

Bombardment of Gaza portends further criminal wars in Middle East

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For eight days, the Israel Defense Forces rained down devastation on Gaza. More than 150 Palestinian lives were lost, including 40 children, and much of the city lies in ruins.

Further suffering is inevitable, even if the current ceasefire holds. There are thousands of injured, and the death toll will likely mount. The infrastructure on which one and a half million people depend has been devastated, especially key civic buildings that were the main target of 1,500 bomb and missile attacks. Hundreds of millions of dollars in damage has been wrought through the destruction of residential and commercial buildings that have left 11,000 refugees sheltering in United Nations facilities and paralysed Gaza's economy.

The bombing of 140 smuggling tunnels and Egypt's pledge to more effectively police Gaza's border will prevent vital goods from entering a strip that has long served as a glorified prison camp.

The offensive against the Palestinians will also continue. The night the ceasefire came into effect the IDF arrested what it described as 55 "terror operatives" in the West Bank.

Israel's ability to lay siege to Gaza depended upon the backing of Washington. The belated insistence of the Obama administration on a ceasefire focused on preventing a threatened ground invasion. Its stance was motivated by the strategic goal of securing regime change in Syria and isolating Iran in order to establish undisputed hegemony over the oil-rich Middle East.

Gaza is only a foretaste of greater war crimes that are in active preparation—a fact openly discussed by analysts and political figures in the US, Europe and the Arab world. Jonathan Schanzer, vice president of research at the neoconservative Foundation for Defense of Democracies wrote, "The fact that the United States

and many European countries appear to give to Israel a green light to operate inside Gaza has something to do with the fact that we are now in a worldwide battle against Iran... This is very much seen as a part of the strategic calculus from the West to say 'Yes, get rid of the Iranian nodes inside Gaza and make it clear that Iran cannot operate there.'"

Al-Sharq al-Awsat, the most-read Arab newspaper, indirectly funded by the Saudi royal family, editorialised, "The solution to Gaza...return to Syria."

French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius on Wednesday said of Gaza, "Iranian responsibility is extremely heavy in all this," before accusing Tehran of "extremely negative" involvement in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Gaza.

France was the first country to recognise the Syrian opposition, now nominally led by the National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces formed in Doha, Qatar on November 11 under US tutelage. France has now been joined by Britain.

One day prior to the Gaza ceasefire, Foreign Secretary William Hague urged a ceasefire so that the western powers could turn more forcefully to "the conflict in Syria." Recognition of the Syrian opposition as the legitimate government "imposes responsibilities," he said, and the UK "will not rule out any option in accordance with international law that might save innocent lives in Syria and prevent the destabilisation of a region that remains critical to the security of the United Kingdom."

Sir David Richards, chief of the defence staff, said on November 11 that Britain could intervene in Syria within months. "The humanitarian situation this winter I think will deteriorate and that may well provoke calls to intervene in a limited way," he told the BBC. "There's no ultimately military reason why one

shouldn't, and I know that all these options are, quite rightly, being examined.”

On the day of the Gaza ceasefire, Turkey made its long anticipated request for Patriot antiballistic missiles to be supplied to it by NATO. The 28-member nation's ambassadors met in Brussels that day to discuss the request. Turkey is the regional power most capable of leading a proxy war against Syria on behalf of the US. NATO deployed surface-to-air missiles on Turkish soil in 1991 and 2003 during the US-led wars against Iraq. The missiles would be needed in the event of an air attack on Syria. German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle said Wednesday that Berlin has approved Turkey's request, while Defence Minister Thomas de Maizière stressed the move would also involve German soldiers.

The imperialist plotting in the Middle East depends far more upon its alliance with Turkey and the coalition of Arab powers led by Egypt and the Gulf States than upon Israeli military might. Washington calculates that it is they who are best placed to mobilise a movement against Iran and Syria while preventing the popular outrage that would be precipitated by Israeli involvement as already demonstrated in Gaza.

That is why Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood President Mohammed Mursi played the key role in imposing a ceasefire in collusion with US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Israel's Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, whom Mursi described in a letter as his “faithful friend”. At stake is not only the \$1.3 billion annual US military and economic aid to Cairo, but the support of Washington in suppressing popular opposition at home and the chance that the Muslim Brotherhood will form a major coalition of a newly installed puppet regime in Syria.

Gaza is a warning to working people the world over. The slaughter inflicted by Israel will be dwarfed by a military offensive waged on Syria or Iran. The working class must mobilise in a new antiwar movement to oppose all such criminal wars of intervention through the fight to bring down the governments of war criminals and imperialist brigands in every country and replace them with workers' governments.

Such a movement must be politically free from the influence of the pseudo-left groups, such as the International Socialist Organization in the US, the Socialist Workers Party in Britain and France's New

Anti-capitalist Party. Their hastily staged protests over Israel's attack on Gaza were only a cynical effort to conceal the fact that it was their support for the war against Libya and the destabilisation of Syria that paved the way for Israel's bloody offensive.

The revolutionary mass movement that was first expressed in the deposing of Ben Ali in Tunisia and Hosni Mubarak in Egypt in 2011 must be reanimated, but on new socialist and internationalist foundations. The goal must be the deposing of all the capitalist regimes of the region, in Cairo, Ankara, Riyadh and Doha as well as those in Tel Aviv and Damascus, and the formation of a unified socialist federation of the Middle East.

This necessitates the building of a new leadership based upon a strategy of world socialist revolution, the International Committee of the Fourth International.

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