people in the United States. This translation did not simply appear on its own. US television news media continuously reinforce a mindset in the American people that dehumanizes Palestinians. This dehumanization allows for a democratically elected government, such as Hamas, to be labeled endlessly as a terrorist organization. Palestine is seen as a breeding ground for violence and terror. American mass media portrays an image of Palestinians as victimizers rather than victims of an oppressive military occupation. Even when it is clear that Palestinians are the victims of the Israeli military,

American television has a way of twisting the story and blaming Palestinians for the violence.

On June 27, 2006, the *Jim Lehrer News Hour* reported that 3,000 Israeli troops had just entered Gaza. The program reported that Israeli warplanes, flying over Gaza, had completely sealed off all the borders. Yet, after Lehrer described Israel's actions, he justified it as a form of collective punishment by reporting on the two Israeli soldiers captured prior to the invasion. Framed in this way, Israel's cruel treatment of Palestinians, specifically in Gaza, then becomes acceptable.

On March 3, 2008, when ABC reported on the deaths of over one hundred Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, these deaths were justified as a retaliation to Hamas rockets that had been previously fired into Israel. In almost all of the news reports regarding Hamas, the media has referred to Hamas using negative language. The same terms are used repeatedly: "violent, extremist, and terrorist."

Political commentator and MIT professor Noam Chomsky writes in "Elite Policy and the 'Axis of Evil'" (*Z Magazine*, February 5, 2008), "in a remarkable act, tens of thousands of the tortured people of Gaza broke out of the prison to which they had been confined by the US-Israel alliance as a punishment for the crime of voting the wrong way in a free election in January, 2006." It goes unrecognized that Palestinians have the right to elect their own representative government. Instead, Palestinians are punished for electing a government that supports them and their right for autonomy, "failing to recognize the people of the Middle East are too backward to appreciate democracy—another principal that traces back to 'Wilsonian Idealism,'" scathes Chomsky.

Hamas, in most US television news programs, is not even presented as a democratically elected government. On June 15, 2007, CBS news reported on the chaos in Gaza. In this report the elected Hamas government was referred to as a forced government, "Masked Hamas gunmen have taken over Gaza Strip." Not only was there no acknowledgement that Palestinians elected the Hamas government, the adjectives used to describe Hamas created a violent image justifying its vilification. In the same CBS news report, the reporter Charles Osgood interviewed Mr. Michael Oren, a Middle East analyst, in which he stated that the violence and deaths in Gaza are to be blamed on Hamas, "Hamas has to stop terrorizing the Palestinian people."

The following are descriptive terms and editorial comments regard-

ing Hamas used by US television news stations over the past two-and-a-half years. Stories also link Hamas to other middle eastern “terrorist” organizations and countries. Negative terms are italicized.

ABC News Now, World View

May 9, 2006

“Hamas Versus Fatah; Factions Fight For Control”

Anchor: Mike Lee; Reporter: Simon McGregor Wood (Gaza, Jerusalem)

MIKE LEE: The situation has deteriorated significantly. As you say, since the Hamas organization won the Palestinian elections, what we’ve had is almost daily clashes between armed gunmen from the Fatah organization, which lost power in the elections, *and gunmen from Hamas*. And, in the last two days, yesterday, three people were killed. And this morning’s incident produced nine injuries and we read from the sources that we have in Gaza that up to five or six of those were school children.

VOICEOVER: *Of course, the danger is that the Palestinians will become ungovernable and that could lead to further chaos.*

MIKE LEE: And, in many cases, we’ve seen, particularly recently in Gaza, they’re refusing to play the *Hamas’ game*. And there is this enormous tension on the streets almost every day now because the guys with the guns are not necessarily obeying the orders of the new government.

(Off-camera) And, because *Hamas is in control, refuses to amend its charter, saying that Israel should be abolished*. The West is still withholding hundreds of millions of dollars in funds that should be going to the Palestinian people. Now, there is a medical crisis there, as you’ve reported before. President Bush says he’s going to send some emergency medical aid but is that going to be enough?

The News Hour with Jim Lehrer

June 27, 2006

“Hamas and Fatah Struggle for Power within Palestinian Government”

Jim Lehrer, Jonathan Miller, Margaret Warner, Kwame Holman, Alexis Bloom, Jeffrey Brown

JIM LEHRER: A major Israeli military strike into Gaza appeared imminent late today. Warplanes attacked a bridge in central Gaza, and tanks began moving nearby.

Meanwhile, there were conflicting reports about Hamas accepting a plan that implicitly recognizes Israel. The *militant group* now runs the Palestinian Authority.

CNN, *The Situation Room*

June 29, 2006

“Supreme Court Rules on Military Tribunals for Terror Suspects”

Wolf Blitzer, John Vause, Brian Todd, Ed Henry, Jack Cafferty, John Roberts, Susan Roesgen, Zain Verjee, Andrea Koppel, Bill Schneider, Mary Snow, Paula Zahn, Chris Lawrence

JACK CAFFERTY: And this just coming in, the Israeli Defense Forces telling CNN that a third and fourth Israeli air strike have been launched. One target, according to the Israelis, one target including a Hamas training site in Gaza. Another target, Hamas offices in Gaza City.

JOHN VAUSE: In the short time since then, there’s been a total of five air strikes tonight in and around Gaza. Apparently a Hamas training camp in the north has also been targeted; an Hamas office; and, also, possibly, a *storage house used by Hamas militants for explosives and other weapons*—Wolf.

WOLF BLITZER: The Israelis say, John, they’re doing this to try to get their one kidnapped Israeli soldier released . . . We have been told by the IDF that they’ve targeted a Hamas training ground. They’ve also targeted a Hamas office, as well as what could have been a storage place for *Hamas ammunitions, and bomb-making facilities* as well, that kind of thing . . .

JOHN VAUSE: Well, really in many ways Palestinians are split about what to do with Gilad Shalit, the nineteen-year-old soldier, who’s currently being held by the *militant wing of Hamas*. Some say if it avoids bloodshed, hand him back, enough is enough.

ABC News Now, *World View*

July 28, 2006

“Crisis in The Middle East; Al Qaeda Announces Holy War Against Israel”
Anchor: Nick Watt, Reporters: Jeremy Bowen (Gaza Strip)

. . . Hezbollah's Hassan Nasrallah is not his leader because he's fighting Israel to help the Palestinians. Secular Palestinian nationalists in this camp are turning to *resistance movements inspired by Islam, their own homegrown Hamas, and Lebanon's Hezbollah*. The al Qaeda broadcast suggests it's trying to get on the bandwagon.

CNN, Anderson Cooper 360°

July 14, 2006

"Hezbollah Drone Packed with Explosives Hits Israeli Gunship; Hezbollah Fires Rockets at Israeli Towns; Hezbollah Leader Declares Open War on Israel; Two Wildfires Consume Over 60,000 Acres in California"

Anderson Cooper, Nic Robertson, Paula Hancocks, Suzanne Malveaux, Candy Crowley, John Roberts, Joe Johns, John Vause, John King, Chris Lawrence
Guests: Martin Indyk, Edward Djerejian, Robert Baer

ANDERSON COOPER: *A video from Gaza where Hamas had a demonstration calling for people to take to the streets, to support Hezbollah and praise them for what they have done with the kidnapping of Israeli soldiers.*

It may represent a growing *linkage between Hamas and Hezbollah*, a linkage which worries many not only here in Israel but also in the US government and in this region.

JOHN KING: Now this additional common ground. Both Hezbollah and Hamas are holding kidnapped Israeli soldiers, looking to exchange them for prisoners held by Israel and looking to draw attention to their shared political agenda.

CLAYTON SWISHER, MIDDLE EAST INSTITUTE: *Hamas is blamed for more than 350 attacks in the past dozen years, killing more than 500.*

JOHN KING: Iran has offered Hamas more support since its dramatic gains in January's Palestinian elections, saying it would make up for any aid the West cuts off because of *Hamas ties to terrorism*.

The News Hour with Jim Lehrer

June 13, 2007

"Fighting Between Palestinian Factions Rages Out of Control"

Jim Lehrer, Kwame Holman, Margaret Warner, Tom Bearden, Jeffrey Brown
Guests: Ghaith al-Omari, Mark Perry, Damien Cave, Barbara Goff

JIM LEHRER: Battles spread across Gaza today, as fighting between Palestinian factions raged out of control. The *Islamic militant group Hamas* gained ground everywhere against its rival, Fatah. Hamas forces attacked three security bases in Gaza City and took control of a number of key positions. They also captured a main north-south road to block Fatah from moving reinforcements . . . The conflict between Fatah and Hamas has paralyzed the already-fragile Palestinian National Unity government. Fatah, the nationalist, largely secular party, led by President Mahmoud Abbas, appeared to be losing significant ground in northern Gaza to the *Islamist movement Hamas*, which won control of the Palestinian Legislative Council in elections in January 2006.

Fox News Network, Fox Special Report with Brit Hume

June 15, 2007 Friday

“Panel Discussion on Latest Palestinian Crisis”

Brett Baier

Guests: Fred Barnes, Charles Krauthammer, Mort Kondracke

BRETT BAIER: This gun battle is finished. Those were Hamas leaders holding a very unique news conference in the Gaza Strip today, fully masked, as you say there. Hamas now in control there, Fatah in the West Bank, what now?

CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER: That clip is an extreme example of “we’re the government, and we’re here to help you.” *Imagine a government run by masked terrorists. It’s ominous because you have men like that who are terrorists, run by a terrorist party, who are in control of Gaza, and even worse, this is an Iranian client, so Iran now has essentially a frontier with Israel in the south, and Egypt as well . . . You now have Gaza, which is all Hamas, all rejectionist, all terrorists, and you’ve got the West Bank, run but Fatah, which is a lot stronger than the West Bank, run by Abbas.*

KONDRACKE: Well, what I’m afraid of is that it’s (peace) not going to last for very long, that Hamas is on the ascendancy. In Gaza they’re going to get *aid from the Iranians*—it will be smuggled in, but they’ll get aid. Military aid as well as, probably, economic aid.

KRAUTHAMMER: Well, no. Look, I think Fred is right. People have always assumed what the *Palestinians wanted was a state. What they actually had wanted was the destruction of the Israel.*

CBS News, *The Osgood File*

June 15, 2007

“Chaos in the Gaza Strip as Hamas Takes Control”

Charles Osgood

CHARLES OSGOOD: *Masked Hamas gunmen have taken over the Gaza Strip, raiding and looting Fatah strongholds, dragging men into the street and shooting them. Hamas calling this liberation, the arrival of Islamic rule in Gaza.*

CNN, *Late Edition With Wolf Blitzer*

June 17, 2007

“Interview With Fatah, Hamas Spokesmen; Interview With Hoshiyar Zebari”
 Wolf Blitzer, Ben Wedeman, Ed Henry, Donna Brazile, Terry Jeffrey, Atika Shubert

Guests: Ahmed Yousef, Saeb Erekat, Seymour Hersh, Hoshiyar Zebari, Jack Reed, Duncan Hunter, John Cornyn

WOLF BLITZER: But it comes at a time of extreme tension throughout the region. A new Palestinian government was sworn in today, a government, though, without Hamas. While the *radical Islamic Palestinian faction remains firmly in control of Gaza* right now, its rival group, Fatah, is intent on maintaining control on the West Bank.

What is happening in Gaza now is a state of emergency. It is a situation out of our hands. You have seen who are sitting in Abu Mazen’s office—President Abbas’ office yesterday, *gangsters* and so on.

These descriptions of Hamas as a radical militant group, bent on the destruction of the state of Israel and supported by Iran and Hezbollah, are typical of the on-going coverage of the Middle East issues on US television news. Increasing the blame of Hamas eases the responsibility of Israel for the dire humanitarian situation currently existing in Gaza. The fact that Israel’s continuing attacks and economic boycott, which has strangled the Gaza strip and created an unlivable situation for Palestinians, is accepted by most in the US as fully justified.

For the most part, Americans do not recognize the bias inherent in everyday reporting regarding the situation in Israel and Palestine. Therefore when former US President Jimmy Carter visited with Hamas leaders in April 2008, the result was puzzlement and disgust in corporate media.

On April 13, 2008, Jimmy Carter landed in Israel at the start of a nine-day tour of the Middle East. The former President's itinerary took him to Palestine, Egypt, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan, where he met a number of political leaders from each of the countries, including Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, Jordan's King Abdullah II, and Syria's President, Bashar al Assad.

However, Carter's meeting with top leaders of Hamas took center stage as the defining event of his trip. Carter stated that he believes that Hamas can no longer be shut out of talks, if peace is to be established between Israel and Palestine. The former President tried to be clear that he was not going as a negotiator, but hoped that his visit would result in Syria and Hamas being included in talks that cannot succeed without them. On April 17 and 18 former President Carter met with Mahmoud Al-Zahar, Siad Siam, and Ahmed Yousef in Egypt, and Mashaal and other Hamas leaders in Syria. American mass media has focused almost exclusively on these meetings, just one part of his voluntary assistance, and the coverage has been almost entirely negative.

Fox News Network, Fox Hannity & Co

January 15, 2007

"Is Jimmy Carter Anti-Semitic?"

Sean Hannity, Alan Colmes

Guests: Steve Berman

SEAN HANNITY: Steve, I want to specifically go—explain in detail why you think he (Carter) supports terrorism.

STEVE BERMAN: I wouldn't say that Jimmy Carter supports terrorism. What Jimmy Carter does is he supports the underdog in this conflict. But what he fails to recognize, that the underdog in this particular conflict has choices and has made choices....

SEAN HANNITY: When Israel withdrew from the Gaza strip, unilaterally, how was that greeted? It was greeted with the election of Hamas, and it was greeted with the Kassam missiles falling on Sderot, the Israeli town . . .

STEVE BERMAN: Well, Israel is the victim of terror. But you know what? This is a—this is a complicated story, Sean, with dual narratives at work here, dual claims to—legitimate claims to the land. And to unwind this all to get to an essential truth where we can find, perhaps, a peaceful

way of dealing with this situation, both sides have to be held accountable . . .

ALAN COLMES: Steve, did Jimmy Carter deserve the Nobel Peace Prize?

STEVE BERMAN: At the time—at the time I was very proud of him. Three years ago I traveled to Geneva to witness the—witness and support the signing of the Geneva Peace Accord that was authored by very brave Israelis and Palestinians. The president was the keynote speaker. *I think in that interim he's lost his way.*

The corporate media, during the week of President Carter's trip, focused heavily on his meeting with Hamas leaders. Most of the network news stressed that President Carter is a private citizen and was acting in direct defiance of America's foreign policy with regards to Hamas.¹ Many of the news stories featured US politicians who called for action against the President for meeting with Hamas while neglecting to present an opposing view on his trip.

A search of Lexis/Nexis found that no major news sources had a guest speaker who supported the President's meeting with Hamas. Many news stories did not even touch on the reasons stated by President Carter for his meeting with Hamas.

Fox News had Representative Sue Myrick of North Carolina calling for his (Carter's) passport and stating, "he is just deliberately undermining [US] policy. And it's wrong."² Guest speakers like Sue Myrick and the accompanying negative attention were common on all the major news networks. Most of the networks reported that President Carter was told by the State Department prior to his trip that he shouldn't meet with Hamas.³ However, this was not the case: President Carter had contacted the State Department before leaving and informed them of his intended meetings with Hamas and he was never contacted back. While this information was made available and reported on, the major news channels did not correct this story and continued to report that President Carter was acting in direct defiance of the US State Department, after being told not to talk to Hamas.⁴

The tone of most of the stories that covered President Carter's trip was negative and hostile to the former President. President Carter was accused of "engage[ing] with terrorists,"⁵ and "radical diplomacy."⁶ He was blasted as a "horrible President" who "is a stooge"⁷ as a result of his meetings with Hamas leaders. This kind of language was common

on news shows, presenting the issue as ridiculous rather than treating it as a serious news story. President Carter's trip to the Middle East was reduced, in America's mass media, to a couple meetings with Hamas that received little fair or serious coverage.

Current US corporate media coverage is as much a bias in favor of Israel as it is negative towards the democratically elected Hamas government in Gaza. Both sides reflect a US policy of continuing \$3 billion in annual military support to Israel, making it the fourth most powerful military in the world. The negation of Hamas becomes itself a justification for the continued funneling of US tax dollars to Israel, most of which come back to the US military-industrial complex in the form of weapons purchases.

Without truthful, unbiased disclosures of the Israel-Palestine conflicts in the US media, massive human rights abuse in Gaza will likely continue unabated.

Notes

1. CNN, *American Morning*, April 22, 2008, 7:00 AM EST.
2. Fox News Channel, "America's Pulse" Interview with Representative Sue Myrick (R-NC), Thursday April 17, 2008.
3. *Good Morning America*, April 19, 2008, 8:31 AM EST.
4. *Fox Special Report with Brit Hume*, April 24, 2008, 6:00 PM EST.
5. Fox News Channel, "Your World" Interview with Representative Eric Cantor (R-VA), April 17, 2008.
6. Fox News Channel, "America's Pulse" Interview with Representative Sue Myrick (R-NC), April 17, 2008.
7. Glenn Beck, "Carter Doing More Harm than Good in Middle East," April 21, 2008.