

# The Gaza crisis and the perspective of permanent revolution

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The onslaught against Gaza has provoked popular outrage throughout the Middle East and around the world, even as governments in the Arab world and elsewhere have lined up to provide justifications for this US-Israeli war crime.

Israel's declaration of "all-out war" against a largely defenseless and half-starved population of 1.5 million people imprisoned in a blockaded strip of land justifiably provokes fury and revulsion. So too do the hypocritical and lying reports of the mass media, which incessantly describe Israel's aerial blitz against apartment blocks, police stations, universities, mosques and office buildings as an act of "self defense," while equating the occupied with the occupiers and ineffectual homemade rockets with US-supplied F-16s, Hellfire missiles and "smart bombs."

Yet moral outrage and condemnation of Israel are by no means a sufficient answer to the atrocities in Gaza. What is required above all is a political perspective.

Many of those now under attack are the children of refugees subjected to violence and forced from their homes by Israel in its expansionary war of 1967. Then, as now, the plight of the Palestinians was largely ignored by the world's governments, while their interests were betrayed by Arab bourgeois nationalist regimes that claimed to speak in their name.

As the terrible events have unfolded in Gaza over the past three days, it has become clear that the present-day Arab bourgeois governments are either acting as direct accomplices in the attack on the Palestinians or offering their tacit political support.

The most criminal role has been played by the US-backed police state regime of Hosni Mubarak in Egypt. Egypt had collaborated with Israel in enforcing its punishing economic blockade of Gaza by closing the Rafah crossing between Gaza and Egypt. After the bombing started, terrified Palestinians trying to flee across the Egyptian border to safety were met with Egyptian machine gun fire.

It is widely suspected that the Cairo regime deliberately deceived the Hamas leadership in Gaza, assuring them just hours before the bombing began that Israel had no intention

of launching an attack. Hamas representatives have insisted that it was this Egyptian assurance that led to buildings not being evacuated, resulting in a higher toll of killed and maimed.

The London-based Arabic-language newspaper *al-Quds al Arabi* cited Arab diplomatic sources as reporting that Egyptian Intelligence Minister Omar Suleiman warned a number of Arab leaders that Israel was preparing just such an attack on Gaza.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit told a press conference Saturday that Hamas was responsible for the violence against Gaza. "Egypt warned for a long time and someone who ignores warnings is responsible for the outcome," he said.

Newspapers close to the Saudi monarchy essentially welcomed the Israeli onslaught, describing it as an attack on "Iran's agents" in the Middle East.

Representatives of the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah led by President Mahmoud Abbas have told the Israeli media that they likewise viewed the massacre in Gaza as an opportunity to regain power, assuring the Zionist establishment that they are prepared to move in if Israel succeeds in toppling the Hamas administration with high explosives.

Even those regimes that have formally denounced the attacks and criticized other Arab governments for their complicity—such as Iran and Libya—do so from the standpoint of advancing their own regional and bourgeois political interests.

In a fitting symbol of the reaction of the Arab regimes as a whole, an "emergency summit" of Arab League foreign ministers was postponed until Wednesday, giving Israel five full days of bombing before it confronts another toothless declaration.

And, while it is necessary to defend Hamas against the ongoing assassination of its leaders and the unending vilification of its supporters as "terrorists" by those inflicting massive state terror against a civilian population, this Islamist movement has no real perspective for confronting

and defeating the US-Israeli offensive.

The firing of rockets into southern Israel was aimed at convincing Israel to negotiate a lifting of economic sanctions, just as its talk of renewed "martyr operations," sending young Palestinians to blow themselves up in Israeli cafes and buses, is similarly designed to pressure the Zionist regime.

No one has benefited more from the domination of nationalism and Islamism in the Arab countries than the Zionist regime itself. There is no nationalist way out of the present morass.

Creating another national mini-state in the region will not provide a solution to the decades-old dispossession of the Palestinians. The division of the West Bank and Gaza by Israeli settlements, security roads, checkpoints and walls make it clear that such a territory could represent only a Bantustan-type prison, with a Palestinian bourgeois nationalist regime serving as its guards.

Israeli officials have made it clear that they see the so-called "peace process" as a means of creating just such a monstrosity, dubbed the "two-state solution," in order to lay the political foundations for expelling Israel's own million-strong Arab population, a massive exercise in ethnic cleansing.

This maniacal perspective, like the attack on Gaza itself, is a manifestation of the political bankruptcy and crisis of Zionism. The Israeli state and all of its major parties are subordinate to a military camarilla. The regime staggers from one reckless military adventure to another—from Lebanon to Gaza and, on the horizon, to Iran—inflicting destruction on civilian populations while horrifying and demoralizing large sections of Israel's own people.

While the government seeks to maintain its power by constantly promoting both fear and chauvinism, there are many Israelis who view the unfolding violence with revulsion and the conviction that it can lead only to new disasters.

Ultimately, the aggressive militarism of the Israeli state is an expression not merely of Zionist ideology, but of deep-going social, political and class fissures that run through Israeli society. It is a society characterized by vast social inequality and a regime headed by an individual, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, whose narrow escape from criminal indictment for financial and political corruption expresses the corrosion of the entire Zionist establishment.

In one revealing comment, Olmert's spokesman, Mark Regev, declared after a government meeting following the first round of bombings in Gaza: "In the cabinet room today there was an energy, a feeling that after so long of showing restraint we had finally acted." That the slaughter of innocents by means of aerial bombardment is a source of

renewed political "energy" speaks volumes about the nature of this regime.

A genuine struggle against Zionism is conceivable only on the basis of a class struggle that transcends national boundaries, uniting Arab and Jewish workers based upon their common class interests. Outside of a class perspective, which seeks the independent and united mobilization of both Arab and Israeli workers, there is no real means of dealing a deathblow to Zionism and imperialism in the Middle East.

The demonstrations that have erupted from Cairo to Baghdad in support of Gaza have been directed not just against Israel, but against the rotten Arab regimes, which represent Israel's most faithful allies. This popular movement is not just a reaction to the latest events, but rather part of a growing radicalization of the working class in the Middle East as well as in Europe, America and across the globe, driven by the desperate crisis of world capitalism.

For all of the heroism of the Palestinians facing Israeli F-16s and Apache helicopters in Gaza, the greatest threat to the Zionist regime, its Achilles heel, is the intensification of class struggle and the prospect of socialist revolution in Egypt, the other Arab states and in Israel itself.

A genuine revolutionary alternative can be constructed only on the basis of the theory of permanent revolution, as developed by Leon Trotsky. In the imperialist epoch, Trotsky established, realization of the basic democratic and national tasks in the oppressed nations—tasks associated in a previous historical period with the rise of the bourgeoisie—can be achieved only through the independent political mobilization of the working class acting on a socialist and internationalist perspective.

The Palestinian question, the center of the bitter conflicts and political tragedy of the region is, in the final analysis, bound inseparably with the fate of the socialist revolution in the Middle East and internationally. The unfolding events in Gaza pose with the greatest urgency the struggle to unite the working class, Arab and Jewish alike, in the fight for a socialist federation of the Middle East as part of the struggle to put an end to capitalism on a world scale.



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