

# Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs

*1995 Nobel Peace Prize*

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## ***Statement on the situation in Gaza***

**by**

***Pugwash President Amb. Jayantha Dhanapala and Secretary General Prof. Paolo Cotta-Ramusino***

Our sympathies are with the people of Palestine and the people of Israel who once again are facing further devastating conflict. In particular, our hearts are heavy watching the continuing devastation of Gaza. We call upon all sides to immediately stop the bloodshed and terror. Killing civilians in large numbers is tragic and intolerable. Causing terror among civilian populations through relentless rocket attacks is also unacceptable. We note the UN Security Council has called for a ceasefire, and we urge the international community to act with due diligence to prevent further escalation and further killing.

Back at the beginning of this morass, three settler youth were shot and one Palestinian teen was burned alive. While rhetoric on all sides heated up, their relatives called for calm, and people crossed religious and ethnic lines to honor those killed too young. Sadly, the Israeli government used the moment to impose collective punishment against Hamas members and leaders throughout the West Bank. They also ordered the banks in the West Bank not to transfer the salaries to Hamas governmental employees in Gaza and threatened the banks with sanctions. Some say such moves tipped Hamas in Gaza over the edge.

We particularly regret that following in the wake of failed negotiations, recent events are designed to destroy Hamas - Fatah reconciliation, which deserves support. The vast majority of Palestinians still support a two-state solution. A one-state solution will be the outcome if the two-state solution fails - this is not good for Israel. As an urgent first step, Israel should define its borders and stop expanding settlements in illegally occupied territory. Conditions in Gaza must change. Keeping 1.5 million people in a virtual prison is unacceptable. Gaza should be open to people and goods. Building economic and political freedom in Gaza, lifting the siege of Gaza, and facilitating internal Palestinian dialogue are alternative ways to promote Israeli security that deserve much more attention among political leaders and in the media.

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