

Oppose the Israeli invasion of Gaza

**Statement of the International Committee of the Fourth International
18 July 2014**

The International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) denounces the ground invasion of Gaza by the armed forces of Israel. What is unfolding is a calculated war crime against a defenceless population of 1.8 million Palestinians, who are trapped in the tiny strip of land of less than 200 square miles by the blockades imposed by the Zionist state in the north and east, and by the Egyptian regime in the south.

All those in ruling circles who assert that the onslaught is a justified response to the firing of crude rockets into Israel by the Islamist Palestinian movement Hamas are beneath contempt. Just one Israeli has died as a result of Hamas's retaliation for the slaughter of dozens of its members and hundreds of Palestinian civilians, including scores of women and children, by Israeli airstrikes.

Throughout June, Israeli forces used the pretext of searching for three missing teenagers to rampage through the West Bank, detaining over 600 alleged Hamas members and terrorising the Palestinian population. For the past two weeks, Israel has rained death and destruction upon Gaza, targeting not only more than 1,000 civilian homes, but cafes, mosques, health centres, vehicles clearly marked as media, water plants and sewage treatment facilities.

The assertion that the invasion of Gaza was provoked by Hamas's rejection of an Egyptian-brokered ceasefire is no less contemptible. The so-called ceasefire included none of the basic demands of the Palestinians, above all the lifting of the economic blockade and the release of those detained by Israel in the West Bank and other political prisoners. It was offered solely so that it would be rejected and give the US, the European powers and the Arab states the propaganda they needed to legitimise the Israeli assault.

Moufeed al-Hasainah, the Hamas housing minister, stated yesterday: "We want a ceasefire, but not a ceasefire at any cost. We're not animals. What is a

ceasefire without an open border crossing? Without salaries? Without jobs?"

Before the ground invasion, at least 243 Palestinians had already been killed in Gaza and more than 1,800 wounded. The carnage will now soar.

Brigadier General Motti Almoz, the spokesman of the Israel Defence Forces (IDF), declared that as of 10 p.m., Thursday night, "large ground forces accompanied by massive air force support, naval forces and intelligence, are taking over targets in Gaza, operating against tunnels and terror activists and infrastructure."

The Israeli government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu yesterday ordered the mobilisation of another 18,000 army reservists. The lightly armed Palestinian fighters who will try to defend their people are confronting over 60,000 Israeli troops, equipped with US-supplied tanks, heavy artillery, jet fighters, helicopter gunships, armed drones and the latest in personal body armour.

Journalists who have filed Twitter reports and other accounts of the initial stages of the assault have already described scenes of terror in northern Gaza towns such as Beit Lahiya and Al Atatra. The Palestinian side of the border is being pounded by tank and artillery fire, airstrikes and missiles fired by Israeli warships off the coast. Electricity has been cut off, plunging the area into total darkness, except for the flashes of explosions.

The Palestinian Health Ministry has reported "dozens taken to hospitals in the north, reportedly choking from some sort of gas." Before the ground offensive, health authorities already alleged that the IDF was again firing illegal white phosphorous munitions, as it did during the assault on Gaza in 2008–2009, and as American forces did during the 2004 siege of Fallujah in Iraq.

Netanyahu's representatives have stated that the objective is not to overthrow the Hamas government. The aim of the offensive is to carry out mass killings

and inflict mass destruction, then withdraw and leave Gaza a smoking ruin. In the north of the strip, leaflets dropped by the IDF from the air ordered the populations of six entire towns near the Israeli border to abandon their homes and seek refuge in Gaza City. Residents of four towns in the centre of the territory were ordered to evacuate to Khan Younis, while in the south, people in two towns were instructed to move to Rafah.

Tens of thousands of people could not or would not obey the edict and are now at the mercy of the Israeli military. The coming days will reveal whether the IDF has been ordered to completely level the targeted communities, on the pretext of destroying tunnels from Gaza into Israel and ending the ability of Hamas fighters to launch their ineffective rocket attacks.

The actions of Netanyahu's regime testify to the complete moral disintegration of the defenders of Zionism and the utter dead-end of its reactionary perspective of carving out a sectarian Jewish capitalist state in the Middle East. The Zionist attempt to channel the immense class and social tensions within Israel into crushing the decades-long resistance of the Palestinian population has assumed genocidal dimensions. However many die in Gaza over the next days and weeks from Israeli missiles and bullets, the lives of hundreds of thousands are threatened by the virtual collapse of water supplies and sewage treatment.

Netanyahu's government could not carry out its war on the Palestinian people without the host of accessories to its crimes. US imperialism supplies Israel with endless political and military aid. The European powers issued a predictable statement, declaring that while the European Union "deeply deplores the loss of innocent lives" in Gaza, "Israel has a right to protect its population." Egypt, the other Arab bourgeois states and the Palestinian Authority of President Mahmoud Abbas have blamed Hamas's refusal to accept the ceasefire charade they organised with Israel. The Hamas leadership itself has no answer to the assault other than to appeal to the very Arab bourgeois forces and the imperialist-controlled United Nations that have utterly betrayed the Palestinian people.

The atrocities being inflicted in Gaza will deepen the revulsion and hostility of workers and youth toward their own governments and ruling classes, in Israel,

throughout the Middle East and around the world. The future, as the WSWS perspective of July 12 stressed, depends on the building of sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International to fight for the program of socialist internationalism, the unity of the Arab and Jewish working class, and a common struggle against capitalism and imperialism.



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