



Israel's recent bombing and ground invasion of the Gaza Strip, Operation Cast Lead, killed 1,417 Palestinians; thirteen Israelis were killed, five by friendly fire. Thousands of Palestinians were seriously wounded and left without adequate medical care, shelter or food. Among the Palestinian dead, more than 400 were children. In response to this devastation, Caryl Churchill wrote a play.

Churchill is one of the most important and influential playwrights living, the author of formally inventive, psychologically searing, politically and intellectually complex dramas, including *Cloud Nine*, *Top Girls*, *Fen*, *Serious Money*, *Mad Forest* and *Far Away*. To this body of work she's now added the very brief (six pages, ten minutes long in performance) and very controversial *Seven Jewish Children: A Play for Gaza*. The play ran for two weeks in February at London's Royal Court Theatre and is being presented across the United States in cities such as New York (Theaters Against War and New York Theatre Workshop), Chicago (Rooms Productions), Washington (Theater J and Forum Theatre), Cambridge, Massachusetts (Cambridge Palestine Forum) and Los Angeles (Rude Guerrilla).

While some British critics greatly admired the play, which was presented by a Jewish director with a largely Jewish cast, a number of prominent British Jews denounced it as anti-Semitic. Some even accused Churchill of blood libel, of perpetrating in *Seven Jewish Children* the centuries-old lie, used to incite homicidal anti-Jewish violence, that Jews ritually murder non-Jewish children. A spokesman for the Board of Deputies of British Jews told the *Jerusalem Post* that the "horrifically anti-Israel" text went "beyond the boundaries of reasonable political discourse."

We emphatically disagree. We think Churchill's play should be seen and discussed as widely as possible.

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