

Using NewsHour Extra Feature Stories

STORY

Israel Strikes Hamas Targets in Gaza, 12/30/08

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/features/world/july-dec08/israel_12-30.html

Estimated Time: One 45-minute class period with possible extension

[Student Worksheet](#) (reading comprehension and discussion questions without answers)

PROCEDURE

1. WARM UP

Use initiating questions to introduce the topic and find out how much your students know.

2. MAIN ACTIVITY

Have students read NewsHour Extra's feature story and answer the reading comprehension and discussion questions on the student handout.

3. DISCUSSION

Use discussion questions to encourage students to think about how the issues outlined in the story affect their lives and express and debate different opinions.

INITIATING QUESTIONS

1. Where is Israel? Locate it on a map.

2. Why was Israel created?

3. Where are the Palestinian Territories?

READING COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS – [Student Worksheet](#)

1. What is happening in Israel and Gaza?

ANSWER

Israel bombed Hamas targets in the Gaza Strip for a fourth day Tuesday in its deadliest assault on the Palestinian territory in decades, in response to repeated rocket fire by Hamas militants on southern Israeli towns.

2. How many Palestinians have died and how many Israelis?

ANSWER

The Israeli airstrikes on Gaza had killed at least 360 Palestinians by Tuesday, according to the Associated Press. Two Israelis were killed and more than a dozen were wounded by more than 250 rockets and mortar rounds fired from Gaza into Israel since Saturday, reported the Agence France-Presse.

3. What is Hamas?

ANSWER

Hamas is the Islamist group that governs Gaza. Hamas is considered a terrorist organization by the United States, and has a militant wing that carries out attacks on Israel. Hamas has said it considers it a religious duty to eliminate Israel.

4. What was the U.S. response to the attacks?

ANSWER

A spokesman for President George W. Bush placed the blame for the violence on Hamas.

"In order for the violence to stop, Hamas must stop firing rockets into Israel and agree to respect a sustainable and durable cease-fire," White House spokesman Gordon Johndroe said from the presidential retreat in Crawford, Tex. "That is the objective to which all parties need to be working. That is what the United States is working towards."

5. What happened when Israel was declared a state in 1948?

ANSWER

In 1948, after the state of Israel was proclaimed it was immediately invaded by armies from neighboring Arab states.

The war concluded in 1949 and resulted in a 50 percent increase in Israeli territory.

6. What did Israel agree to in the Oslo accords?

ANSWER

On Sept. 13, 1993, Israel and the PLO signed a Declaration of Principles, also known as the Oslo Accords. Israel committed to withdrawing from parts of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank and agreed that a Palestinian Authority would be set up.

7. How did Hamas come to power in Gaza?

ANSWER

In January 2006, Hamas took a majority in the Palestinian Legislative Council. Hamas forcefully seized complete control of Gaza from other opposing Palestinian parties in 2007, further isolating the area.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (more research might be needed)

1. Do you agree with Israel's position that they will not stop airstrikes until Hamas stops sending rockets into the country? Why or why not?

2. Should the international community step in to stop the violence, why or why not? If yes, when and how should they take action.

3. Looking at the history of Israel and the disputes over land there, what do you think should happen to increase chances for peace in the region?

Extension Activity

Have students write a 300-500 word essay on this topic providing clear examples. Send your completed editorial to NewsHour Extra (extra@newshour.org). Exceptional essays might be published on our Web site.