

From the Commercial Appeal, the largest newspaper in Memphis, the largest city in Tennessee, Jan 3, 2008, after the Israeli bombing and before the Israeli invasion of Gaza

Letters to the editor.

Enemies can become allies

My husband and I are members of Temple Israel who visited the Israeli group New Profile when we were in Israel/Palestine with Interfaith Peace Builders. We visited both Israeli and Palestinian groups working nonviolently for peace. The New Profile group said militarism is in the minds of all Israeli people because, with very few exceptions, all Israelis, male and female, serve in the Israeli army at the formative age of 18. The Israeli army does what it pleases, not necessarily what the courts or its parliament tells it to. New Profile members write in e-mail messages of the unfairness this produces.

Most people don't know that Hamas spent 90 to 95 percent of its budget on humanitarian projects such as building schools and hospitals. Many people voted for Hamas on the basis that Fatah was riddled with corruption and diverted funds for the Palestinians to its own Swiss bank accounts. Once they won, all funds to Hamas were cut off, thus turning them to Iran and Hezbollah for funds.

Israel wanted Hamas to recognize the right of Israel to exist. If only the Israeli government had been willing to recognize the Palestinians' right to a country of their own, things would be very different today.

For years Israel has prevented the people of Gaza from fishing in the waters off their own coast. They have prevented them from importing or exporting anything. Among the results of this policy is that Gaza's had to feed flowers, grown for export, to their animals. They have not received what is necessary for clean water or sewage disposal. People have died waiting to go to Israeli hospitals because their own hospitals have no drugs or even light for operations. Funds cut off from Gaza have meant that their teachers and police were not paid.

Then Israel insisted that no rockets come from Gaza to Israel. Is there anywhere on Earth where police can prevent all crime? It is even harder if your police are bombed and killed, as they are now.

Jewish values include justice and good works. Unfortunately the world is being treated to a different view of Jews by Israel. Inevitably, this will vastly increase anti-Semitism throughout the world.

We hope Israel and the Palestinians work nonviolently for peace. We hope the United States will stop giving vast armaments to Israel that provide for more

war.

After World War II, the United States occupied Germany and Japan, our enemies. Five years later they were our staunchest allies, and have remained ever since. How did we do it? We found a win-win solution. We gave our former enemies credit in the United States to buy machine tools and factories. This provided Germany and Japan with improving economies and hope. It also provided our returning GIs with jobs and pulled us out of the end of the Great Depression.

We wish Israel would follow our example and convert its enemies into its allies. It can be done.

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Memphis