

# **When Will There be Peace in Gaza?**

## *A Primer to the Israel-Hamas War*

The brutal atrocities on October 7 awakened many to the depravity of Hamas, the ruthless terrorist organization controlling Gaza. More than 1,400 Israelis were savagely murdered, babies were burned and decapitated, women were raped, and 220 Israelis and others were taken hostage. This was the most brutal attack on Jews since the Holocaust. Many are unfamiliar with the problems in Gaza, and this is intended to provide simple answers to a very complex issue.

**What is Hamas?** Hamas is a terrorist organization governing Gaza with the stated goal of destroying Israel and murdering all the Jews who live there. Hamas is not remotely interested in a two-state solution or a peaceful coexistence with Jews.

**What does Hamas want from Israel?** Hamas wants to take the land “from the river to the sea.” For those unfamiliar with this phrase, it means Hamas seeks all the land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea (i.e., all of Israel). This is not a compromise position. Unfortunately, over the past few weeks, protestors have continually repeated this threat from Hamas across the United States – and even in downtown Allentown and on college campuses – some knowingly and others unknowingly, calling for an entire country and its people to be wiped off the earth.

**What is the Ministry of Health of Gaza?** The Ministry of Health of Gaza is operated by Hamas. Several news sources report data from the Ministry of Health of Gaza without first confirming the facts, which leads to stories that are inherently unreliable and many times patently false. It is no different than relying on ISIS, Al-Qaeda, or other terrorist organizations to be objective and factual when sharing data.

**Has Israel offered land in exchange for peace?** Yes, many times. Every peace plan offered has been rejected. The Palestinian Authority (originally known as the Palestine Liberation Organization or “PLO”) and neighboring Arab countries rejected: (1) the United Nations partition plan in 1947; (2) the UNGAR 194 land plan proposal in 1949; (3) the UNSCR 242 proposal in 1967; (4) the Begin/Sadat Peace Proposal in 1978; (5) the Rabin/Hussein peace proposal in 1994; (6) the Barak/Clinton peace proposal in 2000; (7) the Olmert/Bush peace proposal in 2008; (8) the Kerry “contour for peace” plan in 2014; and (9) the most recent invitation from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and President Trump to join the Abraham Accords in 2019. Each of these plans would have created a state for the Palestinian people.

**Does Israel “occupy” Gaza?** No, Israel does not occupy Gaza. In 2005, then Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon required the unilateral evacuation of all Israelis from the Gaza Strip in pursuit of peace. Following the Israeli withdrawal, the Palestinians in Gaza have ruled themselves and controlled their own destiny in Gaza. Regrettably, since it was elected into power, Hamas began diverting humanitarian aid to support its military operations and reign of terror, including the October 7 massacre. Even now, while hospitals in Gaza are running out of fuel, Hamas is holding fuel for its rockets and terrorist activities.

**What is the “Pay for Slay” Program?** The Palestinian Authority, which governs the West Bank, and Hamas pay families of terrorists who murder innocent Israelis. Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and members of his government defend these payments, which include a “success” bonus and a monthly stipend in perpetuity. In 2018, Congress passed the Taylor Force Act, which reduces economic aid to the Palestinian Authority until it ends this policy.

**What is the role of the United Nations?** The UN, through its refugee agency, has allowed humanitarian aid to be diverted to Hamas and other terrorist organizations. The UN funds educational programs in Gaza that include antisemitic training, pushing the parties further from peace. Hamas leaders – many of whom live with their families in other Arab countries – have also siphoned away significant international aid for their own wealth, while the people in Gaza have struggled.

**Who funds Hamas?** The largest sponsor of Hamas is Iran. Iran and Hamas are longtime allies, with a shared goal of destroying the State of Israel and the United States.

**How does the Israel Defense Force (IDF) respond?** The IDF is more cautious about mitigating civilian casualties than any other military in modern times. The IDF uses efforts where possible to warn civilians before bombing in populated areas. Hamas, unfortunately, hides weapons and terrorist command centers in schools and hospitals, using human civilian shields to protect its terrorist activities, takes civilians as hostages, rapes women, beheads children and launches thousands of rockets on civilian populations in Israel.

**So, when will there be peace in Gaza?** Despite the current climate, Israeli leaders yearn for a time when Palestinians and Israelis can live adjacent as peaceful neighbors. As soon as Israel has a true partner for peace, rather than Palestinian leaders seeking its destruction, peace can be pursued, and people living in Gaza, the West Bank, and Israel can refocus on a better, safer future.