Israeli massacre in the city of Jenin

David Cohen in Israel
13 April 2002

Note from the editors:

The following article was originally posted on April 10. We have since been informed by a reader that the article was in large part made up of a report distributed by the Palestine Media Centre (PMC) and published in various supportive Palestinian journals.

In the article as originally posted, there was no attribution to the PMC. The PMC report had been sent as an email to the author of the WSWS *article, David Cohen, by a newsgroup. It was unattributed and was headed by an appeal to "please spread it as wide as possible". Cohen included the email in his article in order to draw attention to the atrocities being carried out by the Israeli Defence Force.*

We apologise to the Palestine Media Centre for our unintentional error and have amended David Cohen's WSWS *article accordingly.*

The Palestine Red Crescent Society has confirmed that Israeli occupation forces have killed dozens of Palestinian civilians in Jenin's refugee camp Tuesday April 9. Eyewitnesses inside the camp confirm that Israeli bulldozers have leveled the refugee camp's front row homes while families were still inside.

According to a report distributed by the Palestine Media Centre, (PMC):

"While the confirmed 30 victims were killed in one of the camp's street, the total number of casualties is estimated to be at least 100. Many victims are buried under the rubble, while others have been torn to pieces by the exploding tank shells. Dozens of people have bled to death inside their homes and in front of their traumatised family members.

"Six Palestinians were confirmed killed in the camp during the early hours of the morning and identified. The rest of the victims remain unidentified and the numbers of injured have been impossible to confirm, but is feared to be in the hundreds.

"Since the early hours of the morning, Israeli Apache helicopters and tanks have been bombarding the densely populated refugee camp, where at least 150,00 people reside in an area that barely reaches one square kilometer."

For the first time in its history of aggression, "Israeli F-16 fighter jets have bombarded the Jenin refugee camp, in an offensive clearly meant to exact the maximum number of civilian casualties. Official sources estimate that in the past two days, the camp has been bombarded with more missiles and tank shells than all those Israeli occupation forces have previously used against Palestinian targets in the past year and a half.

"Israeli occupation forces continue to refuse to allow any ambulance into the refugee camp, even to collect the bodies. Two days ago, bulldozers destroyed a makeshift mass grave that the camp's residents had made to bury their loved ones during the last Israeli invasion in February. Bodies were removed from their graves and strewn across the street. Eyewitness accounts also confirm that Israeli tanks patrolling the street have crushed a number of bodies that medical crews have been unable to collect.

"In a telephone interview with *Al-Jazeera* television, Umm Jihad, a camp resident, described the desperate situation:

'The shelling has not stopped. We are all cornered in our homes, unable to sleep, move, or help those who are pleading for help as they bleed in the camp's streets. The Israeli bulldozers are leveling homes over their residents' heads and without prior warning. When we called health officials to ask for help, we were informed that the occupation soldiers confiscated the ambulances' keys in order to debilitate them. Our situation is one of indescribable suffering and desperation for no one is intervening to save our children, who are dying in front of our own helpless eyes'.

"In an unprecedented breach of human rights, Israeli occupation soldiers announced Tuesday afternoon that they would cease firing in order to allow the women and elderly to get water—only to arrest them and use them as human shields.

"Since the residents have had no water for days, a number of women and elderly men came out of their homes. As they reached the camp's entrance, where Israeli tanks and personnel carriers are stationed, they were all detained. Shortly after that, residents reported hearing the Israeli forces calling out on the microphone to the resistance fighters and security officers to surrender in order to save the lives of the detained civilians. The detainees were seen

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strapped to the tanks and personnel carriers, which resumed their bombardment campaign shortly after the call for surrender.

"The Israeli officer previously heading the Jenin reoccupation offensive was reprimanded and removed from his duty after having failed to take over the camp in the past four days. Currently, Shaul Mofaz, Israel's Chief of Staff, heads the brutal operation personally. Palestinian officials have thus held him directly responsible for the atrocities taking place.

"Jenin's three humble hospitals have confirmed that they have run out of fuel, needed to keep the electricity generators running, after Israeli occupation forces plunged the city into total darkness four days ago. The hospitals have also run out of water."

The Palestinian leadership has warned repeatedly, through numerous appeals, "of a possible second Sabra and Shatila massacre, only this time it would be in Jenin. 'The Palestinian leadership urgently appeals to the international community and the Arab leaders to immediately intervene and help save the residents of the Jenin refugee camp for they have been the victims of a brutal war campaign, lead personally by Israel's Chief of Staff, Shaul Mofaz", read a leadership statement. It added, "We hold the international community responsible for delaying any intervention that could spare the refugee camp's residents from a certain massacre.'"

The *Independent* newspaper reported, "the sound of four explosions came down the phone line. A woman could be heard screaming in the background 'Come and save us'." This was in the middle of an interview their reporter was conducting with a Red Crescent ambulance official: "He said the woman's house had been hit by rockets fired from an Israeli helicopter".

From reports that came to the *World Socialist Web Site* correspondent, it was clear that the Israeli authorities have been refusing to allow ambulances access to the wounded. International law defines this type of action as a war crime under the Geneva conventions. *IMC*-Israel reported that the Red Cross said five ambulances were fired on in the area around Jenin and Nablus April 8, when the IDF gave permission to give medical treatment for the wounded people.

Under the headline "Cry for help from Jenin", Palestinian man Issa Samandar gave the following report over the telephone:

"Several heavy shielded bulldozers of the army digging a wide road 8-10m wide from west to east... to cut off the camp into two halves... This is done also with air bombings, hundreds of bombs, from 2-7 Cobra and Apachi helicopters, each raid... it is still continuing from around 20.00 last night...till now". He added, "The soldiers sometimes withdraw for the helicopters to do the strikes... This came after the helicopters bombarded a house where soldiers were inside on the assumption that they were Palestinians... The shooting and the bombing are severe and directed towards the houses with much brutality. More than one third of the camp houses have been destroyed... total destruction... tens of people died in this way.

"Witnesses say that dead bodies [are] still in the streets and narrow roads of the camp from 100 to 150. This the fifth day that ambulances can't reach to save the injured or the corpses... all health workers and representatives are issuing SOS for help through the media... directly... till now no result... on the ground... In the past 36 hours, only two corpses and one injured were received by the hospital... health situation and living is so [bad] that people are now drinking from the sewage and eating leaves off trees... We [heard] now from a witness that hundreds of bodies are under the rubble of the houses... the people who saved themselves are gathered in the university."

He continued, "One soldier killed the son of 34 years... then the other soldier exchanged and killed the father of 62 years in front of the sons and grandsons... another two old men—more than 64 years [old]—and one 45 years [old] were also shot in front of their families.... Doctors said that they were shot at intentionally so as to kill as many people on the orders of the criminal Sharon... In these days it is not fair for the victims to make analysis. And if some politicians reading these lines will not understand what mentality is behind these atrocities, then humanity and conscience is lost."

Yehudit Harel, an activist from the "Peace Block" movement, has been sending by e-mail a public call to take away Shimon Peres's Nobel Peace Prize. She told the *World Socialist Web Site*: "Shimon Peres is one of the most cynical and immoral politicians of our times, a true Machiavelli disciple, who plays such a key role in enabling the current catastrophe to happen. As a Nobel Prize Laureate—with all his international connections and special status in Europe—Shimon Peres secured all along a European umbrella for the Sharon Government. Thus he made it possible for this criminal government to go as far as this. It is high time to try to teach him a lesson".

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