

Gaza and Israel agree to temporary ceasefire in conflict

by Rachel Salisbury

Editor-in-Chief

Seven weeks after Israel first launched Operation Protective Edge, Israel's military objective against Hamas, Israel and Palestine agreed to a ceasefire on Aug. 26. The terms of the Egyptian-backed agreement do not aim to conclude fighting, but rather serve to suspend violence until the two groups can arrive at a relatively sustainable compromise.

Israel's main goal—to demilitarize Gaza in order to end rocket fire—and Hamas' main goals—to end Israeli aggression, end the blockade of Gaza by Israel, and free Palestinian prisoners—have not yet been incorporated into a concrete treaty that will represent and satisfy both sides of the conflict, and hopefully make long term peace possible. The Aug. 26 agreement eases border restrictions between Gaza and Israel, allows humanitarian supplies and aid into Gaza, and extends fishing boundaries for Palestinians, doubling the previous three-mile limit to six miles.

Solutions to the main incongruities between the parties were not detailed in the ceasefire treaty. Hamas stipulated that an end to the conflict would be achieved in part by allowing Gaza to build an airport and a sea port; debating this issue will be put off for the next month.

This is one of a handful of ceasefires between the two parties since the recent tension began in June, after Hamas' political leader Khaled Meshal affirmed that Hamas was responsible for the kidnapping and murder of three Israeli teenagers. This was followed by the alleged revenge killing of a Palestinian teenager, for which six Jewish suspects were arrested. Hamas then fired rockets into Israel, accepting responsibility for an attack on Israel for the first time in twenty months. This aggression prompted the initiation of Israel Defense Forces' Operation Protective Edge on July 8.

Previous ceasefires were less ambitious than the one currently in place; they each had a set time at which they would be lifted, usually a day or number of hours, while the Aug. 28 agreement is open-ended. Each previous attempt was broken after short lulls in fighting before

violence resumed.

The death tolls on both sides have been immense, even in comparison to the number of casualties resulting from past Israel-Palestine conflicts. According to data compiled by OCHA (Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs), IDF (Israel Defense Forces), and Palestinian Ministry of Health, there had been 5226 airstrikes on Gaza and 4591 rockets and mortars fired at Israel as of Aug. 28. The same data enumerates the casualties of the last seven weeks, which consist of 7 Israeli civilians, 66 Israeli soldiers, and 2104 Gaza inhabitants. According to the UN, an estimated 69% of the deaths in Gaza were civilian casualties. An UN Situation Report also states that 10244 Gaza inhabitants have been injured, including 3106 children, and 475000 people have been displaced.

Palestinian officials claim Israeli air strikes targeted residential areas, while Israel asserts these homes served as Hamas command centers. President Mahmoud Abbas says Israel's attacks on civilians constitute a "genocide," but both sides have been accused of devaluing Palestinian civilians' lives and committing war crimes.

The current strife between Gaza and Israel mirrors previous conflicts, but has lasted longer and resulted in more casualties than its predecessors. The ongoing Operation Protective Edge resembles similar Israeli initiatives of the recent past, such as Operation Cast Lead in Dec 2008 and Operation Pillar of Defence in 2012, which killed 1300 Palestinians and 167 Palestinians, respectively.

As truce talks in Cairo began last weekend, Hamas announced its willingness to pursue a long-standing truce with Israel, despite its mission statement, which includes Israel's destruction as one of its goals. Hamas and Fatah, which together make up the Palestinian unity government, express a largely unprecedented willingness to cooperate with Israel in an effort to eliminate the control Israel has held over Gaza since Israel's occupation of the area from 1967 to 2005.

US Secretary of State John Kerry expressed support for the ceasefire, a sentiment shared by the rest of the Western world, by "[calling] on all parties to fully and completely comply with its terms." Israeli officials have displayed less certainty that these talks will be progressive. "There is no confidence here. People are very skeptical," Yuval Steinitz, Israel's minister for intelligence and strategic affairs said.

(Sources: BBC, The Wall Street Journal, The Huffington Post, Financial Times)



AN UNEASY RELATIONSHIP: Gaza and Israel have exchanged rocket and mortar fire.

Scotland awaits referendum

by Mhairi Finlayson

Web Editor

On Sept. 18, Scotland will hold a referendum to determine whether or not Scotland should become an independent country. The Scottish National Party (SNP) is campaigning for the liberation and independence of Scotland under the Yes Scotland campaign, while Scottish Labour, the Scottish Conservative Party, and the Scottish Liberal Democrats are all supporters of the Better Together campaign. By voting yes, Scotland would break away from the United Kingdom and become an independent state.

Currently, Scotland has its own parliament and a First Minister, and this Scottish government has powers given to it specifically by the UK government, called devolved powers. Scotland receives a block grant from the UK government, which the Scottish parliament is free to spend as it deems fit in the service of its devolved powers. The UK government retains reserved powers, which are of international or nationwide importance.

The Yes Scotland campaign makes the case that Scotland would be one of the wealthiest nations in the world if it secedes, mainly due to its large oil reserves in the North Sea. Opponents argue that Scotland is basing its future upon a resource that is unsustainable.

Another significant issue that has arisen in the campaign is that of currency. Scotland wants to retain use of the pound, the current national currency, if it becomes independent. However, the UK Treasury contends that sharing a currency between separate countries is problematic.

Many in Scotland also believe that the UK government is not adequately representing them or serving their interests. There is also a great amount of national pride that has influenced both sides of the issue. Those in favor of union emphasize British national sentiment, while those in favor of independence have pride in Scotland as its own entity.

Residents of Scotland over the age of 16 will be allowed to vote in the referendum, as long as they are from the EU, the Commonwealth, or Britain. The voting age, usually 18, has been lowered to 16 for this referendum only. This franchisement was done with the reasoning that the youth have the largest stake in the country's future, and so should have the right to help decide its destiny. The terms of the referendum also mean that hundreds of thousands of English residents of Scotland will have a vote, whereas Scots not living in Scotland will not have a say in independence.

Various public figures have come out both for and against an independent Scotland. JK Rowling has revealed that she has donated money to the Better Together Campaign, while The Proclaimers have supported the Yes Scotland campaign. It is unclear as of yet whether or not celebrity endorsements will make a significant difference in the outcome of the referendum, but they have served to bring the vote into the public eye, especially in the rest of Britain.

The issue of Scottish independence will be hotly debated over the next couple of weeks, but whatever the result, the United Kingdom will be forever changed.

China curbs freedoms

by Antonia Salisbury

Opinion Editor

In past years there has been disagreement between Hong Kong and the Chinese government over the structure of their One Country, Two Systems regime. This conflict dates back to 1997, when the United Kingdom reinstated Chinese sovereignty over Hong Kong after 99 years of colonial leasing. To better understand the issue at hand and the recent protests of the Hong Kong people against new rights and voting restrictions, it is essential to know the history of Hong Kong's regime change.

Conflicts between China and Great Britain regarding Hong Kong date back to the Opium Wars and the 1842 Treaty of Nanking. This treaty promised to give Hong Kong and several other small territories to Britain and led to Britain's economic interest in Hong Kong for the next two centuries. After a series of treaties debating the rule of Hong Kong, both governments signed the Second Convention of Peking in 1898, thereby agreeing to a 99 year lease of Hong Kong to Great Britain. When the lease ran out in 1997, China had agreed to a One Country, Two Systems rule, meaning that citizens of Hong Kong would continue to live in a capitalist society and be able to exercise certain rights that are not protected on mainland China. As a communist country, this system of rule created a conflict of interests between the Chinese government and the citizens of Hong Kong.

On Aug. 31, contrary to their promises of new rights, the Chinese government stripped Hong Kong citizens of certain voting privileges. Despite years of protesting from Hong Kong in favor of instating a new "one person, one vote" policy, President Xi Jinping of the People's Republic of China released statements saying that there would be new limits restricting candidate choice in open elections and that "one person, one vote"-style elections would not be held. Following the news, Occupy Central, an advocacy group for open elections, staged a major protest in the center of the city.

It is thought that this political backpedaling by the Chinese government came about due to fear of a 1989 Tiananmen Square reoccurrence. Chris Buckley of The New York Times writes, "tight reins on Hong Kong politics reflect a fear among leaders in Beijing that political concessions here would ignite demands for liberalization on the mainland." On the other hand, by failing to appease the political desires of the 7.2 million citizens of Hong Kong, the Chinese government is now facing increasingly violent mass protests.

Meanwhile, the news has angered inhabitants of Beijing who, in response, have formed the largest riot the country has ever seen. Though the Chinese government has taken new action against dissent this year, they have gone up against a force that will be difficult to combat, and the world can only watch, wait, and hope that the situation does not escalate. (Sources: About: Asian History- Hong Kong, New York Times, Huffington Post, CNN)

Country of the Month: Scandinavia's exotic Norway

by Olivia Pla

People Editor

When we think of Norway, we think of Vikings, the cold, and an abundance of fish. Though these three stereotypes are somewhat true, Norway is severely underrated in terms of its uniqueness. Often overshadowed by its Scandinavian neighbors Denmark and Sweden, Norway is not the most popular vacation spot in northern Europe. However, Norway has a fascinating history and features some of the most spectacular natural attractions in the world.

The Viking Age is the foundation for the culture of Norway and its influence is still present in the country today. Though the Vikings had a reputation for being ruthless plunderers, they were also skilled craftsmen and traders. Because Norway is home to fjords, long narrow inlets with steep sides or cliffs created by glacial erosion, the Vikings became skilled in water transportation. This allowed the country to have more opportunities for trade and for raiding neighboring countries. Today, Norway still honors its Viking past and has several Viking museums, as well as a replica of a traditional Viking ship in Vefsnfjord. Present-day Norway has come a long way since the Viking times and

now operates with a constitutional monarchy and a parliamentary democracy. The indigenous people of Norway are the Sami, who are known for looking after herds of reindeer and wearing colorful clothes. The Sami people, often called the Lapps, have lived in northern Scandinavia for over 10,000 years and have established a Sami capital in



all photos courtesy wikicommons

NATURAL BEAUTY: Norway features beautiful fjords, including the iconic Geirangerfjord.

the northern Norwegian municipality of Karasjok.

Norway also thrives during the winter Olympic games due to its familiarity with harsh winter climates. The country has accumulated 303 medals during its Olympic career, 107 of which are gold.

Norway is home to some of the world's most famous natural attractions including fjords, the Northern Lights, and the midnight sun. Norway's two most iconic fjords, the Geirangerfjord and the Nærøyfjord, are featured on the UNESCO World Heritage List, a list the UN makes of places that have a special cultural or physical significance. Norway is also one of the best places in the world to see the Northern Lights because of its close proximity to the Arctic Circle. The best times to see this natural phenomenon are the months of September through March, between the autumn and spring equinoxes. Another attraction characteristic to the northernmost countries is the midnight sun, the time during the Norwegian summer season when the sun never sets north of the Arctic Circle. For those who don't like sleeping, these few months of 24 hour sunlight are perfect. (Sources: VisitNorway.com, Trip to Norway)