

Portland Peaceful Response Coalition

(503) 344-5078

PO Box 5112
Portland, OR 97208-5112

For Immediate Release

Event: Local Peace Groups Condemn Israeli Attacks in Gaza Date: Saturday, December 27, 2008 Time: For Immediate Release SEE BELOW FOR ADDITIONAL CONTACTS	Contacts: Portland Peaceful Response Coalition (503) 888-7455 William Seaman (503) 344-5078 voicemail pprc@riseup.net www.pprc-news.org
--	---

Local Peace Groups Condemn Israeli Attacks in Gaza

The *Portland Peaceful Response Coalition* and *Americans United for Palestinian Human Rights* unequivocally condemn Israel's criminally ruthless attacks on Gaza, attacks that have killed over two hundred Palestinians, including many civilians, and people whose only crime was to have been a part of what little civil service still exists in Gaza," said William Seaman, a volunteer with PPRC and a member of *American Jews for a Just Peace*. "It is clear that the overwhelming majority of the scores of victims of this US-financed and US-supported assault had nothing to do with the Qassam rocket and mortar fire coming out of Gaza, and it is equally clear that this latest massacre of Palestinians is grossly disproportionate, and on these two counts alone the assault constitutes a serious war crime."

Seaman also emphasized that the rocket fire from Gaza that followed the Israeli attacks demonstrates further that the Israeli attack was ineffective and did not strike the Palestinian militants who have been attacking Israeli civilian towns and cities in the Western Negev and just north of Gaza along the Mediterranean coast. "The rocket fire from Gaza, just like any attack on civilians, on non-combatants, is strictly prohibited under international law and constitutes war crimes," said Seaman. "But we completely reject the claim that these rocket attacks justify the wholesale slaughter that Israel has just carried out in Gaza."

According to the Israeli human rights organization, *B'Tselem* (The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories), "from 2004 to the end of 2007, eleven Israelis, four of them minors, were killed by Qassam rockets fired by Palestinians. Another Israeli civilian and one foreign national were killed by Qassam rockets that struck [Israeli] settlements in the Gaza Strip." UN figures, cited by B'Tselem, put the number of rockets fired from Gaza in 2006 at 1,786, and in 2007 at

1,331, with almost all of these rockets resulting in no injuries or deaths. The ongoing rocket fire from Gaza nonetheless terrorizes the Israeli civilian population along the Gaza border regions. Regardless of the effectiveness of these weapons, the targeting of civilians is strictly illegal and immoral.

"The root cause of this ongoing conflict is the ongoing, illegal, US-backed Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza," said Seaman. "In Gaza this occupation takes the form of a blockade that is strangling the entire civilian population, a siege that has brought widespread malnutrition to Gaza's children, crippled the healthcare system, and has utterly dismantled the economy." Seaman said that unless there is a comprehensive resolution to this decades-old conflict, a resolution that recognizes fully the human rights of the Palestinian people, the resistance by Palestinians will continue. "That resistance has taken many forms in these last few decades, some peaceful, and some violent," said Seaman, "and unless we recognize the legitimate demands of the Palestinian people, especially those of us who are citizens of the country which most aggressively supports Israel's crimes, and unless we work for a just peace, we will continue to share responsibility for the victims on both sides of this conflict."

The Israeli attack was carried out in part with F16 fighter jets and missiles provided by the United States. "Israel's latest massacre in Gaza could not have been carried out without the military and political support of our country," said Seaman. "This means simply that we have a direct and central responsibility to take action by protesting this attack and demanding an immediate cease-fire." PPRC and AUPHR are asking Oregonians to contact the White House to protest the attack and to demand an immediate cease-fire. The White House can be contacted at 202-456-1111 or by e-mailing at comments@whitehouse.gov. The State Department should also be contacted with the same message at 202-647-6575. In addition, PPRC and AUPHR urge Oregonians to contact our representatives in Congress. Contacts for the Oregon delegation can be found at www.pprc-news.org ; additional action links are available at the *US Campaign to End the Occupation* website at www.endtheoccupation.org.

- END -