

# free Gaza!

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Saturday 10/01/08

Wednesday was the first day when there was a truce from 1pm til 4pm. In that time, the Red Cross successfully negotiated for themselves and Red Crescent medics to enter Zaytoun, one of the places where calls for help have not been allowed to be responded to. My medic friends described walking for about 4 km, using donkey carts to bring out the few dead and injured they could; they only had time to reach four houses. At times they were shot at by the army despite the advance arrangements.

The house of the Samoudi family was one of the houses they reached. A medic told me that two days before, there had been a call from this house to the Red Crescent, saying that 25 women and children were there, with about 5 shaheed after shelling attacks. But on Wednesday when the house was reached, almost all were dead, survivors included one 11 year old boy with a leg injury. What shocked the medic I spoke to was that the majority appeared to have been killed by close range shooting - it seemed an execution had taken place. I have not been able to find out further clear details on this, and in fact there are various confusing versions of this story, speaking of seven families and 100 people in fact being in multiple houses together that were shelled. Ramattan journalists are going to interview a survivor in the hospital this afternoon so it may become clearer.

At other locations children without food or water were found besides dead parents. Some of the injured people brought out are above us here in the Al Quds hospital. I met baby Nour,



Young boy evacuated from Zaytoun, eye and arm injuries

tucked in a bed with her mother, and another woman with them whose child had been killed.

Following this I obtained permission to go on Thursday's Red Cross/Red Crescent evacuation back to Zaytoun again during the hours of ceasefire. My impression was they were glad of a second woman and another international. The team was made up of three Red Cross folks and about ten Red Crescent medics. A similar RC evacuation team in another location during ceasefire was fired upon, with one Red Cross worker injured. I am going again today, Friday with the team from Al Quds. I will try to write a description of this process shortly.

We understand also that UN food deliveries were fired upon and one or two UN people were killed. My access to the net is so little that you will be able to find out more accurate reports on these sort of events (ie involving international agencies) with your own searching.

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Friday 2/01/08

Last night for the first time I went back to my flat with the aim of getting a night's sleep, having not had more than 2 hours in a row in any 24 since this whole thing started. I wish I hadn't! Being away from Palestinian or international friends was hard, but being woken 2 hours into my longed for sleep by the sound of shooting outside the house had me in complete confusion, since it wasn't coming from a hovering Apache.

Since on the evacuation today I finally saw Israeli tanks and soldiers and realised how close their lines are, my sleepy mind immediately decided they'd somehow reached the port area. The drone planes were also going crazy, normally they mainly sound sinister but monotonous, now they sounded like a bunch of very mad hornets, swooping about manically.

I started to think about what to grab for an escape back to my friends, but a little while later I got onto V and he explained that the drone planes have started shooting, something at least us foreigners had no idea they could do. Rockets, yes, shooting, no. Last night apparently for the first time they began shooting at anyone on the street. I shelved my escape plans, but then the hornets started swooping nearing to me and the rockets were rocking the building. So I jumped up, packed a bag for if the building fell apart, got dressed, moved my mattress the furthest I could from outside walls, and then miraculously managed to go back to sleep.

When I visited the Kabariti family yesterday, M told me that the girls are asking him how much it hurts to get injured, and what happens if they die. They are seeing so many pictures of children like themselves wrapped in body bags. He has explained that God sends you into unconsciousness if you are hurt, so you don't feel the pain

From Sharon Lock, Medic,  
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## Take some kittens

"Take some kittens, some tender little moggies in a box", said Jamal, a surgeon at the Al Shifa, Gaza's main hospital, while a nurse actually placed a couple of blood-stained cardboard boxes in front of us. "Seal up the box, then jump on it with all your weight and might, until you feel their little bones crunching, and you hear the last muffled little mew."

I stared at the boxes in astonishment, and the doctor continued: "Try to imagine what would happen after such images were circulated. The righteous outrage of public opinion, the complaints of the animal rights organisations..." The doctors went on in this vein, and I was unable to take my eyes off those boxes, sitting at our feet. "Israel trapped hundreds of civilians inside a school as if in a box, including many children, and then crushed them with all the might of its bombs. What were the world's reactions? Almost nothing. We would have been better off as animals rather than Palestinians, we would have been more protected."

At this point the doctor leans towards one of the boxes, and takes its lid off in front of me. Inside it are the amputated limbs, legs and arms, some from the knee down, others with the entire femur attached, amputated from the injured at

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the Al Fakhura United Nations school in Jabalia, which resulted in more than fifty casualties. Pretending to be taking an urgent call, I took my leave of Jamal, actually rushing to the bathroom to bend over and throw up.

A little earlier I'd been involved in a conversation with Dr. Abdel, an ophthalmologist, regarding the rumours that the Israeli Army had been showering us with non-conventional weapons, forbidden by the Geneva Convention, such as cluster bombs and white phosphorous. The very same that the Tsahal Army used in the last Lebanese war, as well as the US air force in Falluja, still violating international norms. In front of Al Auda hospital we witnessed and filmed white phosphorous bombs being used about five hundred metres from where we were, too far to be absolutely certain there were any civilians underneath the Israeli Apaches, but so terribly close to us all the same.

The Geneva Treaty of 1980 forbids white phosphorous being used directly as a war weapon in civilian areas, allowing it only as a smoke screen or for lighting. There's no doubt that using this weapon in Gaza, a strip of land concentrating the highest population rate in the world, is a crime all on its own. Doctor Abdel told me that at Al Shifa hospital they don't have the medical and military competence to say for sure whether the wounds they examined on certain corpses were indeed provoked by white phosphorous bullets.

But on his word, in twenty years on the job he had never seen casualties like those now

being carried into the ward. He told me about the traumas to the skull, with the fractures to the vomer bone, the jaw, the cheekbones, tear duct, nasal and palatine bones showed signs of the collision of an immense force against the victim's face. What he finds inexplicable is the total lack of eyeballs, which ought to leave a trace somewhere within the skull even in case of such a violent impact. Instead, we see Palestinian corpses coming into the hospitals without eyes at all, as if someone had removed them surgically before handing them over to the coroner.

Israel has let us know that we've been granted a daily 3-hour truce, from 1:00 to 4:00 PM. These statements from the Israeli military summit are considered by the people of Gaza as having the same reliability as the Hamas leaders' declarations that they've just provoked a massacre of enemy soldiers. Just to be clear on this point, the soldiers of Tel Aviv's worse enemy are the very same who fight under the Star of David. Yesterday a war ship off the coast of Gaza's port picked out a large group of alleged guerrilla fighters from the Palestinian Resistance, moving as a united front around Jabalia. They shot their cannons at them. But as it turned out, they were their own fellow soldiers, with the shooting resulting in three being killed and about twenty injured. No one here believes in the truces that Israel declares, and as it happens, today at 2:00 PM Rafah was under attack by the Israeli helicopters. There was also yet another massacre of children in Jabalia: three little sisters aged 2, 4 and 6 from the Abed Rabbu

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family were slaughtered. Just half an hour earlier in Jabalia, once again the Red Crescent hospital's ambulances were under attack. Eva and Alberto, my ISM colleagues were on board that ambulance and managed to film everything, passing those videos and photos on to all the major media.

Hassan was kneecapped, fresh from mourning the death of his friend Araf, a paramedic who was killed two days ago as he came in aid of the injured in Gaza City. They had stopped to pick up the body of a man languishing in agony in the middle of the road, when they were under fire by about ten shots from an Israeli sniper. One bullet hit Hassan in the knee and the ambulance was filled with holes. We're now at a death toll of 688, in addition to 3,070 injured, 158 dead children and countless missing. Only yesterday, we counted 83 dead, 80 of which were civilians. Thankfully, the death toll on the Israeli side is still only at 4.

Travelling towards Al Quds hospital, where I'll be working all night on the ambulances, as I raced along on board one of the very few fearless taxis left, zig-zagging to avoid the bombs, on the corner of one street I saw a group of dirty street urchins with tattered clothes, looking exactly like the "sciuscià" kids of the Italian afterwar period. They threw stones towards the sky with slingshots, at far away and unapproachable enemy who was toying with their lives. This is a crazy metaphor, which could serve as a snapshot of the absurdity of this time and place.

Stay human  
Vittorio Arrigoni

Vittorio Arrigoni  
- Homepage: <http://www.freegaza.org/>

**[www.freegaza.org](http://www.freegaza.org) - these people are aiming to send another boat of direct aid to Gaza today, Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> January**

**[http://www.palestinercs.org/Donate\\_online.aspx](http://www.palestinercs.org/Donate_online.aspx) - this is the International Red Crescent, despite being fired on and killed by Israeli army these folks are evacuating dead and injured Palestinians**