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[Contents of Issue Menu](#)

Click Here

[Home](#)

Cover Story
Israel Must End the Gaza blockade!
The African World
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When it comes to Israel's blockade of Gaza, the silence is deafening, at least outside of Palestine. One wonders how many international conventions the Israelis need to break before there is an actual global outcry and action against their repeated human rights abuses against Palestine. The blockade of Gaza is only the latest in a long list of such abuses, but the scale of the abuse is beyond dramatic.

Israel justifies its blockade of Gaza, and their repeated refusals to consistently allow in humanitarian aid, due to rocket attacks against Israeli positions. Yet the reality of the situation is a bit more complicated. From the moment that Hamas, the Palestinian Islamist party, won free elections in 2006, there was a concerted effort by Israel and the USA to destabilize the situation and ultimately to destroy Hamas. In point of fact, both the USA and Israel were more than content to permit Palestinian elections as long as the candidates that Israel and the USA favored, won. When this did not happen, both countries went into action in order to destroy the Palestinian government.

If one has any questions as to whether this suggestion is paranoid, one need only read the April 2008 Vanity Fair article "[The Gaza Bombshell](#)" for a remarkable exposure of the US-led plot to carry out a coup against the Hamas government. Once Hamas got a hint of the plot, a semi-civil war unfolded which resulted in Hamas military units taking over Gaza, and the further splintering of Palestine.

Since the Palestinian semi-civil war, the Israelis have been doing all that they can to further isolate and destroy Hamas in particular and Gaza in general. Thus, their blockade of Gaza is nothing short of "collective punishment", a war crime according to the 1949 Geneva Conventions. In other words, the civilian population of Gaza is being punished by the Israelis as a means of forcing Hamas to submit. One can ask the

legitimate question, how is such a course of action different from terrorism?

Although Israeli naval authorities permitted a symbolic violation of the blockade by a small ship carrying relief supplies, on December 1st the Israelis turned back a Libyan ship bringing a more substantial amount of assistance. While this drama has been unfolding, Gaza is running out of money, fuel and food. Humanitarian organizations have been repeatedly sounding the alarm, but this has been all but ignored outside of the Arab World.

Human rights abuses inflicted against the Palestinians are regularly excused away by mainstream opinion in the USA. The excusing away is largely framed in terms of defending Israel's right to exist, and permitting Israel to do what it needs to do in order to survive. But this defense ignores the daily horrors inflicted on the Palestinian people, Gaza being only one, but the illegal so-called apartheid Wall built by Israel in and around the Palestinian territories being another notorious example. All of this is unfolding, of course, in the context of a denial of the Palestinian people's right to exist.

The attempt to block discussion of Palestine in the USA has suffered some set backs. Former President Jimmy Carter's best-selling book [Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid](#) helped to begin a reframing of the conflict. Nevertheless, Carter's treatment at the 2008 Democratic National Convention (where he was not permitted to speak) seems to indicate an on-going fear that anyone who challenges the establishment "wisdom" when it comes to Palestine is a contagious pariah. In fact, the attorney Alan Dershowitz has claimed that he was personally responsible for undermining Carter's speaking at the Democratic Convention because of Carter's views on Palestine.

So, Gaza represents another test, less for the world and more for the leaders and people of the USA. President-elect Obama has been relatively silent on the question of Palestine, at least as of recent, but his appointments do not make one particularly optimistic that a different approach to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict is in store. While one should not jump to conclusions, it is worth suggesting that no change in the US relationship to the conflict, and particularly toward Palestinian national self-determination, is in store until and unless a significant, organized, and vocal constituency emerges in the USA, upholding of Palestinian rights as well as fighting for a just peace. This is what makes the work of groups such as the ["US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation"](#) so critical. That said, the scale of this work must be increased geometrically.

Silence is not an acceptable alternative, because continued silence toward human rights abuses against the Palestinian people means the removal or elimination of a people, a stated objective, by the way, of a segment of the Israeli ruling elite.

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BlackCommentator.com Executive Editor, Bill Fletcher, Jr., is a Senior Scholar with the [Institute for Policy Studies](#), the immediate past president of [TransAfrica Forum](#) and co-author of, [Solidarity Divided: The Crisis in Organized Labor and a New Path toward Social Justice](#) (University of California Press), which examines the crisis of organized labor in the USA. Click [here](#) to contact Mr. Fletcher.

[Contents of Issue Menu](#)

Click Here

[Home](#)

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