

By all means, free Gaza – from Hamas
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For years, faux human rights activists have run campaigns based on the theme of “Free Gaza” – marketing the slogan that Israel’s blockade is responsible for the suffering of millions of Palestinians. They have organized highly publicized “humanitarian aid” flotillas (carrying almost no aid); held violent protests at universities (York University is on the hit list again), and justified boycotts, divestment and sanctions around the false images of “collective punishment” and Palestinian victimization.

In the latest “Free Gaza” violence, these individuals and groups share major responsibility in producing and marketing this tragedy. With this political backing, the Hamas leadership was confident (overly confident, it turned out) that it could escalate attacks on Israelis and count on international campaigns to quickly stop the counterattack. This strategy worked for them in the previous round (December 2008 to January 2009), as it did for Hezbollah in 2006. With a stream of “flotillas” and accompanying publicity, including fringe Canadian groups, Hamas thought it was safe.

One of the most active groups involved in the “Free Gaza” industry is an Israel-based NGO known as Gisha, which subtiles itself the “Legal Center for Freedom of Movement.” Gisha has waged a media campaign to promote what it portrays as Israel’s policy of starving the population of Gaza and preventing Gazans from travelling and importing goods unencumbered. Gisha and its many allies have erased all traces of Hamas, including its brutality against its own people and its acquisition of thousands of rockets, which Hamas has hidden in schools, mosques and homes.

Anyone who is actually concerned about the welfare of the people of Gaza and does not belong to the church of “it’s all Israel’s fault” would have focused the generous resources provided by foreign donors (including the New Israel Fund and anonymous European government officials) on liberating Gaza’s citizens and Israelis from Hamas.

But instead, they’ve constructed a fictitious Gaza based on the total disconnect (overlooked by journalists committed to the Palestinian victimization promoted by NGOs) between the image of deprivation and the huge sums spent on rockets and missiles to attack Israel. According to the IDF, in the past decade, more than 13,000 rockets and mortars – an average of three per day – have been launched against Israel. Some 800 were fired in just five days beginning Nov. 14.

The missile industry – the biggest in Gaza – consumes huge resources and tens of millions of dollars, pounds, euros and dinars. How many school lunches, prenatal and infant care medical checks and other social welfare measures could this money have been used to buy, if only the Hamas overlords of Gaza were so inclined?

Similarly, according to media reports, Gaza has “15,000 Qassam fighters who are responsible for most of the rocket blitzes.” While some societies encourage their best and brightest to go to universities, become scientists, build businesses and create jobs, in Gaza, the best jobs are making and shooting rockets to kill Israeli civilians.

All of this is erased in the distorted universe of the NGO human rights network and their funder-enablers, such as the New Israeli Fund (NIF) and hidden European government officials. In their

absurd, patronizing and morally inverted version of reality, all responsibility and blame lies with Israel.

Another radical fringe group with a major bank account is “Breaking the Silence” (BTS), which has received \$523,342 from the NIF from 2006 through 2011, with additional funds from Europe. BTS plays a central role in the dissemination of false “war crimes” accusations against Israel, including in the notorious Goldstone report of 2009.

Now, BTS is seeking to repeat this process by drawing comparisons between the fictitious “crimes” of four years ago, and the current Israeli operation in Gaza. As in the case of Gisha and many others, there is no mention of Palestinian war crimes (such as every rocket attack) and the intimidation through which Hamas controls Gaza. On these issues, the silence is deafening.

There are many more examples selling more or less the same defective product. In contrast, a real and moral “Free Gaza” movement would close the missile industry and help Israelis and Palestinians in liberating themselves from the tyranny of Hamas.