

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Rally to Protest Violence in Palestine/Israel ~ Let your voice be heard!**

**Join the Chico Peace Vigil, this Saturday July 12, 3rd & Main, 12:30 to 1:30 p.m.**

The public and press are invited to join a rally protesting the continuing violence in Palestine/Israel, co-sponsored by the Chico Peace and Justice Center, the Palestine Action Group, and the Chico Peace Vigil. In response to the June 12 kidnapping and subsequent murder of 3 Israeli teens, Israeli Defense Forces stormed through hundreds of Palestinian homes in the West Bank, killing over 15 Palestinians; hundreds of Palestinians were arrested, their homes raided, their property destroyed. On July 2, Palestinian teenager Mohammed AbuKhdeir was abducted and burned alive and his 15-year-old cousin Tarek mercilessly beaten while armed violence escalated to the Gaza Strip, with Israeli aerial bombings of Gaza and rockets launched by Hamas from Gaza into Israel.

Israel and the U.S. claim the bombing of Gaza is retaliation against Hamas for firing rockets into Israel; that "Israel has a right to defend itself". They blame Palestinians as the aggressors, yet the more than 1.5 million Gazan Palestinians living virtually in an open-air prison with no ability to get out, no ability to bring in needed supplies, entirely controlled by the whims of the Israeli occupiers, certainly also have the "right to defend themselves" against the much greater violence of aerial bombings from Israel. Palestinian violence pales in comparison to that done by Israel upon them.

It's important for the international community to know that, although understandably frightening for Israeli citizens, there have been *no casualties* resulting from Hamas rockets fired into Israel. On the other hand, as of July 10, Israeli forces have dropped more than 500 bombs on Gaza, killing over 100 Palestinians, injuring hundreds, destroying homes, schools, and infrastructure. Hospitals are running out of medical supplies and ambulances do not have enough gasoline to operate. Human rights activists are describing the Israeli attacks as a "massacre", and Archbishop Desmond Tutu described the Israeli siege and blockade on the Gaza Strip as an "abomination". The Gaza Strip is among the world's most densely populated locations in the world. Because it is completely controlled by Israel - land, sea and air, it is the only place on earth where civilians cannot escape from the attacks of war, making the Israeli bombing of the Palestinian Gaza Strip all the more horrendous and cruel.

*The co-sponsors of the Saturday rally in Chico join hundreds of human rights groups and thousands of citizens around the world in calling for an immediate end to the collective punishment and illegal siege by Israel of the Palestinian people of Gaza. These groups further call for an end to the illegal Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands, and for the United States to withhold the \$8.5+ million per day sent to Israel in military aid until such time as Israel abides by International law. U.S. law demands that no military aid be granted to governments that uses its weapons against civilians. It's time we abide by our own laws!*

We invite citizens to show their support to end the violence in Palestine/Israel this Saturday, 3<sup>rd</sup> & Main Streets in downtown Chico, 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. Violence will only ever perpetuate itself; we beg both sides to vigorously pursue lasting peaceful cooperation.