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Israel-Gaza Ceasefire Comes with Pledge from Obama to Seek More Defense Aid for Israel

By: Kevin Gosztola

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United States Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Egyptian Foreign Minister Mohamed Amr announced ceasefire between Israel and Hamas. There was no signed agreement. The ceasefire is essentially “quiet in exchange for quiet,” as one Israeli diplomatic source put it.

In the announcement, Clinton reiterated the US’s position that “all rocket attacks must end” and said the US would be working with Egypt in the coming days on the next steps in the process. She said improvement of conditions for the people of Gaza and providing security for the people of Israel would be sought in any long-term agreement and there was “no substitute for a just and lasting peace.”

Amr explained the ceasefire would go into effect at 9 pm Cairo Time. Egypt would “assume responsibility to the Palestinian cause and finding a just solution for it.” Egypt will also work for Palestinian unity and an end to division among Palestinian factions.

The blockade or siege of Gaza was not part the terms of the ceasefire. Hamas leaders had pushed for that to be included in the ceasefire. Both Egyptian and Hamas leaders had included that in the ceasefire proposal sent to Israel yesterday. Israel rejected that along with a demand that targeted

assassinations of people like Hamas leaders end. The bombing of Gaza re-intensified until less than twenty-four hours later there was this announced ceasefire.

As the *New York Times* reported, Clinton flew to Egypt yesterday to “consult with Egyptian officials in contact with Hamas” and, after this meeting, the demand for an end to the Israeli blockade of Gaza was entirely absent from the announcement and unmentioned as something that would be specifically addressed in the days ahead.

The [statement](#) from President Barack Obama’s administration that was given to the press indicated the administration would “use the opportunity offered by a ceasefire to intensify efforts to help Israel address its security needs, especially the issue of the smuggling of weapons and explosives into Gaza.” President Obama would also seek “additional funding for Iron Dome and other US-Israel missile defense programs.” According to *Haaretz*, this was part of conversations that led Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to [decide](#) to give a ceasefire “a chance” to possibly help “stabilize” the situation “before exerting more force.”

A Congressional Research Service (CRS) report released in March of this year detailed, “The Department of Defense, Missile Defense Agency’s FY2013 request for joint U.S.-Israeli co-development is \$99.8 million which is \$6 million below the President’s FY2012 request. However, according to one source, ‘Though the administration’s request for missile defense monies has dropped somewhat in recent years—from \$121.7m. in 2011 to \$106.1m. in 2012 to 2013’s \$99.8m.—during each of those cycles, Congress has consistently increased the final allocation.’” In July, Obama [approved](#) \$70 million more in aid for Iron Dome.

Essentially, the Obama administration is providing Israel with an incentive to restore nothing more than the status quo. The status quo is what is fueling the cycles of violence. The blockade, arbitrary detention and the policies of apartheid, including issues over water and food distribution, freedom of movement, etc, should be understood as part of what creates an environment where Palestinians are moved to respond to Israel with violence.

“Each firing of an interceptor missile costs the Israeli government tens of thousands of dollars, according to the defense ministry,” *Voice of America* [reported](#).

Those interceptor missiles being used to prevent Israel from suffering the consequences of its policies toward Palestinians are being funded with US taxpayer dollars. Israel’s failure or refusal to end these policies ensures there will be more interceptor missiles and more maintenance necessary for the Iron Dome. That means the US has to invest tens of millions more dollars. That may be acceptable to Israel because it can weather hundreds if not thousands of projectile attacks and get used to it, but it should not be acceptable to Americans.

Funding for Iron Dome should not be seen as part of the solution to the conflict in the short-term or long-term because it gives Israel a mechanism for continuing the collective punishment and systemic abuse of the human rights of an entire population of people.

Hopefully, Egypt and Turkey can play a significant role in fostering a long-term agreement that addresses the blockade and other policies. There will be many stories of despair, pain and

suffering as they try to recover from the complete decimation of homes, infrastructure and numerous civilian buildings. Even though ceasefire has been announced, Israel [continued](#) to bomb Gaza right up until the time it was to go into effect.

Egypt, Turkey and other Arab countries will need to make up for the United States' complicity because right now the US is not concerned about their plight. Official statements are virtually indistinguishable from statements from Israeli officials. Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak even said this latest operation in Gaza would not have been possible without US support. The US wants what Israel wants and Israel does not want Gaza to become anything other than the open-air prison it is now because then they would not have control.