

Mass murder in Gaza

Bill Van Auken
15 May 2018

The Israeli military slaughtered dozens of unarmed Palestinian demonstrators and wounded thousands more in Gaza on Monday. As this atrocity was being carried out, a grotesque ceremony was unfolding barely 50 miles away to mark the formal opening of a US embassy in the divided and occupied city of Jerusalem.

The two events—occurring on the 70th anniversary of Israel’s declaration of independence—were juxtaposed by the media, broadcast simultaneously on split screens by television networks. What could not be concealed was the fact that the opening of the American embassy was entirely in line with and, indeed, a statement of political support for the massacre taking place at the security fence separating the impoverished occupied territory from Israel.

The number of unarmed Palestinian protesters shot dead by Israel Defense Forces (IDF) snipers on the eastern border of Gaza rose to at least 60 Tuesday, with over 2,700 others wounded, many suffering grievous injuries from live ammunition that will almost certainly drive up the death toll. Many of the injured who survive will lose one or more limbs as a result of Israeli sniper fire. Palestinian ambulance teams were reportedly unable to collect some of the bodies of protesters who were cut down as they reached the heavily fortified fence.

Among the dead were at least eight children under the age of 16, including a 12-year-old and one young girl. The wounded included 78 women and 203 children, the Palestinian Ministry of Health in Gaza reported.

This deliberate mass killing of refugees demanding the right to return to the homes and villages from which their families were violently expelled 70 years ago with the founding of the state of Israel is a monstrous criminal act.

The lethal violence unleashed by the Israeli military included air strikes, tank shelling and the dropping of flammable material on tent encampments where Palestinian families had gathered.

This unbridled state violence is motivated not by any lethal threat from the tens of thousands of unarmed demonstrators. The IDF, while killing well over 100 Palestinians, has suffered not a single casualty since the “Great March of Return” protests began in Gaza on March 30.

Rather, the elementary right demanded by the youth marching into gunfire poses an existential threat to the entire Zionist project of carving out a Jewish state based upon racial and religious exclusivity through the dispossession of the Palestinian people.

All those involved in this mass killing, from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his cabinet, their enablers in Washington, down to the snipers firing the bullets, are collectively and personally responsible for war crimes. As the Nuremberg trials

of the Nazi war criminals established, soldiers are able and obliged to refuse an illegal order to wantonly kill civilians. Only an army saturated with racist and fascistic ideology can be counted on to commit such crimes.

The carnage on the Gaza border was matched by the atmosphere of criminality and reaction at the US embassy ceremony, which was staged before an audience of right-wing Israeli and American politicians, army commanders and leading rabbis.

Present for the occasion was Sheldon Adelson, the Las Vegas casino mogul whose millions have gone to fund Zionist settlements in the occupied West Bank as well as Donald Trump’s presidential campaign. Also present was Joseph Lieberman, the former Democratic senator and vice-presidential candidate, who drafted the 1995 US legislation—supported overwhelmingly by both parties—that called for transferring the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

Further underscoring the bipartisan support for Israel’s criminal policy, Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer of New York hailed the opening of the Jerusalem embassy as “long overdue,” adding, “I applaud President Trump for doing it.”

Providing an opening invocation was Robert Jeffress, the right-wing Dallas Baptist preacher who has declared that “all Jews will go to hell” and that Islam is “a heresy from the pit of hell.” He spoke alongside an Israeli rabbi who has described blacks as “monkeys.” Also present was another prominent “Christian Zionist,” John Hagee, who has declared that Hitler was “a hunter” sent by God to fulfill biblical prophecy by chasing the Jews into Israel. Such are the friends of the Israeli state.

While Trump appeared via video, the main speech was given by his son-in-law Jared Kushner, who told the audience, “We stand with Israel because we both believe in human rights, democracy worth defending, and believe that we know that it is the right thing to do.” Nothing could provide a more graphic exposure of the “human rights” and “democracy” promoted by Washington than US support for the mass killing of civilian protesters by the Israeli military.

Kushner went on to blame the Palestinians for their own deaths, declaring to applause that “those provoking violence are part of the problem and not part of the solution.” This position was concretized Monday afternoon by a White House spokesman who rebuffed repeated questions about whether Washington was calling on Israel to exercise restraint. He insisted that the “cynical actions” of Hamas, the bourgeois Islamist party that administers the territory, were entirely to blame for the massacre.

The corporate media has done its best to conceal the scale of the crime being carried out in Gaza. Television networks in the US

gave the bloodbath short shrift, while making no criticism of Israel's savage repression. One can easily imagine the reaction had such killings been carried out by the government in Russia, Iran, Venezuela or any other country targeted by the hypocritical "human rights" imperialists.

The European powers issued hand-wringing statements on the Gaza bloodbath that only point to their own complicity. The European Union's foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini called for Israel to respect the "principle of proportionality in the use of force"—something that it clearly will not do—while demanding that Hamas insure that the protests "remain strictly nonviolent."

For their part, the Arab bourgeois regimes that once falsely postured as defenders of the Palestinian people have turned their backs on the carnage in Gaza. The Saudi monarchy, which has aligned itself firmly with the US and Israel in preparations for a region-wide war with Iran, welcomes the repression.

The Egyptian regime of Gen. Abdel-Fateh al-Sisi issued a hypocritical statement declaring that it "rejects the use of force against peaceful marches demanding legitimate and just rights." This came from a government that consolidated its power by massacring 1,600 followers of the elected president backed by the Muslim Brotherhood, Mohamed Mursi, toppled in a 2013 coup. The Egyptian regime has demanded that the Gaza protests stop, fearing that the contagion of mass resistance could spill across its own border.

In exchange for suppressing the demonstrators, Cairo has offered to open up the country's border crossing to Gaza to allow in food, fuel, medicine and other vital supplies that have been stopped by Israel. Tel Aviv has closed down its one open border crossing in retaliation for the protests, threatening to throw the territory's fragile infrastructure into a state of complete collapse.

There is no fundamental difference between what the Israeli government has done in Gaza and the actions carried out by the most reactionary regimes in history, from British colonialism's mass killing of Indians in Amritsar in 1919, to the South African apartheid regime's massacre at Sharpeville in 1960 to the crimes of the Nazi regime itself.

Attempts by Israel to justify its slaughter of Palestinians with references to the Holocaust are morally obscene, as are the efforts to intimidate those who denounce these crimes by labeling them as anti-Semites. This was grotesquely illustrated by Israeli Security Minister Gilad Erdan, who said on Monday that the scale of the death toll on the Gaza border "doesn't indicate anything—just as the number of Nazis who died in the world war doesn't make Nazism something you can explain or understand."

Only a deeply diseased and demoralized society could produce such a comparison between the desperate youth of Gaza, imprisoned by the Israeli military in a territory where they confront 60 percent unemployment, mass poverty and deprivation, with Nazis. The reality is that the Israeli occupation and repression have produced conditions that resemble nothing so much as the Warsaw Ghetto, replete with snipers ready to kill anyone attempting to get out.

Israel as a society and a country is heading toward the abyss. Regardless of the support it enjoys from Washington and other imperialist powers, in the eyes of millions around the world it is

viewed as a criminal state, having lost all moral and political legitimacy. No government claiming to be democratic has ever committed such atrocities. The crimes in Gaza are the end product of the methods through which the state was founded 70 years ago and all of the consequences since.

Behind the Zionist myths of Israel representing a "safe haven" for the Jewish people, the onslaught against Gaza and the drive by Tel Aviv toward a wider war in the Middle East are in large measure driven by the desperation of the country's capitalist ruling class to divert social and class tensions outward by promoting fear, anti-Arab chauvinism and militarism. Israel is second only to the US as the most socially unequal of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries, with a 22 percent poverty rate and one of the world's highest per capita concentrations of billionaires.

The bloody events in Gaza pose with utmost urgency the necessity of uniting the working class, Arab and Jewish alike, across national, religious and sectarian divides in a common struggle against imperialism, Zionism and the Arab bourgeoisie on the basis of a socialist and internationalist program.

There is no national road out of the present bloody impasse, either in the continuation of the crisis-ridden Zionist project or in the chimera of a "two-state solution" based on the creation of a Bantustan-style Palestinian state under the rule of a corrupt native bourgeoisie.

At the same time, the massacre in Gaza constitutes an urgent warning to workers everywhere. The Israeli state's turn to savage repression is part of a shift to the right by capitalist governments all over the world. The indifference of the media and bourgeois governments to the mowing down of unarmed Palestinian demonstrators is an indication of their readiness to carry out and justify even greater crimes in any country where they face mass resistance.



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)