



WORD

from **JERUSALEM**

USA EDITION February 2009



All Eyes on Obama

BY MICHAEL HINES

Standing before a wall of spent Kassam rockets in the Gaza-border town of Sderot in August 2008, Senator Barack Obama uttered the most memorable reference to Israel of last year's Presidential campaign:

"If somebody was sending rockets into my house where my two daughters sleep at night, I would do everything to stop that, and would expect Israel to do the same thing."

Six months later, in the aftermath of Israel's three week military offensive to curb Hamas rocket fire deep inside the Gaza Strip, President Obama is being reminded of these words. They remain his strongest expression to date of the legitimacy of Israel's struggle for self-defense. The only difference now is that his daughters Milia and Sasha are sleeping in one the most heavily fortified homes on earth. A rocket fired at their White House bedroom would surely send the world to war.

"If somebody was sending rockets into my house where my two daughters sleep at night, I would do everything to stop that, and would expect Israel to do the same thing."

The children of Sderot, meanwhile, are not so fortunate, still facing daily rockets fired at their bedrooms, schools and kindergartens while the world stands idly by. The numbers have dwindled since Israel pounded Hamas weapons caches all across Gaza, killing and capturing many of the terror group's key leaders, but their government's right to defend them is still questioned from Washington to Beijing.

Last month authorities in Barcelona, Spain, decided to cancel the city's annual Holocaust Day observances on January 27, while a German neo-Nazi group arranged a "Stop the Israeli Holocaust" protest march

in Berlin the same day. "Marking the Jewish Holocaust while a Palestinian Holocaust is taking place is not right," a city official told Barcelona's La Vanguardia newspaper following a series of violent protests across the Catalan capital against the Israeli military action in Gaza.

Meanwhile Arab and European efforts to rebuild Gaza have begun apace, even as the first foreign journalists to return to the Gaza Strip have begun to testify to the accuracy of Israel's precision air-strikes and Hamas' gross inflation of civilian casualties.

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The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem



The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem was founded in 1980 as an act of comfort and solidarity with Israel and the Jewish people in their claim to Jerusalem.

Today, the Christian Embassy stands at the forefront of a growing mainstream movement of Christians worldwide who share a love and concern for Israel and an understanding of the biblical significance of the modern ingathering of Jews to the land of their forefathers.

From our headquarters in Jerusalem and through our branches and representatives in over 80 nations, we seek to challenge the Church to take up its scriptural responsibilities towards the Jewish people, to remind Israel of the wonderful promises made to her in the Bible, and to be a source of practical assistance to all the people of the Land of Israel.

The ICEJ's United States Branch is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization with offices in Washington, D.C. and Murfreesboro, Tennessee. We are a non-denominational faith ministry supported by the voluntary contributions of our members and friends.

We invite you to join with us as we minister to Israel and the Jewish people worldwide by using the enclosed response card to make your donation to the ongoing work and witness of the ICEJ.



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Dear Friends,

As I write to you I do so sadly in the wake of another chapter in Israel's ongoing war for its survival. Although Israel has, for now, withdrawn its troops from Gaza, the war against the radical Islamic terrorists of Hamas is far from over. Their charter calls for the total destruction of Israel and refuses to acknowledge Israel's right to exist. They have no respect for human life and in fact use children and women as shields against attack.

For five years now Hamas has initiated a campaign of terror against the southern towns and villages of Israel. Over this period some eight thousand missiles of one type or another have rained down on the civilians in the region. Two hundred and fifty thousand people have been held hostage by this "rain of terror" and thousands of children have been traumatized. As a consequence Israel this past month moved to protect its citizens and thus stop this blatant and unprovoked aggression. She was in the right to do so!

Naturally all loss of life is regrettable but there comes a time when only force will resolve the matter and in the long run save more lives. Please continue to pray for Israel as never before as this conflict, to be sure, is spiritual. Spiritual strongholds in wicked places are yet again seeking to destroy the Jewish people. It's just a different time and place but the same old adversary. What we need in the region is God's redemptive love to triumph and it will in the end for this is the promise of scripture. (Isaiah 2:1-4).



During recent weeks the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem, working in partnership with Operation Blessing, has been on the scene funding and facilitating the evacuation of children and the elderly from Sderot to a place of safety in the southern tip of the country ('Rest for the Battle Wary' p.6). You helped us do this by responding most generously to our online appeals for finances to aid and shelter those Israelis on the frontline. Thank you! This edition of our magazine tells the story of how your support saved lives and I believe caused the heart of God to rejoice.

This month's *Word from Jerusalem* also takes a deeper look at the repercussions of the recent conflict, our considered biblical response to the facts on the ground ('The Conflict in Gaza' p.5), the latent anti-Semitism prevalent in that world's reaction ('The Jew Factor' p.3), what it means for new administration of President Barack Obama in Washington ('All Eyes on Obama' pages 1 & 8), and our efforts to stand up for Israel in the nations, ('Rushing to the Aid of Israelis Under Fire' p.4).

As Israelis go to the polls this month to choose a new government to lead them through these trying times, we also need to redouble our efforts to pray for them, for God's purposes to be fulfilled in the earth and His lovingkindness to be poured out on them again, (Jeremiah 31: 33-34).

Thank you for continuing to be a blessing to the people of Israel.

Yours in Jesus,

Malcolm Hedding
ICEJ Executive Director,



The Jew Factor

What lies behind the rising tide of global anti-Semitism?

BY JÜRGEN BÜHLER

Observing the international buzz regarding the current war in Gaza one couldn't help then to wonder whether we are already in the Millennial reign of peace. It must have arrived. How else could you explain the storm of attention this relative tiny conflict in Gaza gathered in the world media. It brought within few days virtually every foreign minister and government on this planet to the scene to solve the "Human Catastrophe" in Gaza. Are there no other wars or conflicts tormenting our planet anymore? Is the crisis in Congo resolved? Did the Tamil Tigers stop fighting the Sri Lankan government? Do we have a stable and free government in Mozambique? Is there peace in Sudan? The list goes on...

Of course the Millennium is not here and each one of the above conflicts is still raging. Every single one of them did cost more human lives in the past 10 years than all wars in Israel since 1948. But why was there no shuttle diplomacy when 4 million Africans were killed in Congo? Where is the constant media coverage for the more than 70,000 people dead in Sri Lanka or the hundreds of thousands massacred in Sudan? Is it that the world is so much more concerned about Arabs or Palestinians?

For sure not. Because Egyptians killing Palestinians or Palestinians killing Palestinians neither produces media headlines nor political attention. There are no mass rallies in solidarity to the Arab Christians or Fatah people killed daily in Gaza by the hands of Hamas.

The only formula which seems to be able to rouse the global attention and to stimulate diplomatic activism is the formula "Jew kills Arab." It is the "Jew factor" or as Israel's former Minister of Foreign Affairs Shlomo Ben-Ami called it recently a "global syndrome regarding the Jews." Whenever Jews are involved public interest rises.

There are multiple reasons for this syndrome. One for sure is anti-Semitism. European media does report that anti-Semitism is noticeably on the rise since the war in Gaza. Many of the banners

as seen during European anti-Israel rallies are clearly fueled by Jew hatred. As a matter of fact there was never a time when the world was free of the deadly disease of anti-Semitism. However today it is more sophisticated than in the Middle Ages. After Auschwitz it is not anymore politically correct to voice anti-semitic views. But as soon as the Jewish state offers just a tiny opportunity to voice criticism the whole world jumps on it - not only to grasp the opportunity to criticize but to tear down the whole nation - if they could.



BARCELONA BURNING (ABOVE): ANGRY 'PEACE' DEMONSTRATORS IN SPAIN BURN A MOCK ISRAELI/NAZI FLAG TO PROTEST THE IDF'S RECENT EFFORTS TO CURB HAMAS ROCKET FIRE FROM GAZA. (AP PHOTO)

But there is another level to explain the "Jew factor" which is our own history with the Jews. The world desires to belittle their own guilt regarding the centuries of mistreating the Jews by pointing to Israel "See it also happens to you!" It is the eternal human drive to assuage your own guilt by pointing to that of your neighbor. Or as Jesus said we like rather to investigate the speck in our brother's eye in order to avert attention from the plank in our own eye (Matt. 7:3). It is not surprising therefore that Gaza is readily compared these days with a concentration camp or during the recent Intifada Jenin even with Auschwitz.

But there is a third reason for the "Jew factor" which to me is the most frightening one. The biblical Prophets warn us that there will come a time when the whole international community will conspire against Israel. The Jews will become once more target of a global agenda. It is vividly described by the prophet Zechariah (Zech. 12). He depicts it almost like an international game competition of who can lift up the highest this eternal stumbling block in the Middle East and solve it once and for all. God strongly warns the nations to participate in this wicked competition because the participants are about to touch the apple of God's eye.

To observe how the world is increasingly obsessed with the question of Israel is frightening and should cause the church of Jesus Christ not only to pray for peace in Middle East but also for their own leaders to act in a just and righteous way. Because at the end of the day the Jew factor is a God factor. 🌐

"There was never a time when the world was free of the deadly disease of anti-Semitism."



Rushing to the Aid of Israelis under Fire

Christians Respond on the Streets and on the Web to the ICEJ's Emergency Appeal

BY JÜRGEN BÜHLER & MICHAEL HINES

When the IDF was ordered to confront Hamas terrorism in Gaza just a few days before the New Year, protesters began to flood the streets worldwide driven by a sense of deep hostility towards Israel. Many of the banners seen during these protests, were clearly fuelled by the age-old hatred of anti-Semitism and triggered a dramatic escalation in violent attacks against Jewish people and property.

Thankfully, it was not long before Israel's many friends began staging solidarity rallies across the globe. Christians joined with Jews in many locations to organize pro-Israel gatherings in support of the effort to remove the Kassam rocket threat that has battered the western Negev for eight years now.



RALLYING CRY: ICEJ BRANCHES AROUND THE WORLD JOINED WITH LOCAL CHURCHES AND SYNAGOGUES IN SOLIDARITY RALLIES IN DOZENS OF CITIES, INCLUDING MANCHESTER, UK (ABOVE), NASHVILLE, TN (BELOW LEFT) AND CEBU IN THE PHILIPPINES (BELOW RIGHT).

In Oslo, Norway, riot police had to come to the defense of hundreds of friends and supporters of the ICEJ's Norwegian branch using tear-gas to disperse a violent pro-Palestinian counter protest. In Nashville, TN, meanwhile, staff from our US Branch headquarters were strongly represented at a peaceful pro-Israel rally in the Tennessee State Legislative Plaza, standing alongside local rabbis and pastors and speaking up forcefully from the platform for Israel's right to self defense.

Elsewhere, the ICEJ through its network of national branches, sponsored or participated in pro-Israel rallies on every continent and even the islands of the sea including Costa Rica, the Philippines, Denmark, Finland, and the United Kingdom.

Meanwhile in the States, friends of the ICEJ swiftly responded to our emergency appeal for funds to relocate vulnerable residents of Sderot out of harm's way, donating thousands of dollars online via our website and recruiting others to join our new Facebook cause, 'Help Israelis under Fire.'

From our vantage point here in Jerusalem, we can assure you these messages of support and concern were much appreciated by the Israeli people. 🌍





The Conflict in Gaza

The ICEJ stands behind Israel's actions of self-defense and calls on the world to lay the blame where it is due.

BY MALCOLM HEDDING

In the time since Israel pulled out of the Gaza Strip in August 2005, the Islamist terror militia Hamas seized control of the area and increased its relentless rocket and mortar attacks against the southern towns of Israel. These daily barrages literally kept thousands of Israeli civilians in siege-like conditions, while the world stood by and said almost nothing about the thousands of children traumatized or the needless loss of life and property. Sderot, one of the towns closest to Gaza, took the brunt of these attacks.

The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem has firmly stood by the Israeli communities in the western Negev during these tense times, providing social assistance through local charities and aid workers and delivering a number of portable bomb-shelters to the region. This ministry has also undertaken numerous fact-finding visits to the area and has thus witnessed first-hand the brutality and indiscriminate nature of these attacks from Gaza.

A brief 'lull' brokered by Egypt brought temporary relief to these war-weary residents of the Gaza periphery, but the rocket strikes returned in early November and began striking the city of Ashkelon. The Israeli government was reluctant to endanger the

Palestinian civilians among whom Hamas hides, using them as involuntary human shields. But in the end Israel had little choice but to finally take action to protect its citizens, which is its rightful duty. One would expect the same of any state that cares about its citizens.

Hamas consequently responded with longer range rockets that have hit the cities of Ashdod and Beersheva, placing over 700,000 Israeli civilians within range.

Loss of life is always regrettable and must be contained, and Israel more than any other country has demonstrated this principle. However, the Hamas regime in Gaza has no respect for life, denies the very existence of Israel, and works relentlessly for its total destruction. This is the stated position of the movement in its own words and clearly reflected in its charter. Israel was left with no choice other than to remove this threat from its southern region. Better to do so now than to wait until Hamas has the backing of a nuclear Iran.

The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem therefore finds it disturbing that many Western leaders have again opted to condemn Israel under the guise of what they call "disproportionate response."



The "doctrine of equivalence" sees no evil, hears no evil and does no evil. It stands on the fence trying to lay blame equally on both combatants. This is an outrage and our world is giving in to radical Islamic terror because of it. Hamas is a terrorist organization supported by rogue regimes in Syria and Iran, and the international community knows this well but many leaders do not have the courage to say it. Appeasement is the only game in town! So, Israel must be equally condemned.

We stand behind Israel in its actions of self-defense on behalf of its citizens and call on the world community to lay the blame where it is due. In this regard, we recall the words of US President Barack Obama when he stood in Sderot this past summer and stated that Israelis should never have to live under the threat of daily rocket attacks. 🌐

This statement was first published on December 31st, 2008, four days after the start of the recent Gaza conflict, as part of the ICEJ's global efforts to encourage Christians to pray for Israel and offer practical assistance to the embattled residents of the Western Negev.

PRECISION STRIKE (LEFT): THE DOME OF A GAZA CITY MOSQUE IS SEPARATED FROM ITS MINARET BY AN ISRAELI AIRSTRIKE. FEW MEDIA REPORTS ACKNOWLEDGED THE EXTENT TO WHICH HAMAS HAD HIDDEN THEIR WEAPONS AND FIGHTERS IN SCHOOLS, MOSQUES AND HOSPITALS. (AP PHOTO).

GROUND INVASION (ABOVE): PROVING THAT THE IDF HAD LEARNED LESSONS FROM THE 2006 LEBANON WAR, ISRAEL SWIFTLY RECAPTURED GAZA WITH FEW CASUALTIES IN JANUARY. (AP PHOTO)



Rest for the Battle Weary

ICEJ offers young and old respite from the front lines of the rocket war in Sderot

BY DAVID PARSONS



From the outset of the recent Gaza conflict in late December, the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem sprang into action to assist needy residents in the embattled Israeli communities along the Gaza border. Given the many urgent needs due to the war raging in the area, the ICEJ teamed up with CBN's Operation Blessing to bring relief to as many as possible, in coordination with local social workers and other long-standing contacts in the besieged area.

Among those assisted were 80 teenagers from the Sderot area, who happily climbed onto buses for a weekend reprieve in sunny Eilat, far from the daily Kassam rocket barrages in their home town. The getaway was arranged with Yigal Levy, director of the Keren Or, a learning center which works with at-risk teens in the troubled Gaza border town. Thanks to the generosity of Christians worldwide, all of the youngsters that come to Yigal's center were given a well-deserved break away from the terrors of the front-line.

The ICEJ-CBN partnership also sponsored a respite for 50 elderly residents of a kibbutz in the nearby Sha'ar HaNegev region, who also were treated to four days in Eilat, the first time most of them were given a chance to relax away from the constant rocket threat. A whole program of senior activities awaited them.

In addition, we sponsored nearly 300 low-income residents of Sderot and Netivot for similar short breaks in Eilat, the Galilee, and Jerusalem. This was done at the urging of Israeli social workers, deeply concerned that these families, many of whom could barely afford bus tickets out of town, could get some reprieve from the stress of daily rocket barrages. After eight tormenting years of warning sirens, shelters and shells, the ICEJ was able to provide welcome rest for the battle-weary Israelis of Sderot.

All these emergency efforts, however, are just a sample of the aid we have been able to bring to this troubled area over recent years. In 2008, ICEJ friends and supporters across the world sponsored seven of the 54 Operation Lifeshield portable bomb shelters that are presently saving lives there. In addition, we have been able to assist numerous families who moved to the Sderot area after they were uprooted from the Gush Katif settlements during Israel's disengagement from Gaza in August 2005.

We have also made a commitment to Yigal Levy to help fund a major expansion of his Keren Or youth center. The ICEJ is providing \$80,000 to launch construction of a third story on the center. Eventually, the project will include a safe room, as well as a specially-designed rocket shield over the entire facility.

Hopefully, the worst of the fighting is behind us, but the rocket threat remains a daily reality. We urgently ask that you help us to continue funding these initiatives. It is in difficult times like these that our comfort to Zion is most appreciated. Please mark your donation on the attached response card for 'ICEJ AID' or make your secure gift to our ongoing relief efforts in Israel online at: www.icejusa.org/gaza. 

Jesus said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28



David Parsons serves as the ICEJ's Media Director in Jerusalem, Contributing Christian Editor of The Jerusalem Post Christian Edition, and Senior Producer for the ICEJ's FrontPage Jerusalem Radio Program. Hear more from David at: www.frontpagejerusalem.com.



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Biblical Truth in Black & White



STATEMENT IN SDEROT (Cover): THEN-SENATOR BARACK OBAMA STANDS ALONGSIDE ISRAELI FOREIGN MINISTER TZIPI LIVNI IN SDEROT, ISRAEL IN AUGUST 2008 AT THE HEIGHT OF THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN.

ROCKET TRAILS OVER GAZA (Above): A PANAROMA OF GAZA CITY AT SUNSET AS HAMAS ROCKET SQUADS LAUNCH A MISSILE BARRAGE AT ISRAEL FROM THE MIDST OF A HIGHLY POPULATED RESIDENTIAL AREA.

(PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE ISRAEL PROJECT)

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Quoting a doctor at Gaza City's Shifa Hospital, the Italian daily *Corriere della Serra* reported on January 22 that most of those killed in Gaza appeared to be "young men between 17 and 23 who were recruited into the ranks of Hamas, which sent them to be slaughtered." The physician, who would not be named out of fear for his life, also claimed that only 500-600 Gazans were killed, and not 1,300 as was widely reported, a fact apparently corroborated in interviews with victims and their families but vehemently denied by the Palestinian Ministry of Health.

"It was strange that the non-governmental organizations, including Western ones, repeated the number without checking," the doctor added.

It is unlikely that an objective death toll of Israel's short foray into Gaza will ever be reached. Though the Israelis are cautious to offer an estimate, they are adamant that the widely accepted Palestinian claim of more than 1000 civilian casualties is wildly inflated. Between 75-80% of the Palestinian victims, Israel says, were armed combatants, an assertion that adds weight to the words of the Italian newspaper's outspoken physician.

But on the streets of Barcelona or Berlin, these numbers do not matter. Accused of conducting a 'Holocaust' against the Palestinian people, Israel has both been tried and found guilty by nightly news reports from Gaza that have whipped up crowds to

a frenzy from Fort Lauderdale to London. After all, the prevailing mood of the media these days is simple: all war is evil, and thus any Israeli effort to secure the safety of their civilians must be disproportionate by definition.

Which brings us back to Barack Obama. To his credit he was careful to refrain from weighing in on the Gaza conflict before his inauguration, and is trying his best not to be seen to influence the outcome of Israel's February 10 elections. But nothing changes the fact that he has put the Middle East peace process at the top of his foreign policy agenda, symbolically making his first international Oval Office call to Palestinian Authority leader Mahmoud Abbas.

As Israelis go to the polls this month, therefore, all eyes are on Obama, knowing that his actions could impact their future as profoundly as any new Prime Minister in Jerusalem. As Christians, this should inspire us to pray for our new President, that he would recognize Israel's right of self-defense with the apparent clarity he showed in Sderot last summer.

Pray for him and speak up! It is time to remind President Obama to stand up for Israel. Join the movement at: www.icejusa.org 

Michael Hines serves as the ICEJ's US Media Director and lives with his wife Bonni and four children in Murfreesboro, TN.

