

Evidence submitted to the House of Commons International
Development Select Committee

**Re: Development Assistance and the Occupied Palestinian
Territories**

Submitted by:

Reverend Michael Fryer,

Date 8th November 06

Summarised C.V. of author.

1. My name is Michael Fryer. I am a retired UK Police Officer with 27yrs Police Service, having served in the North Wales Police Force since initiating my service as a Cadet in September 1971. I served in uniform dealing with such incidents as the Farmers riots of 1974; the Toxteth riots and the Miners strike of 1984. My duties as a Community Beat Officer also included dealing with rioting and aggressive situations involving large numbers of youths as well as football crowds.

2. I later served as a Detective investigating such offences as Child Abuse and Murder, as well as serving on Force Drug Squad and latterly on the National Crime Squad. My duties on the National Crime squad involved investigating and targeting criminals who were considered to be in the top 200 in the UK.

3. I have been fully trained in and performed mobile surveillance as well as static observations, both of which involved the logging and photographing of target's activities. I was an expert on drugs-related matters, interviewing techniques and investigating Sexual offences. I am experienced as a major incident exhibits officer acting as such in murders and serious criminal offences. During my service I was awarded with nine commendations for Good Investigative Police work.

4. I am currently an ordained Minister of Religion with Christian International Europe. I pastor a Christian congregation in North East Wales and have done so for the last seven years. My ministry involves counselling and teaching as well as the daily management of my Church.

Resume

5. I have visited Israel a number of times in the last four years. I have interviewed and filmed victims of terror. I have interviewed both Jews and Arabs who have been affected by the current Intifada. I have visited Israel three times this year, my last visit being in July when I stayed in the Jewish town of Sderot, which is situated 2 miles outside of Gaza. My visits are neither supported nor controlled by any Political or Interested groups with exception of a three-week study course at Yad Vashem the Holocaust Museum for which I received a bursary from the Museum. I act independently and my own congregation supports me. As a result I have been able to view many situations first hand, which has given me the ability to formulate opinions about the conditions in the region based on fact.

6. My submission takes the form of presenting my evidence using the events I witnessed during my stay in the town of Sderot between 10th to 15th July 2006.

7. The purpose of this submission is to provide evidence of the consequences of not keeping close accounts and scrutiny of both governmental as well as charitable financial aid to the Palestinian people.

8. Financial aid must be given to those who are in need, whether it be in connection with health, education or economic stability and growth. Financial aid must not only be directed towards, but must actually connect with its target group, for the sake of both the Palestinian people and Jewish people. Financial aid that is used to supply hate education to children or to demise the rights of Israel in the eyes of ordinary Palestinian people will only lead to a constant reign of terror in the region.

9. My submission will show that there is evidence that Israeli incursions are not the cause of Palestinian poverty but that they are defensive actions resulting from acts of aggression towards innocent Israeli's living in areas that were never disputed until 2000. Poverty in the Palestinian Arab areas is a weapon used by terrorists to create further hatred and influence worldwide sympathy. As an example of the key elements of my submission I will use the situation of ordinary Israeli's living in the town of Sderot.

10. My submission draws on the attitudes and opinions and experiences of those residents of Sderot with whom I met, as well as my own direct experience of being vulnerable to acts of terrorism during my stay in the town. My assessments of certain situations and circumstances, based on my experience, and my research are presented in an effort to bring an understanding of the situation without a Political bias. The report concludes with possible resolutions.

History of Sderot

11. Sderot is a Jewish town situated two miles outside of Gaza on undisputed territory. Jewish refugees from Iraq, Iran, Kurdistan and North Africa established the town in 1951. Most of the refugees lived in tents and shacks on land that no one wanted. Having lost their homes and goods in the Nations from which they left they began to establish a home in Sderot free from

persecution. In 1955 their Government began to build housing. Since that time there have been immigrants from the Former Soviet Union, Ethiopia and Uzbekistan who have increased the population to 24,000.

Purpose of my visit

12. On 7th January 2006 I visited the Erez crossing and observed and photographed Israel Defence Soldiers helping a Palestinian Arab as he crossed the border back into Gaza. The soldier had taken a chair from his offices to allow the Arab, who was limping, to sit whilst checks were being carried out. At that point in time two Kassam rockets had been fired from within the Gaza border into the nearby town of Askelon. I approached the soldier, who was unaware that I was observing his actions, and questioned him. He said he was a resident of Askelon and I asked why he had been so courteous to the Arab Palestinian when rockets were being fired by his kinsmen into the soldier's own town. The soldier replied that he didn't love the Palestinian Arabs but he did respect them as human beings.

13. I visited Sderot, the neighbouring town of Askelon that day and learned that Sderot was also the target of rocket attacks and had been since the start of the Intifada in September 2000.

14. On my return to the United Kingdom I kept abreast of the continuing rocket attacks on the town of Sderot and, on the weekend beginning 9th Jun,e saw that at least seventy Kassam rockets were fired at Sderot causing injuries to it's residents and damage to both private and Industrial property. One of these rockets hit the Sderot College other rockets smashed into Kibbutz Nachal Oz and a number of people were hospitalised. This barrage of attacks was scarcely reported in the Western Media. A spokesman for HAMAS, who accepted responsibility said, "We have decided to turn Sderot into a ghost town. We won't stop firing the rockets until they all leave."

15. These incidents laid the foundation for the purpose of my visit, that being to record the effect that such attacks were having on the civilian community which was, and still is of little obvious concern to the International community.

EVIDENCE OBTAINED DURING MY VISIT

16. Within five minutes of my arrival in the town I experienced a Kassam attack as a rocket landed on the outside of the town. The children of the community in which I was staying scattered and hid in a bomb proof shelter nearby. The Shelter had steel windows and a steel door that can be locked. It is never locked as people go to sleep in it last thing at night and leave first thing in the morning in the fear that, in their sleep they wont hear the " Shakah Adom" (red alert alarm) that gives between 10-20 seconds notice of an attack. I learned that due to financial restraint there are not nearly enough of these shelters to protect this community.

17. I soon learned that the fear of not hearing the alarm is huge. Atarah Orenbuch, a teacher in a local school told me that she wouldn't have a shower unless her children are around to warn her should the alarm be sounded. Then there is the fear of actually hearing the alarm. The school at which she taught had been hit by a Kassam which penetrated the roof of a classroom that had minutes before been vacated by the children who had moved to the next room for prayers. Each time the children hear the alarm, whether or not the rocket lands in their vicinity, they experience extreme trauma.

18. Guy Saada the local ambulance man told me that when the "Shakah Adom" is sounded people go into panic and begin to sweat and are struck by real fear. He said children are taught to go under tables or under their beds to give them confidence and are told that these things will protect them. However, he said that is not so as the Kassams break through roofs and ceilings and explode into tiny pieces. The community in Sderot have suffered from no less 3500 Kassams in five years.

19. He described the fear and explained that it could only be understood by experience. He said he could not pass on to people how it feels the moment you hear the "Shakah Adom" the Red dawn alarm, because at that very moment you feel that your life could end in the most horrible way. You have no control on whether you live or die, the rocket could hit you because you don't know where it will land or if you will be close enough to be shattered by its shrapnel.

20. He described how whole families enter into the physical symptoms of extreme shock with sweating, breathing difficulties, panic attacks and shaking from the moment the alarm is sounded. The ambulance crews, when called to individual trauma patients, can do nothing except to try to calm the situation but that is short lived as hours later the alarm sounds again.

21. He described how just three weeks earlier a man in his fifties was injured when a Kassam exploded nearby him. He told me that he could not see how the man had been injured and why he was so desperately ill and fighting for his life. He rushed him on the 20-minute journey to the Barzily hospital Ashkelon. The casualty staff took him through all the examinations and found that a piece of shrapnel had entered his body into his abdomen and caused extensive internal bleeding.

22. He told me that he could understand the accidents of life such as car accidents, accidents in the work place but he cannot come to terms with why someone would cause such trauma to their neighbours. He said he agreed with the disengagement in Gaza in 2005 and had many arguments with colleagues as he tried to explain that this would bring about peace. He then bowed his head as he admitted that he was wrong and that all the disengagement had done was to have brought the terrorist closer to the community he cares for.

23. On Tuesday 11th July I met Atara Orenbuch, who was acting as a guide, at a road junction on the outside of the town in order to confer with a group of international journalists who were making a one-hour visit to Sderot. As we waited in the open for the VIP bus of journalist to arrive Atara was very nervous. We were close to Gaza and in an area where Kassams fall regularly, but because we were out of town we were not able to hear the “Shakah Adom” and there was nowhere to take cover. Atara was sweating and visibly anxious. There was nothing we could do should a Kassam be fired, no noise until it was too late, no indication of an attack or anywhere to protect ourselves. She said to me all she could do was to pray and she was clearly distressed.

24. On 12th July a Kassam hit Sderot as I was visiting an Out of School Activity Centre. I had just arrived at the centre at about 4pm when we heard the sound of the “Shakah Adom” blasting out from sirens on the corners of the street. The thirty five children who attend this centre began to scream and shout and tremble as their leaders tried to calm them.

25. Kassams had killed two children from this community in September 2004 whilst they played in their garden. The nearby school, houses and electricity supplies had been hit by Kassam rockets the previous week. The memories of all this flooded back to the children as I watched trauma express itself in their faces.

26. I watched as a taxi driver abandoned his taxi and took shelter in the centre with the children. I waited for the Kassam to land only knowing the direction of its origin - Gaza. Around me were three separate and distinct sounds. The sound of the children as they scream and cry uncontrollably, the sound of the “Shakah Adom” screeching through the air like a Second World War air raid warning and the most frightening, a strange sound of silence outside as a small residential community froze for long agonising seconds awaiting what could be their last and final breath.

27. The rocket landed in an open area just outside of the town followed by a second rocket. The children, like those in Gaza are being scarred for life by living in a War Zone that the world is ignoring. The children’s teacher, Adina Mastbaum explained that these traumatic experiences have devastating affects on their education.

28. At 1am on 12th July I was rocked in my bed by the sound of a huge explosion nearby my accommodation. I thought my chalet was moving, as it seemed to jerk into another position. Outside I couldn’t hear or see any response but I had quickly learned that this is the way the residents react in Sderot. They simply freeze until it is all over and that can take minutes because this one, like many other explosions was not pre-empted by the usual “Shakah Adom” sirens.

29. The following day I visited the Police station to learn that a Kassam had hit the town at 1am but it was not found until first light. There were no physical injuries, just the mental injuries of trauma as everyone in the community

realises that they may never wake from their sleep- if they ever get to sleep in the first place.

30. The senior Police Chief, Chaim Boublil told me that since HAMAS was elected there had been an increase in Kassams hitting the town. I saw the rockets, which the special Police unit dealing with Kassams had recovered. A Police officer explained how to identify which Kassams were HAMAS from all the others. HAMAS rockets coloured in red and green are bigger and more powerful.

31. During my stay I assisted in the distribution of food parcels to families living below the poverty line. The particular charity I assisted delivers food parcels to 300 families. Many of these families are too frightened to visit the shops themselves because of the likelihood of a Kassam attack, so they wait for the food to be delivered. A number of the recipients of these parcels were cancer sufferers and I learned that there is a high number of cancer sufferers in Sderot, the root cause being stress and anxiety resulting from the Kassam attacks. During my four hours delivery tour of duty, three Kassams hit the town, one causing extensive damage to a block of residential flats on my route.

32. I spent time with parents of children who constantly bed wet because of nightmares. I met families who sleep together in one room because the children are too frightened to sleep alone.

33. Social services and councillors to whom I spoke are so far stretched that they are unable to cope with the huge pressure placed upon them by this situation. They neither have the finance nor resources to impact the huge needs, particularly among the younger generation, many of whom have never had an experience of peace.

34. A local Rabbi, Rabbi Fendel is doing all he can to teach residents and soldiers how to love their enemies and live respecting all life. Even in these tense and violent circumstances I did not hear anyone using the word hate towards the Palestinian Arabs. As Rabbi Fendel states, all they want is peace, but all the residents in Sderot do have a right to live in peace.

35. During my stay I interviewed the Mayor, Eli Moyal, who confirmed what I had been told by teachers and parents that 99% of the 4750 children aged between 3 to 18 years are suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. 75% of these children are receiving medication for this disorder. The town supports 600 single mothers, many of whom are struggling to provide. The mayor explained that he was trying his best to keep the town running as normally as possible. He felt Politically isolated but is determined to give his residents the best possible care, despite the economic and social odds caused by the attacks against them. Thirteen people have been killed by rockets in the town and their photographs are displayed in his office.

36. The Mayor explained that prior to the Intifada, Palestinian Arabs worked in Sderot and the relationship between the Sderot people and the Palestinian

Arabs was good. He explained that the split in relationship has been caused by terrorist propaganda, which has turned the ordinary Palestinian against their Jewish neighbours with whom they once shared their daily lives.

37. When asked about the firing of Kassams he made it clear that this was not the work of ordinary Palestinian citizens but of terrorists, backed by international organisations and Governments. The Mayor clearly still has Palestinian contacts in Gaza who tell of the circumstances of the firing of rockets. The facts are that terrorists are forcing Palestinian Arabs out of their houses, taking the roof of the house and firing Kassams through the hole in the roof. He says when the IDF respond they are blamed for destroying civilian homes. Neither the IDF, the Palestine Arab householders nor the people of Sderot are the aggressors, but rather they are joint victims of this type of terrorism.

38. He explained that if HAMAS force the Sderot residents out of their homes in this way they would continue to terrorise the residents of Askelon and then Tel Aviv forcing them to leave also.

39. He explained that after the Gush Katif residents moved from Gaza in an effort to bring about peace the world thought that there was peace in the area, but the reality is that, since they moved out of Gaza more rockets have been fired at Sderot, which has now become the major target.

40. During my visit I spoke to members of the Gush Katif community who, having given up so much in the hope of peace, are dismayed that their neighbours in Sderot are continuing to be the victims of similar attacks that forced them to leave their homes.

41. They are dismayed that the greenhouses they built which produced so much and were bought by aid organisations for the purpose of helping the Palestinian Arab economy are now being used as cover for terrorists who dig tunnels beneath them.

42. As I make this submission reports continue to record Kassams hitting Sderot.

43. HAMAS have re-issued a warning to the people of Sderot to "leave or be destroyed."

Conclusion

44. The ordinary Arab and Jew are desperate for peace. During the peace leading up to the beginning of these hostilities in September 2000, these groups lived in an environment that was ever increasing in prosperity and quality. The Arabs and Jews living and working at peace in Israel are

evidence that this is possible, even today after all the killings. Terrorism is without doubt the sole contributor to Palestinian and Israeli poverty.

45. Despite many of them being victims, the Jews are not vengeful and hold no hatred towards the Arabs. They express a desire to live peaceably in their own land alongside Arabs, and the Gush Katif withdrawal is clear evidence of that.

46. There is poverty both in Jew and Arab communities caused primarily by the activities of the terrorists and the resulting defence of Israel.

47. The current reporting by those who have an interest in the region is causing suspicion and a misunderstanding of the intentions of Israel government and it's people.

48. It is clear that the actions by Israel in Gaza are the direct result of terrorist attacks on her citizens including her soldiers in such towns as Sderot and Ashkelon.

49. The views and opinions of Israeli citizens is that, should the attacks against them cease, they would be able and willing to do all they could to revive the economy of the Palestinian people and bring about a upward turn in their standard of living by restoring a right relationship with them, as they have had previously.

50. Finances given by both Government and non-government organisations have historically been proven to be misappropriated by Palestinian Officials in such sums that there is increasing poverty amongst the Palestinians.

51. Finances from aid organisations who are, in some cases, using partner organisations to deliver them, are often diverted and are being used to fuel violence and abuse children by incorrect and inhumane methods of teaching.

52. The teaching in the schools and particularly in the summer camps is simply planting the seeds of hatred in the children of a Nation and would never be accepted in Britain. The intention is that, for the foreseeable future, there will be a hatred of the Jewish people by Palestinians.

53. Some of those finances are also being used to promulgate information which is unbalanced and favours the Palestinians to the detriment of Israeli's who are also suffering.

54. Finances from some charitable organisations held here in the UK are being directed towards such organisations as HAMAS who are clearly responsible for the deaths of many innocent Israeli's and by their own admission are the perpetrators of the continued barrage of rocket attacks against Sderot.

RESOLUTIONS

55. We should understand that terrorism is the key issue affecting poverty amongst the Palestinians and Israeli's alike. It should be made perfectly clear that neither suggestions of poverty or impoverishment will be accepted and that there is no vindication for acts of hatred. The teaching of such hatred should also be highlighted and openly condemned.

56. Both Jews and Arabs should be considered equally by those organisations charged with the responsibilities of helping the impoverished. To this end an enquiry should be carried out that looks at the issues surrounding the decline in the economy in places such as Sderot and it's effects, in order to allow organisations to distribute finances in a more balanced and fair way.

57. All efforts should be made for monies that have been given to the Palestinian's to help fund their needs, but which have been misappropriated, to be recovered and reintroduced. There should be International condemnation of the perpetrators in an effort to deter such diversions occurring in the future.

58. There should be a close and detailed record of the actual use of finances given to the Palestinians by Official/Government organisations, Aid and partner organisations to prevent monies being used for the purposes of terrorism whether it be in training or teaching or propaganda. These finances should not in any way be used for bias or unbalanced reporting, as is currently the case.

59. There should be an enquiry to look specifically at child abuse among the Palestinians especially in the education system, as part of a financial aid deal. The consequences of a continuance of such abuse should be severe. Any finances whatsoever that are currently used for Palestinian education in this way should be withdrawn immediately. Such authorities who receive charitable aid should account for the teachings of their young people and if such teaching is found to be harmful to the child then these finances should be withdrawn. It may be considered that in the short term this will adversely affect the child's material wealth but in the long term it would ensure the child's survival and the survival of its neighbours whom I witnessed being traumatised as a direct result of unfounded hatred.

Signed

Rev Michael Fryer
8th November 2006