A socialist answer to the Gaza crisis

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The following statement [PDF] *is being distributed at international demonstrations being held this weekend against the Israeli war in Gaza.*

The criminal character of the Israeli blitzkrieg against Gaza is becoming clearer day by day. According to the United Nations, nearly 800 men, women and children have been killed so far by the Israeli military and over 3,200 people have been wounded. Universities, schools, houses, bridges and drainage systems have been destroyed by huge 500-pound bombs. The extent of the humanitarian disaster in the Gaza Strip defies description.

Israel is continuing to intensify the war. On Thursday, the United Nations stopped vital supplies of food for the population of Gaza after its workers were deliberately targeted by the Israeli army.

All over the world people are reacting with a sense of shock and anger to the slaughter of the defenseless Palestinian population by the modern Israeli military machine. International protests are increasing, as are the numbers of people taking part. Numerous demonstrations are planned for today with rallies and protests taking place in the US as well as numerous European cities, including Paris, London and Berlin.

How can the Israeli terror be halted? How can the future of the long-suffering Palestinian people be assured?

The organizers of today's demonstrations have no answer to offer. Their main response is to appeal to Western governments and the United Nations to intervene and exert pressure on Israel. This invariably leads to a dead end. In reality, only a socialist offensive on the part of the international working class can bring peace to the Middle East and secure a viable future for its people—Palestinian, Israeli and Arab.

The genocidal offensive launched by the Israeli government is inseparably connected to the crisis of the capitalist world economy. After decades of unrestrained enrichment, the ruling classes all over the world have nothing to offer the working masses except poverty, unemployment, exploitation, repression and war.

Israel demonstrates this development in microcosm. Israeli society is wrought by profound social divisions. Its government is thoroughly embroiled in corruption. One of the aims of the onslaught on the Gaza Strip is, in the middle of an election campaign, to divert attention from the seething social tensions inside Israel itself.

Zionism has proved to be a trap for the Jewish people. Socialists have always warned that the Jewish question cannot be solved by setting up a capitalist national state on a religious basis. The overcoming of anti-Semitism and the persecution of Jews is inseparably bound up with the abolition of capitalist class society and the fate of the international working class. The Holocaust was made possible only by the prior destruction of the German workers' movement by the Nazis.

With its terrorizing of the Palestinians, the Israeli state has lost any moral legitimacy. This is reflected inside Israel itself, where political life is increasingly dominated by religious zealots and right-wing fanatics who intimidate the Israeli population. It is a tragic irony that the closest parallel to the Israeli onslaught on the encircled population of Gaza is the murderous clearing of the Warsaw Ghetto by the Nazis.

Israel can conduct its war only because it has the unconditional support of the US and the complicity of the European and Arab bourgeoisies.

The US pumps $3 billion annually into the Israeli military, supplying it with the most modern weaponry. Not only President Bush and the Republicans, but the Democrats in the Senate as well have unequivocally backed Israel. Bush's successor, Barack Obama, has remained silent—which amounts to tacit agreement.

The European ruling elites are playing a more disguised but equally perfidious role. Not one of them has condemned the Israeli aggression. Instead, they have justified the Israeli aggression as a legitimate act of self-defense and declared Hamas to be responsible for the suffering of the Palestinians. According to German Chancellor Angela Merkel, responsibility lies "clearly and exclusively" with Hamas.

The Europeans, however, are concerned about the possible consequences of the reckless actions of Israel and the US. They are therefore demanding a cease-fire. They fear the war will destabilize the Arab bourgeois regimes and undermine their own influence in the region. They also fear an increase in tensions within their own countries, which, especially in the case of France, are home to millions of immigrants from North Africa and Arab countries.

While Israel continues to intensify its terror against the Palestinians, Europe, led by French President Nicolas Sarkozy, is pushing for a cease-fire on terms acceptable to Israel and the US.

Gaza is to be transformed from a prison into a high-security

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ghetto. The small strip of borderland between Gaza and Egypt—the only one not controlled by Israel—is to be hermetically sealed and supervised by an international security force. The authoritarian Egyptian regime of Hosni Mubarak and the US-sponsored Palestinian Authority of Mahmoud Abbas will be given the task of policing Gaza. Israel will thereby be freed of any responsibility for feeding Gaza's 1.5 million inhabitants, and Mubarak will take over as the prison warden.

Mubarak is as yet hesitating, afraid of the domestic repercussions of such a step. But if the bribe is high enough, he will agree. His government is largely dependent on international financial assistance.

Mubarak played an important role in the preparation of the war. He shares the Israeli goal of destroying Hamas, which he fears because of its links to the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. Two days before Israel launched the war, Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni paid a visit to Cairo to inform Mubarak of Israel's plans. When the war started, Egypt made sure its border with Gaza remained closed, thereby blocking the only possible escape route for the encircled Palestinians.

While it is necessary to defend Hamas against the assassination of its leaders and the vilification of its supporters as "terrorists" by those inflicting state terror against a civilian population, this movement has no perspective for confronting and defeating the conspiracy between the US, Israel and the Arab bourgeois regimes. As an Islamic organization, it rejects the class struggle. Rather than turn to the Arab, Israeli and international working class for support, it is attempting to strike a deal with the Arab regimes and the imperialist powers. This is of a piece with its perspective of increasing pressure on Israel by firing rockets at Israeli villages.

Hamas is heavily reliant on Syria, which will have no problem dropping its support for Hamas if Israel pays the appropriate price. It is to this end that Sarkozy and Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan (a former Islamist) are intervening. They both maintain close contacts with Israel and Syria, and are pressuring Syria either to force Hamas to end its resistance, or to abandon the organization altogether.

The fate of the population of Gaza is inseparably bound up with the international working class. The Palestinian people cannot expect any support from the United Nations, Arab regimes or European governments, which have betrayed them time and time again and share responsibility for their plight.

The international economic crisis will inevitably provoke explosive class struggles—in the Middle East, Europe and the US. These will provide the basis for a combined offensive by the international working class. The precondition for such a struggle is a break with all those parties and organizations that subordinate the working class to the national interests of the bourgeoisie. An independent socialist perspective is required.

That is not the orientation that dominates today's demonstrations. Instead, many organizations that call themselves "left" or even "anti-capitalist" are trying to divert the protests behind their respective governments.

In Germany, the position taken by the Left Party is no different from that of the Merkel government. Leaders of the Left Party such as Gregor Gysi hold Hamas responsible for the outbreak of the war. Another Left Party leader, Norman Paech, demands the sending of UN troops to block the supply of weapons to Gaza. Others, like Wolfgang Gehrcke, hail the initiatives of French President Sarkozy. Monika Knoche calls upon the German government to support "the initiative of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak."

In France, the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR) appeals to the "International Community," i.e., the imperialist governments organized in the United Nations. On its web site, the "New Anti-Capitalist Party" being formed by the LCR prominently published an appeal by the Israeli peace activist Michel Warschawski, who demanded "an international intervention now" and called for "pressure to be exerted on Western governments" to send international troops.

At a time when growing numbers of workers and youth are coming into conflict with their own governments and the capitalist system, such organizations are seeking to divert the opposition to imperialism into support for the respective bourgeois regimes and their policies.

In the US, the organizers of the demonstrations subordinate them to the Democratic Party. They address appeals to the incoming president, Barack Obama, who has long since made clear that he will continue in all essentials the foreign policy of George W. Bush.

The *World Socialist Web Site* and the International Committee of the Fourth International call upon all participants in the demonstrations to reject this orientation. The events in Gaza urgently raise the necessity of uniting the Jewish and Arab working class in the struggle for a Socialist Federation of the Middle East. This perspective is inseparably bound up with the struggle for the overthrow of capitalism all over the world.

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