

A Report of a Visit

To

Israel

The Gaza Strip and

The West Bank

6-11 April 2009

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The depth of the conflict and of the divisions in the Middle East; the scale of the devastation in Gaza; the impact of the Separation Wall and of the Israeli occupation, and the settlements in the west Bank; along with the trauma caused to the residents of Sderot and other Israeli towns by rocket attacks, are all evidence of the enormity of the problems facing those who live in Israel and the Palestinian territories.

In September 2006 I visited Israel and the West Bank. Due to a tight schedule I was unable to visit the Gaza strip.

Following the Israeli assault on the Gaza strip in December and January I decided that it was time to go back and to see for myself the extent of the damage and to take the opportunity to meet as many people as I could and gather as much information as possible.

In April myself and three colleagues, Ted Howell, Harry Thompson and Richard McAuley spent four days in Israel, the Gaza strip and the West Bank.

We met a huge number of NGOs, Israeli and Palestinian human rights organisations, women's groups, community organisations, bankers, the private sector, university heads, health staff, including trauma counsellors, and all of the main Palestinian political parties and a Kadima member of the Israeli Parliament and Palestinian refugees.

We were warmly received by everyone we met and they openly and honestly outlined their assessment of the current situation.

I want to thank everyone who assisted us and who was willing to meet and outline their views.

It is clear that many are hopeful that the new US Administration and the appointment of Senator George Mitchell creates a new opportunity to make progress toward a peace settlement.

It is obvious that the political conditions for ongoing violence and poverty and instability still dominate the situation.

These must be tackled effectively if a peace settlement is to have any potential for success.

It was also clear from the scores of Israeli and Palestinian citizens that the Sinn Féin delegation met that there is a deep desire for peace.

This desire must be turned into reality.

I believe that dialogue is key to this.

So too is the role of the international community.

Another start must be made in the Middle East. That includes a huge international effort to begin the work of reconstruction in the Gaza strip and the West Bank.

The international community also has a duty to create the political conditions in which a real dialogue can happen.

So far it has behaved in a shameful way by failing to effectively and persistently pursue the building of a peace process capable of delivering a political settlement.

That must change.

The Sinn Féin peace strategy helped create the conditions for the Irish peace process which has transformed political conditions in Ireland.

While no two conflicts are the same there are nonetheless broad principles which can be helpful in all conflict resolution processes.

Sinn Féin, within our limited resources, is willing to offer our experience to others if it can help.

Is mise

***Gerry Adams MP MLA
Sinn Féin President
June 2009***



Bombed ice cream
factory Gaza



Bombed
Buildings
April 2009

I visited Israel and the Palestinian Territories with a Sinn Féin delegation between Monday 6 April and Saturday 11 April.

The visit was under the auspices of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East.

The purpose of my visit was to meet as wide a range of Israeli and Palestinian people as practicable; to see for myself and hear at first hand the views of those living and working there about the current situation and the impact all of this was having on the communities involved. This included my readiness to meet with any political representatives with a democratic mandate who were willing to meet with me.

Sinn Féin's position is that the integrity of all democratic mandates should be respected and accepted. And, clearly, any attempt to achieve peace must involve dialogue between opponents and enemies.

In advance of my visit I consulted with His Excellency Dr. Zion Evrony the Israeli Ambassador to Ireland and Dr. Hikmat Ajjuri the Palestinian Ambassador to Ireland and made application to the Israeli authorities to enter Gaza.

I was advised by the Israeli authorities that any meeting with Israeli Government representatives was conditional on giving a commitment not to meet with Hamas. I refused to give such a commitment because I believe the integrity of all democratic mandates should be accepted.

I was informed that this condition applied also to assistance in making any other arrangements.

To this point Sinn Féin had no direct point of contact with Hamas or publicly elected Hamas officials about our visit.

Subsequently in Paris and en route to Tel Aviv on Monday 6 April I was informed by Sinn Féin's International Relations Department that permission to enter Gaza had been refused.

The Israeli newspaper, the Jerusalem Post also carried a number of reports stating that I would be denied entry to Gaza.

In the course of Tuesday 7 April I spoke, by telephone, to an official from the Israeli Department of Foreign Affairs.

Later that day I was informed that my application to enter Gaza had been approved. This enabled me to meet with a wider spectrum of opinion than would otherwise have been possible.

I viewed and view this as a positive development and a welcome opportunity to further the aim of my visit. I regret, however, that I was denied meetings with Israeli Government representatives or representatives of the parties which make up the current multi-party coalition government.

Itinerary

In the course of the four days between Tuesday 7 April and Friday 10 April my itinerary included the following meetings:

Tuesday 7 April:

- The Irish Ambassador to Israel Michael Forbes and his First Secretary Conor Long
- Tony Blair, former Prime Minister of Britain.
- Professor Gabriel Motzkin and Amit Lesham from the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute
- Miriam Orbach, The Israeli Trauma Centre, Sderot
- Kadima Party Knesset Member Shai Hermesh, Kfar Aza Kibbutz.
- Rabbi Arik Asherman of Rabbis for Human Rights, Jerusalem.
- Palestinians families from the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of Jerusalem

Wednesday 8 April:

- UNWRA Director of Operations in Gaza, John Ging and UNWRA Commissioner General Karen Konig AbuZayd
- Representatives of civic society in Gaza including Human Rights Organisations, Industrialists, Educationalists, Medical Practitioners, Community workers, Women's organisations.
- This included Professors from the Islamic University and Al Quds Open University
- Kalil Abu Foul the Manager of Al Quds Hospital. We were shown the damage caused to the hospital during the IDF assault
- Dr. Abdullah Efranji, Central Committee of Fatah and Marwan Abdul Hameed, Revolutionary Council of Fatah.
- Hamas Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh.

Thursday 9 April:

- Representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross
- Representatives of the private and banking sectors in Gaza
- Hamas Health Minister Dr Bassem Naem
- A visit to Shifa Hospital

- Rafiq Mikki Mayor of Gaza City and City Council Members
- Members of the Palestinian Legislative Council in Gaza, including the Minister of Justice
- Caoimhe Butterly of the Hands Off Gaza campaign
- Representatives of the Palestinian left in Gaza including the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and the Palestinian People's Party.

Friday 10 April:

- Deputy Foreign Minister Riyad al-Malki, Ramallah and Rawan Abu Yousef, Director of European affairs dept.
- A visit to Al Duhasa Refugee Camp in Bethlehem, accompanied by Dr. As'ad Abdul Rahman, Executive member of the PLO.
- A public meeting with residents and administrators of Al Duhasa Refugee Camp
- Dr. Rafiq al Hussein, (Fatah President Abbas' Chief of Staff); Professor As'ad Abdul Rahman; Claudette Habesch (Secretary General Caritas); Hatem Abdul Qader, Prime Minister Salem Fayyad's Adviser on Jerusalem Affairs; Dimitri Y Diliani (Fatah) and others in Jerusalem.

Appreciation

I want to thank all of the above in Ireland, Israel and the Palestinian Occupied Territory - Sderot, Kfar Aza, Gaza, Ramallah, Bethlehem and Jerusalem - for giving so generously of their time; for their information, opinions, generosity and hospitality.

In particular I thank John Ging of UNWRA, Amit Lesham of the Van Leer Institute, Dr. As'ad Abdul Rahman of the PLO and Dr. Bassem Naem of Hamas for putting together the itinerary for my visit and for giving so generously of their time.

I also thank all of those who took time out of busy schedules at short notice to share their views with me.

Sinn Féin Position

Sinn Féin supports the right of all peoples to national self determination and to the exercise of that right without external interference or impediment.

Explicitly, that means there must be an end to the Israeli occupation.

Before and during my recent visit I consistently set out - privately and publicly - aspects of Sinn Féin's view of the situation.

In brief this included the following opinions:

- ◆ The situation had deteriorated since my first visit in September 2006.
- ◆ Israelis and Palestinians are destined to share the same piece of ground and to live side by side.
- ◆ Everyone deserves and requires justice, stability, security and peace.
- ◆ A two-state solution holds out the best prospect to secure these objectives.
- ◆ Dialogue is central to this.
- ◆ There should be a complete cessation of all hostilities and freedom of movement for everyone.

I made clear that I was willing and ready to meet for discussions with all democratically elected representatives who wished to meet with me.

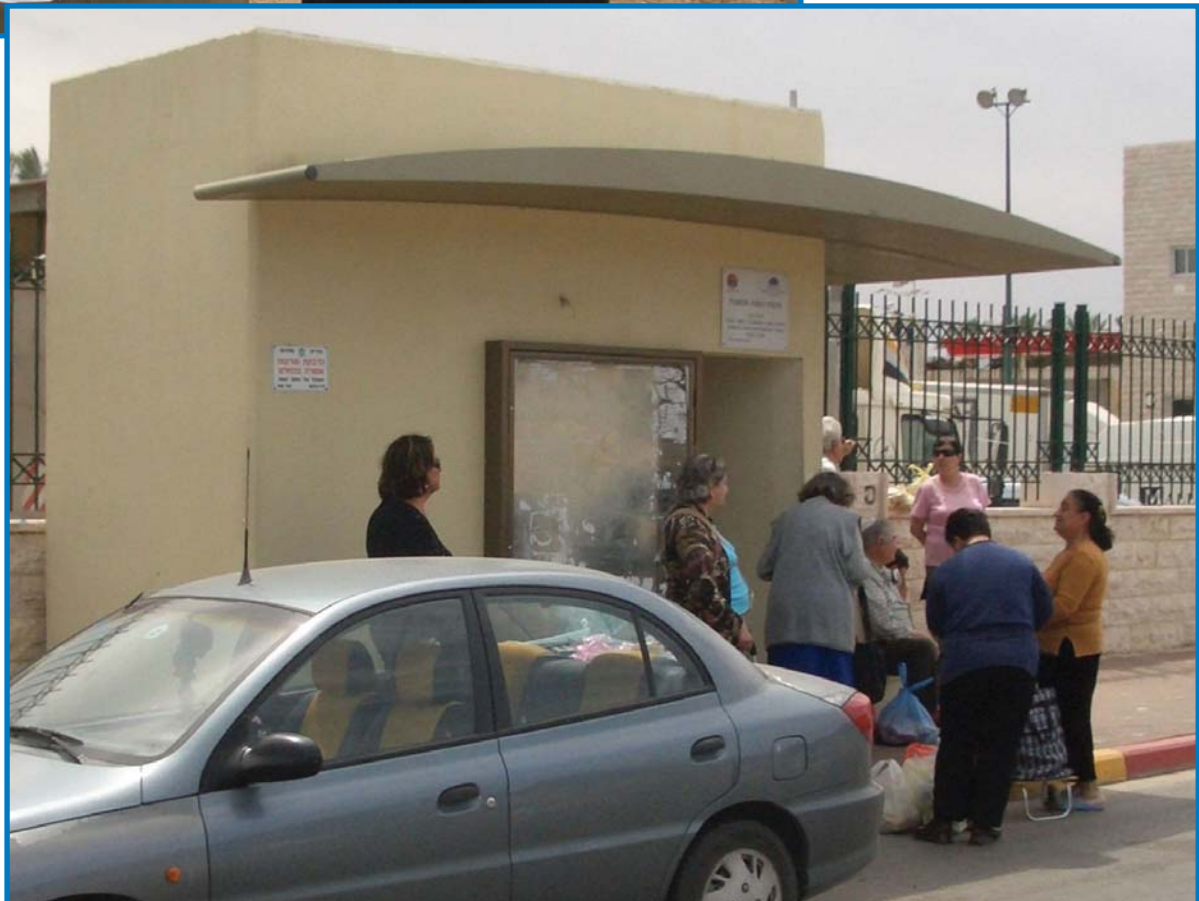
I also said I would report on my visit to Sen. George Mitchell who has recently been appointed U.S. Envoy to the region.

I am also sending this report to UNRWA; to the Israeli government; the PLO and the Palestinian Authority; the Hamas government in Gaza; all of those political parties I met during my visit; the Irish government; the British government; Mr. Tony Blair; to the US government; to the EU; to the UN; to the Russian government; and to a range of Arab states.



The Sinn Féin President meets with Shai Hermesh, a member of the centre-left Kadima party in the Israeli Parliament, the Knesset

Israeli government bomb shelter in Sderot



Some Israeli Opinions Jerusalem, Sderot and Kfar Aza Kibbutz

Sderot has a population of some 20,000, with 30,000 more living in its hinterland. It is only a few miles from the Gaza strip.

The population, except for a small number of resettled Palestinians is solidly Israeli; mostly working-class with significant numbers of north African Jewish settlers.

The town, the nearby kibbutz of Kfar Aza, and other locations have been targeted by locally made rockets out of Gaza over a period of years. Thousands of rockets have been used. 11 people have been killed and hundreds injured.

In relative terms, I was told the greater damage was the unrelenting stress and trauma caused by the attacks, the red alerts and the uncertainties attached to all of this.

Estimates for those psychologically affected in varying degrees run to 8-10,000 people. It is estimated that 15% of the population has moved to a safer environment in which to raise their children.

The Israeli Trauma Coalition runs five centres in the general area. Sderot is the largest. It acts as an umbrella organisation for up to 50 projects. The Irish aid organisation Trocaire contributes to the project. By and large the concerns raised with me and the terms in which they were expressed were reminiscent of meetings I have had over the years with community organisations in West Belfast.

Another consequence of the current situation is the almost absolute segregation between the people of this area and the people of the Gaza Strip. Commercial, community and personal engagement between the people of this area is now non-existent.

I heard expressions of sympathy with Palestinian victims of the Israeli army assault on Gaza. As one commentator put it "Fundamental humanity still obtains. But security concerns inevitably cause a shift towards those who say they can provide it."

Another commentator firmed this up attributing the building of the Israeli built wall along the West Bank border entirely to security concerns.

"One thousand people" he said "were killed as a result of suicide bombers. 300 people dead in Jerusalem in one year alone."

The wall, I was told, was not about land-grabbing with a view to establishing future permanent boundaries.

But against that the same commentator said that 100,000 Israeli settlers were now established on this land representing, allegedly, 3% of the West Bank land space.



Gerry Adams with Rabbi Arik Asherman from the Rabbis for Human Rights group

Any future deal, he said, would or could entail 97% of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Compensation in financial or infrastructural terms could be negotiated for the additional loss of territory.

Palestinian sources refute these statistics as massive understatement.

Israelis, I was told, accept the two state solution as the only way forward. And despite blame fixing for the current and past conflict, dialogue was seen as the only way forward.

One opinion was that despite the public utterances of opposition to the two state solution by the new Israeli coalition government there was no other alternative.

Ariel Sharon and Ehud Olmert had trodden that path and, I was told, the Netanyahu Government would follow.

What is needed:

- ♦ The firing of rockets should cease.
- ♦ The building of Separation Wall should stop as a first step towards its demolition.
- ♦ The building of Settlements should stop.

Jerusalem, Gaza and the West Bank

Some Palestinian Opinions

The Gaza Strip:

From the moment you enter the Gaza strip under the gaze of the watchtowers and through the huge gates in the security wall and security system controlled by Israel at the Erez Crossing, the overwhelming sense is one of entering a huge open air prison. A million and a half people live there enduring multiple deprivations and denial of rights.

The television images of the assault on Gaza by the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) and the cold statistics set out in multiple reports from reputable international relief and human rights agencies all support claims that society in general on the Gaza strip was the target of this assault.

The civilian population bore the brunt of the fatalities and in particular children and women.

Residential areas, educational and medical facilities alongside political and civil administration establishments were targeted.

This included the police. Water and electricity services and roads were also targeted.

Military institutions were attacked.

Over a three week period from 27 December 2008 to 18 January 2009 it is reported that:

- ◆ Over 1400 people were killed including more than 400 children and over a hundred women.
- ◆ Casualties were in the region of 5,000 including 1,800 children and almost 800 women.

According to UNRWA; *'The bombing campaign caused extensive internal displacement of the civilian population with more than 50,000 people seeking refuge in 50 UNRWA schools.'*

UNRWA also said that the IDF assault; *'wrought unprecedented devastation and hardship on an already impoverished population, compounding the effects of an 18 month blockade and tight regime of closures and restrictions on movement that date back to the early 1990s.'*



Al Qud hospital bombed by Israeli war planes

The human cost of the assault on Gaza is an affront to humanity.

The reason given for the assault is that it was a reaction to the firing of Qassam rockets. No-one in Gaza believes this.

Moreover, by any standards, it was a wholly disproportionate response.

In a recent report by the UN into nine of the worst attacks on UN premises and vehicles during the Israeli assault a UN panel, led by Ian Martin a former head of Amnesty International concluded that Israeli actions in using white phosphorous munitions showed a 'reckless disregard' for human life.

The UN report was limited to an investigation of these nine attacks and concluded that Israel was responsible for seven of the nine; Palestinians for one, and the last could not be determined.

Those Palestinians I spoke to believe that the assault on Gaza was an attempt to topple Hamas and to demonstrate to the people of Gaza the price for voting for that party.

The human suffering from the assault has been compounded by the siege of Gaza which continues after the assault.

Doctors told me that patients are dying because medical supplies and spare parts for medical equipment, such as scanners and radiotherapy apparatuses, are not available.

Many factories have been flattened in the bombardment. Others lie idle because of an absence of raw materials or components. Exports are practically zero.

Reconstruction after the bombardments is prevented. Building materials are not allowed in.

Unemployment is in the high seventies. The figures for those officially categorised as living in poverty even higher.

The resultant suffering past and present, especially within a population of which 60% are under 18 years of age, can only store up a festering resentment which will fuel further conflict in the absence of a political settlement.

What is needed:

- ♦ The siege of the Gaza strip should end.
- ♦ International aid on an appropriately large scale should immediately be injected into the area to relieve suffering, restore essential services and kick start the reconstruction of the area.
- ♦ All armed actions or threats of armed action should cease.



Gerry Adams visits Shifa hospital where he is shown radiation machines for cancer treatment not working because Israel will not allow spare parts into Gaza

Gerry Adams meets Palestinian family whose home was destroyed during the Israeli attack on Gaza



West Bank and Jerusalem:

Jerusalem is the hub of all things and all issues related to matters Palestinian and Israeli.

While the focus inevitably shifted to Gaza as a result of the enormity of what happened in the December-January period, Jerusalem is and will be the microcosm of the conflict for as long as it lasts.

Its importance - political, religious, psychological and national - to this conflict is critical; equally so to any solution.

The ongoing conflict finds expression in the eviction of Palestinian families from Jerusalem by the Israeli authorities, the regular attacks and clashes, the colonisation of the city's hinterland on the West Bank. And, most visible of all - the Separation Wall.

There will be no Palestinian/Israeli agreement without an agreement on Jerusalem.

This is a universal view amongst the Palestinian opinions shared with me.

West Bank Palestinians are subjected to stop and search on a daily basis and often several times a day at some 600 permanent roadblocks and crossing gates set up by the Israeli Defence Forces in the West Bank.

Alongside this seven hundred kilometres of roads have been constructed for the exclusive use of the Israeli Defence Forces and Israeli settlers in the ever burgeoning programme of colonising Palestinian lands through the establishment of new Israeli settlements.

All of this, like the grotesque Separation Wall which stretches for 662.8 kilometres and snakes its way across Palestinian land is done in the name of security. All are illegal.

Palestinian land owned and used by Palestinians has, as a result of these Israeli imposed policies, been even further reduced.

According to the PLO Negotiations Affairs Department the *'Wall and planned settlement expansion will place 45.5% of the occupied west Bank under Israeli control ... the revised Wall route alone de facto annexes 9% of the west Bank ... effectively incorporates over 370,000 illegal settlers or nearly 87% of the Israeli settler population...*

Israel claims the Wall is about security, but the revised route, which stretches 662.8 km, still runs more than twice the length of the 1967 border ...'



Gerry Adams meets representatives from a range of Palestinian Human Rights organisations

Palestinians claim, not unreasonably, that the West Bank and the Gaza strip have been cantonised - an apartheid system is in place.

In these conditions conflict on a regular basis between Palestinians and Israeli Defence Forces or Israeli settlers is inevitable.

Several Palestinians, supporters of the peace process route, mature in both age and political experience told me that they feel as angry now as they did when they were teenagers.

They find, in themselves and their contemporaries, a hardening of attitudes.

Others voice the opinion that generations coming up, unless there is a peace settlement, will make Al Qaeda, in retrospect, looking like moderates.



Gerry Adams at Israeli Separation Wall that surrounds Bethlehem

Current Positions

I first visited Israel and the West Bank in September 2006.

During that visit I was told by many individuals, representing a wide spectrum of political opinion that most people in the region, without even thinking about it, could set out the broad shape of an agreement between Israelis and Palestinians.

On this visit and in what is clearly a worse situation, many people, again representing a broad spectrum of political opinion brought my attention to regular opinion polls which consistently show that up to 70% of Israelis and Palestinians consistently say that they want peace.

In March of this year Likud Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu told the Knesset that his new Government *"will make every effort to achieve a just and lasting peace with all of our neighbours and the Arab world in its entirety"*.

However, he and other coalition partners oppose a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict while Labour Defence Minister Ehud Barak, also a coalition partner, is committed to the land-for-peace formula. He has asked the new Prime Minister to endorse the ever tenuous peace process and a Palestinian state.

Barak also supports a new ceasefire arrangement with Hamas in Gaza while Prime Minister Netanyahu and his Yisrael Beiteinu Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman have spoken in favour of toppling the Hamas administration.

The democratically elected representatives of Palestinian political opinion, Fatah and Hamas, representing between them approximately 80% of votes cast in the last election to the Palestinian Legislative Council, made clear to me in separate meetings that they support a two-state solution to the conflict.

And that this requires, understandably, that any Palestinian state be viable and sustainable. This would require ease of movement between the West Bank and the Gaza strip.

In separate discussions with the Deputy Foreign Minister of the Palestinian Authority Ahmad Sudoh, and President Abbas' Chief of Staff Dr Rafiq al Hussein they made clear that their position is to:

- ◆ Support a two state solution,
- ◆ Support and achieve comprehensive Palestinian endorsement for all previous agreements signed by Palestinian governments,
- ◆ Get the Israeli Government to implement what had been previously agreed.
- ◆ Maximise Palestinian political unity.

Hamas Prime Minister Ismael Haniyeh in our meeting on Wednesday 9 April made a number of points in respect of this and related matters.

He said Hamas:

- ◆ Is involved in discussions with Fatah in respect of unity and an agreed political platform to provide a common position for democratically elected Palestinian representatives; to present a single representative Palestinian voice.
- ◆ Is ready to make compromises to achieve Palestinian unity on these issues.
- ◆ Has no interest in establishing or sustaining Gaza as a separate political entity. ***(Some senior Palestinians told me that they believe this is an Israeli Government objective. Their view is that the Israeli government will agree to Gaza as a Palestinian state, colonise as much of the west Bank as possible and hive off the rest to Jordan.)***
- ◆ Wants justice, stability, security and peace for Palestinians and Israelis.
- ◆ Supports, as the route to this:
 - ◆ A comprehensive ceasefire;
 - ◆ The opening of borders;
 - ◆ The lifting of the siege of Gaza;
 - ◆ The two-state compromise and the establishment of a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital on the basis of the 1967 borders;
 - ◆ And the establishment of a long Hudna (long truce) to facilitate this as an important enabling element. That is a renewable 'life long' truce between the Palestinian and Israeli authorities.

A number of Palestinians made clear their preference for a single secular state of Palestine on the basis of the historic/old Mandate borders embracing Israelis and Palestinians, Jews, Moslems, Christians and so on.

If Israelis were not prepared to accept that at this time, they said, then they would support a two-state solution for now and let a future generation politically address the single state option.



Gerry Adams Meets Hamas PM Ismail Haniyeh

International Context

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has ever been bound up with wider regional and international influences and interests. This includes the states with shared borders - Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria - the wider Arab and indeed Islamic world, East/West interests which have endured beyond the Cold War and in particular the role and influence of the United States.

At best conflicting interests have neutralised the international community as a positive influence for justice, stability, security and peace for Palestinians and Israelis.

At another level this results in United Nations Resolutions and international law being flouted with impunity and immunity.

This is not acceptable. It needs to end.

The current situation is untenable.

One thing is clear. Despite any relative lull in the overt conflict, there exists a set of conditions which inevitably and inexorably can and will move the situation in a cyclical way into greater violence with more awful consequences than anything previously witnessed.

The election of President Barack Obama, the agenda for change he has articulated, in particular his recent speech in Turkey supporting a two-State solution, heralds a potential for a new and different chapter in the affairs of the Palestinian and Israeli peoples.

The appointment of Senator George Mitchell as the US Special Envoy, given his role in the peace process in Ireland, symbolises that.



The American Independent School in Gaza destroyed by Israeli war planes



Childrens part of Al Qud hospital bombed by Israeli forces

Conclusions

During my two brief visits to the region and in my conversations with all of those I met I believe that there is a widespread desire for peace among Israelis and Palestinians.

The opinion polls consistently reflect this.

I regret that the view of the Israeli Government is not reflected in this report. That is an unfortunate consequence of its refusal to meet the Sinn Féin delegation.

Dialogue has to be a central tenet of any attempt to make peace; to achieve justice, stability, security and peace.

Refusing to engage in dialogue; demonising opponents; treating them as non citizens; stripping them of their rights and entitlements, of their self esteem and integrity as human beings; engaging in censorship and vilification, makes war easier and peace harder.

It is a policy which guarantees a perpetuation of the cycle of conflict.

The international experience is clear.

There are two ways to end conflict. Either one side convincingly beats the other or all of those involved engage in the more difficult and challenging process of peace making.

61 years after the emergence of the Israeli state and the partition of Palestine, and with the increasing sophistication of the weapons of war on all sides, it is clear that no wall - however high - can provide permanent peace or security.

A political settlement is required and this is only possible if there is a recognition and acceptance of democratic mandates of all of the participants.

Peace making is conducted by and between enemies not between friends.

That means that a necessary element of a conflict resolution process in the Middle East which hopes to achieve a successful outcome, must be an acceptance of inclusive dialogue based on equality and respect.

This required a serious, good faith effort to engage between political opponents.

And this will require determination and commitment to stick with it through all of the inevitable arguments and differences and crises that will emerge.

For Palestinians this means uniting in the national interest by agreeing a truly national political platform involving all of the Palestinian parties.

Fail to do this and the age old tactic of divide and rule will weaken the Palestinian ability to achieve their rights through negotiation.

Party political interests need to be subsumed in the national and democratic cause.

For the Israelis the challenge is equally daunting.

Israel is a major regional and world power.

It has the ability to continue to pursue and implement policies which foster division and conflict, or it can take dramatic decisions for peace.

For both a two-State solution appears to hold out the greatest prospect for an acceptable and durable solution.

Such a settlement would also greatly enhance Israel's standing with its neighbours.

The Arab League peace which includes a proposal to normalise relationships with Israel could be a watershed moment in the effort to bring stability to that region.

The recent positions set out by President Obama, and the appointment of Senator George Mitchell, are welcome developments. The United States of America has a particular role to play and is certainly the most influential international player on the Israeli authorities.

The wider international community also has an important role to play also, especially Egypt, Jordan and Syria, Saudi Arabia, the wider Arab world, the Government of Iran and the European Union, Turkey, China and the United Nations and Russia.

All can and must provide encouragement, incentives, persuasions, economic and other aid as appropriate and the application without fear or favour of internationally agreed laws and standards.

But in the end it is for Palestinians and Israelis to make the peace.

And that means the renewed commitment to agreements and understandings already reached as the basis to resume timetabled negotiations, for an overall settlement, which includes a timetable for implementation.



Bombed building

IMMEDIATE STEPS

- ◆ All armed actions and acts of violence should cease.
- ◆ An inclusive process of negotiations should commence in which all democratic mandates are respected, clear objectives are set, and there is a fixed timeframe.
- ◆ The building of the Separation Wall should stop as a first step which would see its demolition.
- ◆ The siege of the Gaza Strip should end.
- ◆ An immediate and intensive programme of reconstruction and economic development must commence.
- ◆ The ongoing Israeli colonisation of the West Bank and the building of settlements should stop.
- ◆ The occupation of the West Bank and the denial of freedom of movement to Palestinians in the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip, and between the West Bank and Gaza, should end as part of the process to decolonise the West Bank.
- ◆ Mutual and expeditious co-operation between Palestinians and Israelis to enhance public safety and security should commence.
- ◆ United Nations Resolutions and International Law should be enforced.

Appendices:

Gaza statistics provided by UNRWA

- ◆ 1.5 million people reside in a piece of land 40 km long and 10 km wide.
- ◆ 80% of Gazans are now dependent on some form of aid.
- ◆ 100,000 estimated to have lost their jobs in the private sector since end 2004/2005.
- ◆ 56% of the population of Gaza is under 18 years of age. Schools in Gaza often have up to 1000 pupils with classroom sizes of up to 50 children per class.
- ◆ 500 trucks a day need to enter the Gaza strip for there to be a sustainable level of economic activity, as cited by the World Bank/EU. Since the end of Operation Cast Lead an average of 84 trucks per day are entering Gaza.¹
- ◆ Due to the closure regime, approximately only 2% of industrial establishments were still functioning at the end of 2008.²

Destruction caused by Israeli Operation Cast Lead.

- ◆ Approximately 3,500 homes destroyed, 28,000 homes damaged.³
- ◆ 800 industries damaged/destroyed during Operation Cast Lead: 120 million USD of direct physical damage incurred during the 22 day military operation.⁴
- ◆ Agricultural sector: Direct losses to crops, fisheries, livestock and poultry estimated at \$180 million.
- ◆ Impact on the infrastructure of a future Palestinian state: Palestinian Legislative Council destroyed; 7 government institutions completely or partially destroyed.
- ◆ 10 schools destroyed, 204 damaged.⁵
- ◆ 600,000 tonnes of rubble need to be removed.
- ◆ 14 mosques destroyed, 38 mosques, 2 churches and the British Commonwealth cemetery in Gaza damaged.
- ◆ 41 public health clinics and 29 ambulances were either damaged or destroyed.⁶

¹ Based on available data provided by Israeli Defence Forces.

² Local business association estimates as quoted in the PNA Early Recovery and Reconstruction Plan 02, March 2009.

³ UNRWA/UNDP data.

⁴ UNDP/Gaza Private Sector Coordination Council

⁵ 168 PA/private schools and 36 UNRWA. Data for PA/private schools from PNA Early Recovery and Reconstruction Plan 02 March 2009.

⁶ Map UK, WHO, Rapid health facility survey, January 2009, UNDP damage needs assessment.

- ◆ Prior to the IDF operation, per capita water consumption was 80 litres/person/day, below acceptable international standards (minimum guidelines 150 l/person/day). During Operation Cast Lead, 11 water wells were either partially damaged or totally destroyed, 4 water reservoirs were damaged, 20,000 meters of pipes, 4 sewage network and pumping stations and one of Gaza's two main sewage treatment plants was damaged.
- ◆ 57 km of asphalted roads destroyed, resulting in \$78 million of physical damage.



Bombed buildings

Casualties:

Israel:

- ♦ 13 killed - 3 civilians and 10 soldiers were killed.⁷
- ♦ 182 injured.⁸

Gaza:

Source	Killed		
	Total	Combatants	Civilians
Gaza Ministry of Health	1440	N/A	431 children and 114 women, civilian males unknown
Palestinian Centre for Human Rights	1434	236 (not including 255 police officers)	926 (including 313 children, 116 women and 255 police officers) 671 not including police
Israeli Defence Forces	1166	709 (activists in Hamas and other organisations including police)	295 (89 children and 29 women) ⁹

- ♦ Injured (Gaza Ministry of Health) - total of 5303 including 1606 children and 828 women.

⁷ http://www.zionism-israel.com/dic/Cast_Lead.htm

⁸ Israeli Ministry of Defence, 29 January 2009.

⁹ IDF estimates that 2/3 of the remaining 320 people were involved in terror activity

In its report: Israel and Palestine an Irish Congress of Trade Unions delegation visited the Middle East in November 2007.

In its Overall Conclusions it describes the impact of the settlements and of the Separation Wall.

The Settlements

The settlements - which violate international law - and the Israeli checkpoints are all pervasive. Everywhere we went in the West Bank we observed settlements, some of them massive, most often located on hilltops, overlooking and monitoring the Palestinians below.

The settler accommodation invariably comprised bright, modern houses and apartments and is in stark contrast to the impoverished shanty town appearance of the Palestinian homes below.

The settlers themselves are heavily armed and are protected throughout the West Bank by a strong Israeli military presence. Indeed, mobility within the West Bank between Palestinian villages, towns and cities is severely curtailed and under the control of Israeli forces: for example, entering and leaving Hebron or Nablus.

The Israeli army, as well as armed Israeli civilians, operate barriers and controlled crossings, many of which resemble the heavily fortified border checkpoints which were evident during the conflict in Northern Ireland.

Also very noticeable is the fragmented and divided nature of the West Bank itself, which is due to the proliferation of 'settler-only' roads controlled entirely by the IDF. Many are newly constructed, of high quality and frequently run in parallel to existing roads used by Palestinians. These roads provide direct access for settlers to urban areas which Palestinians are prohibited from entering (e.g. Jerusalem), or which Palestinians can only enter after long detours - often taking several hours - and after processing at Israeli checkpoints.

There is little doubt that this two-tier infrastructure both hampers and impedes any form of sustainable Palestinian development and prevents the emergence of a viable, contiguous, independent Palestinian state.

The Separation Wall

The delegation saw multiple examples of the devastating impact the construction of this massive 9 metre high concrete wall is having (Irish company Cement Roadstone Holdings (CRH) owns a 25 percent share in Mashav, Israel's only cement company, which supplies construction materials for the wall).

It dominates huge swathes of the Palestinian landscape, destroying agricultural land, cutting farmers off from their livelihoods and causing the destruction of tens of thousands of olive trees.

It was genuinely shocking to see the impact of the wall in urban areas, where it sunders entire communities and neighbourhoods, and imposes severe restrictions on access to essential services and employment. The delegation heard, but was neither impressed nor convinced by the argument that the wall is essential to the security of Israel.

It was noted that the wall does not follow the route of the 1967 Green Line border. It has instead snaked into Palestinian territory and seized up to 12 percent of Palestinian land, including significant water resources.

The delegation believes, therefore, that the construction of the wall amounts to a land (and water) grab, while simultaneously creating a new border in advance of any possible final settlement.

In July 2004 the International Court of Justice, in The Hague, declared the construction of the wall to be illegal, ordered that it be dismantled, and ruled that Israel should pay reparation to the Palestinians affected by its construction. The ruling also found that the wall, in conjunction with other Israeli measures, "severely impeded the exercise by the Palestinian people of its right to self-determination."