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**Subject:** "Can Gaza Ever Be Pacified" Fmr. U.S. Amb Marc Ginsberg in the HuffPost  
**Attach:** Can Gaza Ever Be Pacified - Marc Ginsberg.pdf

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Please find attached a PDF copy of Fmr. Amb. Ginsberg's article in today's Huffington Post on how to change the Gaza situation written in his capacity as CEO of Peaceworks LLC and CEO of the OneVoice Movement Foundation working in both Israel and Palestine.

See [www.onevoicemovement.org](http://www.onevoicemovement.org)

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## Can Gaza Ever Be Pacified?

Posted: 08/07/2014 3:19 pm

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The Gaza Strip will never fit neatly into a future Palestinian state jigsaw puzzle. Even in a utopian final two-state settlement it will always be separated from the West Bank across 30 Israeli desert miles. The best minds have tried to figure this one out... an elevated highway linking Gaza and the West Bank, a highway tunnel gouged under Israel, even a light rail system. Yet Gaza's ill-fated geography is what it is no matter what Hamas may seek (and will always fail) to change.

The simplistic narratives spinning around the war about Gaza only make things worse for its victimized citizenry. For Israelis and for those truly interested in a positive future for Gaza, it is essential to understand that Hamas and the Palestinians who live there are not one and the same.

The Islamic extremist terrorist organization has ruled over the Strip's 1.7 million inhabitants since 2007. By any objective measure it is not a rule based on the will of the people. Hamas' own leaders know that, which is why they finally agreed to enter into a unity government after four futile negotiation rounds with the Palestinian Authority over the previous three years.

Gazans have years of bitter experience with their jailers. They know they are merely sheep in Hamas' sinister public relations apparatus. While Gaza's population endured a month of horrific warfare to benefit Hamas's global media campaign, Hamas' leaders conducted the war safely from their underground terror tunnel network -- off limits to Palestinians desperately seeking shelter from Israeli bombs.

Why weren't the people ruled by Hamas accorded refuge in these tunnels from the war above that could have sheltered tens of thousands of them? Pure and simple... Hamas wanted them to suffer for the whole world to stand witness against Israel.

Hamas -- a subgroup of the extremist Muslim Brotherhood, rules by fear, terror, extortion and torture. It is an alien jihadist theology thrust onto Palestinians, surviving off a victimized refugee population who still hope they will return one day to their homes in present day Israel. Hamas plays off of that unobtainable goal.

And while there certainly is a dangerous percentage of Gaza's citizenry who blindly obey and follow Hamas either as enlistees or who are forced to join -- the Al-Qassam Brigades -- Hamas' terrorist wing, the vast majority of Gazans were prepared to boot Hamas out of control of the Strip. Had the planned Palestinian election been held as originally conceived for next December, a decaying Hamas would have likely lost its "mandate" in any internationally supervised election to the very Palestinian Authority it had stolen control from in the first place.

Indeed, Hamas' unpopular and severe seven-year rule over Gaza has been a disaster. Just ask the Palestinians who live there. Coupled with the blockade and Hamas' stealing goods and building materials from its needy population to construct its underground terror tunnels and missile launchers, Gaza's already terrible infrastructure went from worse to worst, and its civilians -- already living in an open air prison -- were reaching the breaking point.

And Israel's Operation Protective Edge has only compounded the misery. Damage to Gaza's infrastructure is more severe than any previous war. According to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) 465,000 people (25 percent of the population) have been displaced; nearly 60,000 have lost their homes. The one power station supplying power and water was severely damaged. Whole neighborhoods were destroyed.

The people of Gaza deserve more than a break. They deserve a wholesale rehabilitation of their lives. Only then, will the Gordian knot of hatred, which Hamas feeds off of, begin to finally unravel. And if Israel is to achieve its own goal of "rehabilitation for demilitarization" it will have to rethink its shopworn Gaza strategy.

### Where to begin?

After four weeks of fighting, Israel now realizes it cannot militarily defang Hamas without a full-blown invasion and reoccupation of Gaza -- appealing to Israel's hard right, but not to the majority of Israelis. Israel must confront the fact that the status quo no longer works.

So to neutralize Hamas, and break the back of Gazans' Hamas-induced "Stockholm Syndrome" Israel will need to reverse course and take positive, transparent steps to help re-empower the moderate Palestinian Authority and its president Mahmoud Abbas. But President Abbas and the Palestinian Authority, already badly mauled politically by the war, has no intention, as Tom Friedman wrote in the *NY Times* on August 3, to become Israel's policeman in the West Bank and in Gaza for free.

#### What are those steps?

1. Nothing that Israel may do could help Abbas more than declaring an immediate cessation of all settlement expansion on the West Bank. An unlimited settlement freeze would not only demonstrate to the Palestinians that Israel is prepared to deal with a new reality, but it could also set the stage for unfreezing the moribund negotiations that collapsed in April and help begin rehabilitating Israel's tarnished international image. AND, Israel should release to the PA funds that it has withheld to enable the PA to function and to pay the salaries of Gaza civil servants many of whom owe their allegiance to the PA and not to Hamas.

2. Restoring Abbas' credibility among his own population also requires Israel to begin lifting the ineffectual, counter-productive blockade of Gaza and to deal with Abbas in a dignified and positive manner. Any relief from the blockade should be orchestrated to inure to Abbas' benefit and be seen by Palestinians as such. Israel and Egypt have a window of opportunity with the support of other moderate Arab states to establish an effective international monitoring system to supervise the relaxation of the blockade and the internal monitoring of relief and reconstruction supplies so they do not fall into Hamas' sticky fingers again. An "international" monitoring device would also help demilitarize Hamas by keeping a laser-beam like focus on Gaza's imports.

3. Long-term rehabilitation of Gaza will require Hamas to effectively step aside now from administering Gaza. The new PA technocratic government that President Abbas established on June 2 is a reasonable and acceptable conduit to reestablish the PA's role in Gaza as it was supposed to and agreed upon by Hamas. Israel should drop its vociferous objections to its creation and mandate immediately.

4. Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan and Israel all share a common goal: ridding Gaza of Hamas, if not neutralizing Hamas once and for all. Quashing the Muslim Brotherhood is their defining fault-line. Moreover, they are the key sponsors of the Arab Peace Initiative that Netanyahu has all too conveniently dismissed out of hand for no good reason at all. Israel's leaders have been largely tone-deaf to the new realignment of interests. Netanyahu would be wise to appoint former President Shimon Peres as Israel's Special Envoy for Gaza's reconstruction. Peres enjoys credibility and respectability across the region and is the best diplomat Israel has to work with Egypt, Abbas and other regional players. If Israel were to play its card right, a new Gaza Accord could re-energize regional commitment to the API.

5. PA President Abbas also has to face new realities that inure to his benefit. He has see-sawed on the fulcrum of ambiguity far too long. For a man who has no immediate successor waiting in the wings, the Gaza war also has thrust him into back into the spotlight -- but for how long given his current unpopularity? Abbas is walking a devilish tightrope. His West Bank electorate has little to show for his years urging moderation and non-violence against an occupation that has endured and deepened by the day. Israelis have been told by their prime minister that Abbas is not a partner. Netanyahu is wrong about President Abbas and the new Gaza reality compels Netanyahu to reverse course on Abbas. Abbas has many allies in Israel. But he now needs to explain to deepen his outreach to Israelis directly to explain to them in their post-Gaza frustrations that only a negotiated two state solution will bring them the security they crave. That will require Abbas to address Israel's fears over security, the right of return, and Jerusalem - issues he has forthrightly spoken about, but which have inadequately resonated with vast swaths of Israelis.

In the final analysis demilitarizing Hamas and demobilizing the dreaded al-Qassam brigades will not be achieved through force of arms. Operation Protective Edge, like the other four Israeli military operations before it, prove Hamas's stubborn military resiliency. Israeli and the Palestinian Authority, as well as their Arab allies, are going to have to rethink their approach to so weaken Hamas that it implodes on its own extremism.

What I outlined above is just some of the castor oil that has to be spooned down to cure the patient.

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