

Israel calls up more troops to join Gaza slaughter

Patrick Martin
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The Israeli government has called up another 16,000 reservists to join the military slaughter of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, bringing the total number of troops mobilized since the conflict began in early July to 86,000.

After a cabinet meeting Thursday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) were given the task of complete destruction of tunnels built by Hamas, the ruling party in Gaza, and other Islamist groups. He described this as “the first phase” of the demilitarization of Gaza.

The tunnels have become the new all-purpose pretext for the Israeli aggression against the Palestinian population of Gaza, a narrow enclave with a land area equal to the cities of Detroit or Philadelphia, with a population of 1.8 million people. The territory is completely blockaded and encircled by hostile military forces: the Israeli army on the eastern and southern sides, the Egyptian army on the west, and the Israeli navy along the Mediterranean coast.

There was no mention of tunnels during the initial Israeli airstrikes on Gaza. Instead, the launching of primitive rockets by Hamas and other militias was presented as the main reason for Israeli bombing. But once the ground invasion of Gaza began July 18, Israeli and US propaganda refocused on the tunnels, because their detection and destruction could be used to justify a protracted presence on the ground.

Netanyahu indicated that any ceasefire in the near future would be a short-term event to permit recovery and burial of the dead and receipt of emergency supplies for the civilian population, to be followed quickly by resumption of the violence. “We are determined to complete this mission with or without a cease-fire,” Netanyahu said. The logic of this position is an open-ended ground campaign, with each new

tunnel used to justify pushing ever further into Gaza.

The latest troop call-up and the deployment of IDF forces within the Gaza Strip strongly suggest that the next stage in the Israeli war will be a direct ground assault on Gaza City itself, one of the most densely populated areas in the world, which would entail civilian casualties far in excess of the harrowing toll already exacted by a war now in its fourth week. Such a move would be accompanied by stepped-up raids on the homes of Hamas officials, which are not military operations but attacks by Israeli death squads who assassinate entire families.

There were about 20 air strikes Wednesday night, and others throughout the day Thursday. Eleven people were killed in the Nurisat camp in central Gaza, including three children, and 46 were injured. More than 250,000 people are displaced from their homes, about 15 percent of the total population of Gaza.

The Gaza Health Ministry put the accumulated Palestinian death toll at 1,432, with more than 8,000 wounded. “The hospitals in Gaza yesterday had a very difficult time,” said a spokesman. “All the hospital morgues were flooding with dead bodies, and the injured were laying on hospital floors because of the lack of hospital beds.”

Eighty percent of those killed by Israeli bombs, missiles, shells and bullets are civilians, including 327 children and 166 women. The number of children alone exceeds the death toll on the Malaysian airliner shot down over eastern Ukraine, but there have been no calls from the Obama administration, the European Union or the corporate-controlled media for punishing those responsible for this slaughter of innocents.

The current Israeli military operation has now gone on longer and killed more people than Operation Cast Lead, in December 2008-January 2009, which was

condemned as a war crime in a study commissioned by the UN commission on human rights. Washington is directly implicated in the bloodletting, as Pentagon officials confirmed that they have begun to deliver hand grenades, mortar rounds and other ammunition and equipment to restock the forces attacking Gaza, under a longstanding agreement between the US and Israel.

There was mounting condemnation Thursday of the deliberate Israeli targeting of UN refugee centers in Gaza, including a strike Wednesday on a school that killed at least 19 people. UN Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay noted that six UN schools in Gaza had been hit by Israeli bombs and shells and called for “real accountability.”

“The shelling and bombing of UN schools which have resulted in the killing and maiming of frightened women and children and civilian men, including UN staff, seeking shelter from the conflict are horrific acts and may possibly amount to war crimes,” she said. “The shelling of houses directly means a violation of Israel’s obligation to protect the right to housing, right to food, right to clean water of Gazans, even as, under its obligation as an occupying force.”

Even the US government joined in the handwringing over the slaughter of Palestinian civilians—while still giving unstinting support to the Israeli regime and the atrocities it is perpetrating. White House spokesman Josh Earnest said, “The shelling of a UN facility that is housing innocent civilians who are fleeing violence is totally unacceptable and totally indefensible.”

The real attitude of American imperialism was expressed in the twin resolutions that passed the Senate Tuesday and the House of Representatives Wednesday, giving bipartisan support for Israel while condemning Hamas for firing rockets. The House resolution echoed the lies of Netanyahu, denouncing Hamas for using civilians as “human shields by placing their missile batteries in densely populated areas and near schools, hospitals, and mosques.”

Meanwhile the *Jerusalem Post* revealed that Israeli military officials drew up plans for the current war on Gaza in April, when IDF Chief of Staff Lt.-Gen. Benny Gantz sent a memorandum to his staff to prepare for a “summer war” against Hamas and began moving large numbers of troops to the Gaza Division. This confirms the suspicion that the furor over the kidnapping and murder of three young Israeli settlers in May was only

the pretext for these plans, drawn up in advance.



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