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## The Goldstone Report: The Legacy of the Landmark Investigation of the Gaza Conflict

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Since its release, there has been little or no room for reasoned debate or even a dispassionate review of *The Goldstone Report*. The United Nations' Human Rights Council's fact-finding mission on the waves of the 2008-2009 Israeli attacks on Gaza (code-named Operation Cast Lead) was led by Justice Richard Goldstone, a South African human rights lawyer. His report, released in September 2009, and its revelations about the conduct of Hamas and the Israeli military, is incendiary. It is simply too hot for most of the media and official Washington to handle. In all forums it sparks off sudden, knee-jerk reactions.

Many of those who support or oppose the report's findings have not read it. Both staunch defenders of Israel and those who would compare Operation Cast Lead to a blitzkrieg would be well served to read it. Accordingly, the release of the report, in easily attainable book form, is a positive development. The issuance of *The Goldstone Report: The Legacy of the Landmark Investigation of the Gaza Conflict*, an abridged version of the report, will put into the hands of the public a great deal of material considered too toxic for general distribution. It will also engender more accurate, if no less furious, debate on both sides of the controversy.

The book includes commentary from others who reject Israeli justifications of its actions on the basis of just cause or self-defense. The report itself goes into detail on anti-personnel ordinance and its effects on the civilian population. It claims that civilian personnel and private businesses were destroyed through systematic recklessness, that non-military facilities were targeted, and that Operation Cast Lead was unprecedented in its severity. It also concludes that its consequences will be long-lasting.

The inevitable conclusion drawn by the readers, though not by Goldstone, is that something significant has changed in the Israeli-Palestinian relationship. Without a doubt, this was the intention of Operation Cast Lead. The change may not, however, be the change the Israeli military intended.

DAVID CASAVIS (January / February 2011)

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