

## PRESENTATION FOR CAPITAL RALLY, 7/19/14

I am Ralph McCoy, a member of the NC Coalition for Peace with Justice, AIME (the Abrahamic Initiative on the Middle East) and Jewish Voice for Peace.

Let me take you back in time, not too far, less than two years. On November 10, 2012 my wife and I were in Gaza with a small Peace Delegation led by Cindy and Craig Corrie, parents of Rachel Corrie. On that evening members of our group heard an unfamiliar sound outside our hotel. Our hosts told us it was the sound of a drone and apologized for what we might experience. Later in the evening our hotel was terribly shaken by multiple blasts, apparent bombs or missile fire. Four of the casualties that night were teen age Palestinian boys playing soccer in a stadium in East Gaza City. The previous day we met with the mother and father of Ahmad Abu Dakka, a 13 year old Palestinian boy. The day before he was kicking his soccer ball with two friends in the street in front of his home. He was shot in the abdomen by a bullet for an Israeli apache helicopter making an incursion into the area. He fell dead as he ran toward his front door.

Thus began Operation Pillar of Cloud during which over 1350 bombs and missiles rained down on this tiny strip of land, one of the most densely populated regions in the World. Gaza was then and is now a literal prison surrounded by concrete wall, sniper towers, and electrified fence with surveillance. There has been essentially no civilian going or coming from Gaza since six access points through the barrier of confinement had been closed in 2008. During the Gaza assault which began while we were there, 960 homes, 10 healthcare centers, 35 schools, 2 universities, 30 mosques and the UN food distribution center were damaged or destroyed. Drones were used in 5% of the air strikes but these resulted in 23% of the deaths. UN investigators said two thirds of the deaths in Gaza were civilian.

During our brief tour of Gaza we met farmers whose income had been reduced by 90% because they were no longer allowed to export produce to Israel or the West Bank and because people in Gaza had very limited income. Fishermen had seen their zone for fishing reduced unilaterally by Israel from 20 miles granted by the Oslo Accords, down to 12 miles, then to 6 miles and finally to 3 miles making sustenance fishing impossible. They ventured beyond the 3 mile limit at the risk of being shot. Contractors and construction workers had no work because the import of construction materials had been curtailed for six years. We met with the families of prisoners arrested for periods of up to eight years without formal charge or trial. We met with parents who children had died while they waited years for permits to leave Gaza for humanitarian medical care.

The assault which began while we were in Gaza was the third major assault since 2006. Today Gaza is enduring it fourth major military assault since 2006. How many of these do the imprisoned children of Gaza have to experience before Israeli and American humanity prevails.

An old man in Gaza held a placard that read: "You take my water, burn my olive trees, destroy my home, take my job, steal my land, kill my mother, imprison my father, bombard my country, starve and humiliate us all but I am to blame: I shot a rocket back."