

The slaughter in Gaza: A warning to the international working class

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The Israeli military's horrific slaughter in the Gaza Strip continued unabated over the weekend. The death toll of Palestinians, overwhelmingly civilians, climbed to 1,822, including hundreds of children. Nearly 10,000 have been injured, overflowing hospitals that are at breaking point, like much of the rest of the infrastructure in the enclave of some 1.8 million people.

The latest atrocity—a missile strike on a UN school in Rafah on Sunday—killed at least 10 people and wounded 35 others. The facility—the third UN school to be hit—had been sheltering some 3,000 of the more than 450,000 people who have been driven from their homes in the Gaza Strip over the past month. UN officials had repeatedly advised the Israeli military of the school's coordinates.

Amid mounting international anger, outrage and protests, the attack on the school brought forth utterly hypocritical criticisms from Washington and its allies, who have been backing the Israeli offensive to the hilt. US State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki declared that her government was “appalled” at the “disgraceful shelling” of the school and called on the Israeli military to do more to avoid civilian casualties.

The Obama administration, however, has not only given its full political support to Israel's criminal war against the population of Gaza; it has also provided the means for waging it. The US, which arms and finances Israel to the tune of \$3 billion a year, last week opened the huge cache of arms, known as the War Reserves Stock Allies-Israel, to restock the Israeli military's depleted supplies of ammunition, mortar rounds, grenades and other weapons.

While announcing a seven-hour pause in operations today, the Israeli regime has made absolutely clear that it will not stop until its objectives have been achieved.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu declared yesterday that the military would continue for “however long it will take and with as much force as needed.”

The aim of the murderous assault on the Gaza Strip is not simply to prevent the crude rockets being fired into Israel by Palestinian militants, or to destroy their network of tunnels. The attacks on civilians along with schools, hospitals and vital infrastructure are not mistakes but part of a calculated plan aimed at terrorising an entire population and breaking the 66-year history of Palestinian resistance to occupation.

The methods devised and honed over decades by the Israeli military and security apparatus—detentions without trial, torture, targeted assassinations, collective punishment, indiscriminate shelling of urban areas—recall nothing so much as the Nazi atrocities in occupied Europe during the 1930s and 1940s. The resort to such barbarism testifies to the bankruptcy of the Zionist project, which justified the establishment of Israel as a refuge for the Jewish population from such horrors.

Moreover, it has a broader international significance. The war crimes being carried out in Gaza today, and the fact that they are being supported by all the major powers, are a warning of what is being prepared against the working class in every country. The massacres in the Gaza Strip coincide with the centenary of the outbreak of World War I when the major powers sent millions to their death in pursuit of their predatory ambitions. Once again, the imperialist powers are preparing for catastrophic war.

Six years after the worst financial breakdown since the 1930s, the crisis wracking global capitalism has deepened, threatening new calamities. Around the world, the ruling classes have no rational solution to the

immense social and economic difficulties stemming from the irresolvable contradiction between global economy and the outmoded nation-state system in which capitalism is rooted. All of the imperialist powers are seeking to extricate themselves by preparing for war against their rivals abroad and class war against the working class at home.

The Israeli onslaught in Gaza is a forewarning of the measures that will be used in every country against working-class resistance to war, militarism and the agenda of austerity. The methods developed in the course of a decade of the US-led wars in Afghanistan and Iraq to terrorise hostile populations will also be used against workers fighting to defend their jobs, living standards and basic democratic rights.

The scaffolding of a police state has already been erected. In the United States, fundamental democratic rights and constitutional norms have been systematically undermined, most flagrantly in the massive NSA and CIA spying apparatus and in the Obama administration's authorisation of the assassination of American citizens by drone strikes. The lockdown of an entire American city—Boston—in 2013 by heavily-armed soldiers and police backed by armoured vehicles and helicopters exposed the extent of the military-police preparations underway against the working class in the event of widespread social opposition and rebellion.

The preparations are no less advanced in the imperialist centres in Europe, Japan and Australia. Under the banner of the “war on terror,” the legal framework has been laid of profoundly anti-democratic measures, including detention without charge, mass surveillance and the call-out of the military to enforce the dictates of the corporate and financial elite. Major international sporting events and global summits are now routinely surrounded by a massive security presence and function as trial runs for the roll-out of police-state measures to suppress working people.

The drive to war and austerity, to be enforced by ruthless autocratic measures, is the product of a bankrupt social order. To defend its basic democratic and social rights, the working class must make its own preparations—the building of a unified international movement to put an end to capitalism and all its depredations and to refashion society on socialist lines in the interests of the vast majority of humanity, not the

profits of a wealthy few.



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