

WEBSITE REPORT / anniversary gaza war

“The Blockade is Terrorism!”

On the first day of the Gaza War, one year ago, activists of Gush Shalom and other peace organizations demonstrated against it. Today (2.1.10), many of them took part in a large demonstration, whose main demand was to lift the siege of Gaza.

Some 3000 demonstrators gathered in Tel-Aviv’s Rabin Square and marched to Museum Square, where a protest rally was held. The demonstrators, activists of a wide range of peace organizations and other citizens, chanted in unison (in Hebrew) “Gaza, do not despair / We shall put and end to the occupation!”, “Israel, we are ashamed – the blockade is inhuman!” and more.

The demonstration was accompanied by large police forces, including a helicopter which from time to time lit up the area with a huge projector. However, there were no incidents.

Apart from the Gush Shalom posters “The Blockade is Terrorism”, there were the posters of the “Women’s Coalition” which said “Women cross borders – Freedom and Justice for Gaza”. One demonstrator brought a personal poster: “Mubarak is a War Criminal” – as a protest against the steel wall now being built by the Egyptians along the Rafah border. Many carried the Gush Shalom flag, which combines the flags of Israel and Palestine. A band of drummers, some of them women, enlivened the march.

Nurit Peled-Elchanan, a bereaved mother (and the

daughter of the late general and peace activist Matti Peled), said at the rally: “I wonder about the astonishment voiced by the media at the violence in the schools, the clubs and the street. Our children are just absorbing the message conveyed by parents, elder brothers, the media and the war criminals in uniform who come to the schools and make speeches about the heroism of the army in Gaza.”

Uri Avnery called upon President Obama, the European Union and the peoples of the world: “Help us to end the cancerous occupation. For peace and reconciliation between the free State of Israel and the free State of Palestine!” (Full text of the speech follows below)

Eilat Maoz of the Women’s Coalition said: “All around us in this city we see war criminals who have committed these acts in Gaza. They live their lives in peace, without fear of investigation and punishment.”

Special applause greeted Nasser Rawi, the father of one of the families that were evicted from their homes in Jerusalem’s Sheik Jarrach quarter, who called upon the government in pure Hebrew “to stop the Judaization of Jerusalem and stop sending us the settler who beat people up and drive them out of their homes.”

Other speakers were MK Hanin Zuabi (Balad): “Denial of flour and sugar is a method of blackmail, but the Palestinian people is not broken”; Yael Ben-Yaphet (The Mizrachi Rainbow): “Sderot was the excuse for war, but who now remembers the poor in Sderot?”; Abir Kopti (Hadash): “I congratulate the British government for

marking products of settlements – this is part of what gives hope.”

The high point of the evening was the band of “Raging Grannies”, five elderly women who – on the model of the Canadian original – sang “modified” children’s songs. They concluded the evening with the slightly modified text of a popular Hebrew children’s song: “Mother said to Ahmed / My son is hero / My son never cries / like a little stupid boy. // He had a house in Gaza / And a father, a mother and a brother / Gaza was bombed / And the house is not there anymore. // I do never cry / I am not a cry-baby / But why, mother, why / Do the tears come by themselves?”

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Uri Avnery’s speech at the protest rally

First anniversary of Gaza

Tel Aviv, Museum Square, 2.1.2010.

“Cast Lead”

Was a terrible and cruel war.

It was also

A stupid and superfluous war.

If our government

Had agreed to talk with Hamas

After they won the elections –

**There would have been no Qassams,
Gilad Shalit would have been home
Long ago,
Sderot and Jebaliya
Would be living in peace.
The aim of the war
Was to turn the life
Of the Gaza population
Into hell –
So they would turn against Hamas.
Instead, the whole world
Is turning against us.
We must investigate
What has happened –
Not because of Goldstone,
But for our own sake,
For the sake of Israel'
For the values we believe in.
This terrible war**

Has not ended. It is going on.

For

The blockade is war.

The blockade is terrorism.

The blockade is a crime.

From here the demand goes forth:

Lift the siege!

End the collective punishment

On the Gaza population!

End the captivity

Of Gilad Shalit

And Marwan Barghouti!

We have come here to declare:

Though others may give up.

We shall not despair!

We shall not tire!

We shall not capitulate!

We will continue the fight

For peace and reconciliation

For another Israel,

A country that is good to live in.

Israel is not only They,

Not the Netanyahu, the Libermans,

The settlers.

Israel is also Us,

Therefore, we too are responsible for its actions,

Therefore it is our duty to change them.

This duty we shall not shirk.

We call upon President Obama,

Upon the European Union,

Upon the peoples of the world:

Help us

To end the cancerous occupation.

For peace and reconciliation

Between the free State of Israel

And the free State of Palestine!