**Responding to the Gaza Crisis**

**Rabbi Arthur Waskow**

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In the name of the God who creates all human beings in God's Own Image;

In the name of the God who commands us, "Love your neighbor as yourself; what is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor."

In the name of the God who commands us, "Love the stranger; for you know the heart of the stranger, since you were strangers in the narrow land (Ancient Egypt)":

We mourn the dead among our people and among our cousins, who are also the children of Abraham;

We share in the fear and the anger that haunts those who find random rockets raining on or near their homes;

We share the fear and anger of those whose beloveds have been blown apart by bombs on buses;

We share the fear and anger that arise because our cousin people has chosen for their government a political party that refuses to recognize the legitimacy of the state of Israel.

All these concerns of ours stem from our love of human life and of the traditions and lives of our people.

For precisely the same reasons, we reject as morally unacceptable, religiously forbidden, and historically self-destructive the present behavior of the present government of Israel in Gaza.

Such actions as the destruction of bridges and electric-power plants, the endangerment of the water supply, restrictions on food and medicine, are the collective punishment of an entire people that cannot be justified.

We call upon all Palestinian groups and organizations to halt all attacks upon Israelis, and to do their best to prevent such attacks.

We call on the Government of Israel to withdraw its troops at once from Gaza and to end all attacks on all Palestinians from air, land, or sea by official forces or by other Israelis.

We call for each of these steps to be taken not as a quid pro quo for the other but each of them, without conditions, as a moral and political necessity that weighs upon each party under the gaze of God and history.

And in the same way, we call on the Palestinians who hold Gilad Shalit captive to return him safely home, and for Israel to return safely home the Palestinian children it is holding in detention – each act freely made out of compassion, not as quid pro quo for the other.

We call upon all the elected leaders of the Palestinian people to join in beginning negotiations with the Government of Israel, and we call upon the Government of Israel to enter into negotiations with the President of the Palestinian Authority, together with whatever representatives of the Palestinian people he chooses — with the aim both of peacefully resolving the present crisis and moving swiftly toward the conclusion of peace between a secure Israel and an independent, viable State of Palestine.

We ask that all Americans, moved by compassion and commitment to pursue justice, peace, and healing, insist that the US government act vigorously to support these steps.

We ask that the One Who makes peace in the ultimate reaches of the universe teach us and help us to make peace within ourselves, among all the children of Abraham, and among all who dwell upon our planet.