

Hillary Clinton reprises “peace process” fraud

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In her first trip to the Middle East as President Barack Obama's secretary of state, Hillary Clinton insisted that the new US administration is determined to press for a "two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict."

Decades of US and Israeli policies, however, have made it abundantly clear that the two-state solution will neither resolve the democratic and social aspirations of the Palestinian people nor secure an end to the ceaseless militarism of the Israeli state, which in the end poses a mortal threat to Jewish working people in Israel itself.

Clinton made her pitch for the revival of the decades-old and deeply discredited "peace process" in the context of an international donors' conference called in the Egyptian resort of Sharm el-Sheikh to raise money for the rebuilding of the devastated Gaza Strip.

At the end of the 23-day Israeli onslaught against Gaza, over 1,300 Palestinians had been killed, many thousands more wounded and half a million driven from their homes. It remains a humanitarian catastrophe, with tens of thousands still homeless, sleeping in tents in the cold, inadequate food supplies and the threat of disease posed by the destruction of water and sewage infrastructure. Meanwhile, Israel continues to exercise a tight blockade at Gaza crossings, preventing access to essential supplies.

In her public statements, Clinton managed, incredibly, to make no mention of this destruction wrought by the Israeli military, referring only once to an abstract "crisis in Gaza." At the same time, however, she repeatedly condemned rocket attacks from Gaza, demanding that they stop. Needless to say, the American secretary of state made no such demand upon Israel to halt its continuing military actions against Gaza.

On the eve of Clinton's Middle East trip, which is

taking her to Jerusalem and Ramallah as well, Washington announced that it is boycotting a United Nations-sponsored conference against racism. It refused to participate because a draft document for the conference described Israel's policy towards Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank as a "violation of international human rights, a crime against humanity and a contemporary form of apartheid."

Washington's problem is that, while posturing as the champion of peace, it has been—and under Obama remains—an indispensable partner in these crimes. The weapons used to slaughter men, women and children in Gaza were made in the USA.

The amount of money that the US pledged at Sharm el-Sheikh for reconstruction in Gaza—\$300 million—is a pittance compared to the money lavished on Israel for the arms used to carry out the destruction in the first place. Since 2002 Washington has given the Israeli state \$21 billion in military aid, while signing a 10-year agreement last year to provide it \$30 billion.

The Obama administration will continue this aid. As Clinton's performance in Egypt made clear, the Washington-orchestrated "peace process" will consist, as in the past, of US negotiators pressuring the Palestinians to bow to Israel's demands.

As Clinton put it in Sharm el-Sheikh, this process demands that the Palestinians "break the cycle of rejection and resistance"; in other words, that they acquiesce and submit.

This modus operandi of US Middle East diplomacy has persisted over the course of more than a decade and a half under Democratic and Republican administrations alike, from Yassir Arafat's appearance in the White House Rose Garden with Ms. Clinton's husband and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1993, to subsequent conferences at Wye River in 1998,

Camp David in 2000 and Annapolis in 2007.

It has produced a situation in which the so-called "two-state solution" is today manifestly unviable.

The Palestinian state advocated by the Clinton administration and subsequently by that of George W. Bush, has taken the form of a grotesque farce in the form of the Palestinian Authority of President Mahmoud Abbas, which has become synonymous with corruption and impotence. Its mandate is restricted to scattered Palestinian towns in the West Bank, cut off from each other by Israeli settlements and militarized zones. It is cut off entirely from the Gaza Strip, the Israeli-blockaded territory governed by the Islamist Hamas movement.

US policy towards the Palestinians has essentially been an attempt to build up Abbas's regime and its security forces as a surrogate force for American and Israeli interests in the region and to use it to suppress Hamas. This was reiterated at Monday's donors' conference in which Clinton and other US officials insisted on iron-clad guarantees that not a cent of US funding would go to the Hamas administration in Gaza, a stipulation that will obviously impede reconstruction.

In a report prepared in conjunction with Clinton's trip, the Israeli Peace Now movement revealed that the Israeli government has drawn up plans to build at least 70,000 new housing units for Jewish settlers in the West Bank, potentially doubling the settler population in the occupied territory. This population is already four times what it was a decade ago, and its continuous expansion—together with accompanying Israeli military forces and security road networks—has taken up fully 40 percent of the land on the West Bank.

Any Palestinian state would be physically and economically completely dependent on Israel, and through it the United States. The Palestinian Authority, built up by the United States, would be tasked with policing the the Palestinian population and suppressing popular opposition.

The policy being promoted by Clinton is in fundamental continuity with that pursued by the Bush administration for the last eight years. Its objective is not "peace" in the Middle East, but rather the promotion of American hegemony over the region and its vast oil reserves.

A genuine settlement of the 60-year-old Israeli-Palestinian conflict can be found neither under the

auspices of US imperialism nor through the division of the territory into religious and ethnic-based statelets. It requires the unification of Arab and Jewish working people on a secular, socialist and internationalist perspective in a common struggle against Zionism, imperialism and the ruling elites of the Arab countries for a socialist federation of the Middle East.

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