

Israel again opens fire on Gaza protesters, killing three and wounding hundreds

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For the fifth consecutive week, the Israeli military rained live ammunition on thousands of unarmed Palestinian protesters in Gaza yesterday, killing three and wounding between 600 and 900 people.

Friday's bloodletting brings the total number of Palestinians killed by the Israeli army over the past five weeks to 45, including four children, with more than 6,000 wounded. They have been shot down for participating in "March of Return" protests at the Israeli border fence that have drawn tens of thousands each Friday since March 30. The demonstrators are demanding the right, protected under international law, to return to their historical homeland.

The protests are continuing until May 16, which marks the 70th anniversary of the founding of Israel through the forced expulsion of three quarters of a million Palestinians from their homes in 1948.

All of the three men killed yesterday died of gunshot wounds. One has been identified as 21-year-old Mohammad al-Maqeed, who was gunned down at the border near Gaza City. Abdel-Salam Baker, 29, was killed to the east of Khan Younis city, in the south of the Gaza strip. The identity of the third victim has not yet been released.

Among the wounded, 178 suffered gunshot injuries, according to Gaza health officials, and two remain in critical condition. Hundreds more were hit by rubber-encased steel bullets or are suffering tear gas exposure, after Israeli forces showered the area with tear gas canisters from behind their heavily fortified positions.

Al Jazeera cited Ashraf al-Qidra, a Gaza health official, who said that Israeli forces targeted medical service points twice with unidentified gas, triggering convulsions, severe vomiting and suffocation among a number of victims.

The flood of new casualties has pushed Gaza's already overwhelmed hospitals beyond the breaking point.

Already two days ago, the director of hospitals in Gaza, Abdul Latif al-Haj, told the Chinese news agency Xinhua that "medicines at hospital stocks could run out within a few days due to the high number of injuries we received." Since 2007, the Israeli and Egyptian governments have maintained a blockade on medical supplies and equipment to the seaside territory.

The ongoing murder of civilians and children in Gaza is proceeding under the approving eye of the American government and an utterly corrupt corporate media. The day before yesterday's protests, the Trump administration's ambassador to the United Nations, Nikki Haley, gave the green light for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government to kill protesters with impunity, declaring at a UN Security Council debate on the Middle East that "anyone who truly cares about children in Gaza" must demand that the bourgeois Islamist movement Hamas "immediately stop using children as cannon fodder in its conflict with Israel."

Israel's ambassador to the UN, Danny Dann, told the Security Council meeting that "terrorists are hiding while allowing, even hoping, for their people to die." He added, "This is evil in its purest form." Anticipating yesterday's attack, he declared, "Israel has an obligation to protect our citizens, and we will do so while minimizing civilian casualties to the other side, but let me be clear: Israel will never apologize for defending our country."

No Israeli soldiers have been injured or killed during this year's protests.

Reports by journalists in Gaza yesterday claimed that even after Israeli soldiers began shooting into the crowd, many protesters continued to run forward toward the border. The increasing desperation of broad layers of Gaza youth is a product of both the unbearable conditions facing the more than 1.9 million Palestinians blockaded in what is the largest open-air prison on earth, and the lack of any viable perspective provided by a supposed "two-

state solution.”

In line with the total support of the American government for Israel’s assault on the protests, the media has either remained silent about yesterday’s killings or explicitly defended them.

An article published yesterday by the *New York Times*, written by Iyad Abuheweila and David M. Halbfinger, is particularly filthy.

The authors begin by presenting an image of an Israeli state, equipped with the most advanced military equipment on the planet, besieged on all sides by a virtually unarmed population, who, like locusts, have “conjured up the idea of swarming across the barrier.” The authors write: “Israelis have been worrying aloud about what their soldiers would do in response.”

Citing protesters armed with “wire cutters, hooks and winches,” the *Times* quotes Lt. Colonel Jonathon Conricus, an Israeli military spokesman, who describes the peaceful protests as “the first time we’ve seen this kind of synchronized and focused attack on the fence.” He adds that “they’re trying to infiltrate into Israel, damage our infrastructure and kill Israelis.” Conricus declares that “it doesn’t matter if someone is carrying flowers if he’s tearing down a fence. That’s a violent threat.”

In evidence of the supposed defensive actions of Israeli snipers, the *Times* authors claim Palestinian protesters “threw firebombs and rolled burning tires at the fence to try to melt it,” and refer to the placing of burning cans of kerosene on “kites that are routinely sailed over the fence, setting fires to Israeli farmland.”

This is the same newspaper whose columnists routinely crack out denunciations of atrocities by foreign governments—so long as the offending parties are not allied with Washington. One can only imagine the moral indignation of the *Times* if it was the Russian, Syrian or Iranian governments shooting at unarmed protesters.

The US corporate media treats the murder of unarmed Palestinians as a non-event.



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