

Kerry's diplomacy aids Israeli bloodbath in Gaza

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23 July 2014

As Israel escalated its murderous attack on Gaza on Tuesday, US Secretary of State John Kerry met with Egyptian dictator Abdel Fattah el-Sisi to promote an Egyptian ceasefire plan backed by Israel that amounts to a demand for abject surrender by Hamas.

The plan, already rejected last week by the Islamist movement, requires that the Palestinians in Gaza end all military resistance to Israel's blockade of the impoverished territory. It does not address Hamas' demands for a lifting of the blockade and release of hundreds of Hamas supporters arrested last month during Israel's weeks-long rampage on the West Bank.

Despite the overwhelming military superiority of Israel and the isolation of Hamas, the Islamist movement has mounted a level of resistance that has taken the Zionist regime and its American backers by surprise. On Tuesday, after Hamas rockets landed near the Tel Aviv airport, the US Federal Aviation Administration suspended all US commercial flights into and out of Israel.

The ceasefire proposal was worked out between Washington and Cairo, with the support of the Arab League, the United Nations, the European Union and the US/Israeli puppet Palestinian Authority government of Mahmoud Abbas, to provide a cover for Israel to launch its ground invasion and dramatically expand its assault on the Palestinian population of Gaza. It was designed to provoke a rejection by Hamas in an attempt to foist responsibility for the mass killing in Gaza on the Palestinian leadership there.

Egypt is directly aiding the Israeli military onslaught by keeping the Gaza/Egypt border crossing at Rafah sealed, preventing the Palestinians from seeking refuge in Egypt.

The US-led "diplomatic offensive" gives Israel a green light to continue its mass killing. It serves as a political accompaniment to Tel Aviv's military violence.

While this cynical subterfuge has not fooled many

millions of people around the world, including a significant section of the Israeli population, who look with horror and revulsion on the spectacle of mass murder and collective punishment unfolding in Gaza, it has been seized on by the imperialist powers and capitalist governments internationally to justify their support for the Israeli atrocity.

Events Tuesday provided a vile display of lying and complicity in war crimes on the part of the US, the Arab bourgeoisie, the European Union and the United Nations against the backdrop of even more destructive and wanton attacks by the Israeli military on Gaza.

Speaking in Cairo, Kerry described Israel's military offensive as an "appropriate and legitimate effort" in self-defense. He cast Hamas as the aggressor and placed the onus on it to halt the violence, despite the fact that Israel has thus far killed over 600 Palestinians, three-quarters of them civilians, and wounded over 3,700, while only two Israeli civilians have died from Hamas' crude rockets.

Demanding that it accept the terms of the Egyptian ceasefire proposal, Kerry said: "Only Hamas now needs to make the decision to spare innocent civilians from this violence."

After meeting with el-Sisi, himself a mass murderer, having ordered the killing of hundreds of Muslim Brotherhood supporters and the arrest of thousands more, Kerry held a joint press conference with Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shukri. Kerry was effusive in his praise of the blood-soaked Egyptian dictatorship, which came to power in a coup last year, praising it for "transitioning to democracy."

Meanwhile, the toll of death and destruction in Gaza mounted by the hour. Israel continued to hit civilian targets, including apartment complexes and office buildings in downtown Gaza City, mosques, sports stadiums, homes and United Nations schools meant to provide shelter for the growing flood of Gazans seeking to

escape the Israeli bombardment from air, sea and land.

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) reported that overnight and on Tuesday it carried out 190 new strikes, including 100 on the Shuja'iyah neighborhood in Gaza City that had been pummeled on Sunday, resulting that day alone in more than 62 deaths and some 400 wounded.

Entire families have been decimated by Israeli bombs and missiles. The Kelani family of Gaza City joined the list early Tuesday, losing seven of their number in an Israeli attack.

A TV crew from the International Solidarity Movement recorded a video showing a young Palestinian shot twice and killed by Israeli snipers as he was searching through rubble for his family after heavy shelling in Shuja'iyah.

The British *Guardian* interviewed Faris Saleem, who lives northwest of Gaza City. Saleem described an Israeli naval bombardment of the area. "In a situation like that," he said, "all you can do is stay inside and wait for your imminent death. All nine members of my family decided not to flee anywhere, despite the shelling through the day. It is quite tricky to foresee what will become a target for the Israeli army."

The raw statistics of death and destruction are already staggering. Some 3,000 homes have been destroyed across Gaza as a result of Israeli air strikes and tank shelling, according to the Palestinian Health Ministry.

Around 85,000 people have fled the Shuja'iyah, Toffah and Shaaf neighborhoods on the east side of Gaza City. The United Nations Palestinian agency UNRWA on Tuesday put the number of displaced Palestinians in more than 77 shelters at more than 118,300. One of those shelters, a UN school in the central Gaza town of Al-Maghazi, came under Israeli fire Tuesday as a team was inspecting damage from the previous day, a UN official said.

The UN office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said Sunday that 43 percent of Gaza's territory was impacted by Israeli evacuation warnings or declarations of "no-go-zones."

The Gaza Ministry of Health said the number of Palestinians killed in the conflict had risen to 609 by Tuesday. Three quarters of these were civilians, and, according to the United Nations children's agency UNICEF, a third were children.

That Israel has no intention of halting the slaughter was made clear Tuesday, when it rejected a call from the UN for a five-hour truce that had been accepted by Hamas and Islamic Jihad. A senior Israeli military official told reporters, "We have a mission, and we are going to fulfill

it. Israel is not going to leave the threat of tunnels beneath the border between Gaza Strip and Israel."

The depravity of the Zionist regime was underscored by a remark of the Israeli ambassador to the US, Ron Dermer, to a meeting of the Christians United for Israel Summit in Washington on Tuesday. "The truth is," Dermer declared, "the Israel Defense Forces should be given the Nobel Peace Prize ... for fighting with unimaginable restraint."

Asked about this statement, US State Department deputy press secretary Marie Harf said of the Israelis, "Maybe they could do a little bit more [to protect civilians]."

The international line-up of imperialism and its agencies behind Israeli war crimes was demonstrated by two other events Tuesday.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon held a joint press conference in Tel Aviv with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Appearing alongside an individual who deserves to be prosecuted for crimes against humanity, Moon began his remarks by condemning Hamas for firing rockets into Israel and echoed Israel's contemptible charge that Hamas is using Palestinian civilians as "human shields," and is therefore responsible for Palestinian casualties.

In Brussels, a meeting of European Union foreign ministers issued a statement on Gaza unequivocally laying the blame for the carnage on Hamas and demanding that it unilaterally disarm. The statement branded the "indiscriminate firing of rockets into Israel by Hamas and militant groups in the Gaza Strip" as "criminal and unjustifiable acts."

"All terrorist groups in Gaza must disarm," the statement continued. The EU did not charge Israel with any violations of international law or place any demands on the conduct of its war on the Palestinians. The Israeli Foreign Ministry issued a statement hailing the EU communiqué as a vindication of its policy in Gaza.



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