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# Hundreds rally at the Forks to protest violence in Gaza

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SARAH TAYLOR / WINNIPEG FREE PRESS

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Several groups gather at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights on Saturday to rally for an end to the military assault on Gaza. [Photo Store](#)

Hussam Azzam carried his four-and-a-half-year-old son, A.K., on his shoulders for most of Saturday afternoon's Rally for Gaza.

An estimated 400 people gathered at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights to protest against the ongoing violence in Gaza.



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*Hussam Azzam, his wife Orhan Khalil-Azzam and their son A.K. Azzam attend the rally for Gaza on Saturday. (SARAH TAYLOR / WINNIPEG FREE PRESS)*

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Though toting the toddler wasn't comfortable, Azzam said it was important his son be able to see and learn what is going on in his native Palestine through peaceful demonstrations such as the Winnipeg rally.

"It's important to show solidarity with what's going on," said Azzam. "People are starting to realize the horrifying things that are happening back in Palestine. Nobody likes war, but the loss of lives — it's just sad.

"The problem is that most people don't understand the reality of what's going on there. It's unfortunate, but someone needs to tell the real story," Azzam said.

After an onslaught of air raids ravaged Gaza this past week, organizers from the Canadian Palestinian Association of Manitoba assembled two rallies — the first rally happened Monday at the Manitoba Legislative Building and also attracted

about 400 people.

Israeli troops pushed into Gaza late Thursday after more than a week of airstrikes failed to halt unrelenting Palestinian rocket fire that has increasingly targeted major Israeli cities. Israel has said the operation is aimed at halting the rockets as well as destroying cross-border tunnels that militants have used to stage raids into Israel.

The military said it has hit more than 2,500 targets in Gaza, including 1,100 rocket launchers, during the 13 days of fighting. It said that some 70 militants were killed and another 13 brought to Israel for questioning.

Gaza militants have fired more than 1,760 rockets at Israeli cities since July 8, the military said.

Innocent civilians are caught in the crossfire.

Gaza has been under a blockade by Israel since Hamas group took control of the strip of land in 2007. The blockade, imposed by Israel to stop the flow of militants and weapons, has since impeded the flow of other goods and services and hurt Gaza's economy.

On Thursday, Israel and Hamas held a mutual five-hour ceasefire on the 10th day of fighting. The government of Egypt, with support from the West, is trying to negotiate between Israel and the Palestinians to stop the violence, but there are no signs yet as to when a permanent ceasefire might occur.

Rally for Gaza event organizer Liz Carlyle said the message stemming from Saturday's protest was that the CPAM believes the conflict between Gaza and Israel should not be recognized as a war, but rather a massacre or a genocide of Gaza's population.

Daniel Thau-Eleff, who spoke on behalf of Independent Jewish Voices, called the situation in Gaza, "an incremental genocide."

"The media sometimes reports what Israel's doing as a war between Israel and Hamas, as if Hamas is the name of an independent country — it's not. This is mostly a massacre being conducted by a very powerful army against a civilian population," Thau-Eleff said.

Though opinions remain divided on whether Israel or Gaza are propelling the violent behaviour, Azzam said he found it reassuring that North Americans were starting to cultivate their own opinions on what's happening in the Middle East.

"With social media you hear way more stuff today. It's reassuring at least that people are starting to learn exactly what is going on," said Azzam.

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