

Israel continues “full force” attacks on Gaza, backed by US and several Arab states

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17 May 2021

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu authorized Israel’s heaviest airstrikes on Gaza City yesterday, insisting that the war will go on “as long as necessary” and that attacks on Gaza would continue in “full force.” Israel “wants to levy a heavy price” from Hamas, the Muslim Brotherhood group that rules Gaza, he added.

Netanyahu proceeds with his criminal war on a largely defenceless people with the full backing of US President Joe Biden, who has repeatedly declared for “Israel’s right to defend itself.” On Sunday the US, for the third time in a week, blocked the United Nations from issuing a toothless call for a cease-fire.

This was despite a warning from UN secretary general António Guterres to the imperialist powers that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict threatened to spiral out of control, fostering extremism and communal violence not only in the occupied Palestinian territories and Israel but across the region. On Sunday evening, Biden said he was telephoning Netanyahu but refused to call for a cease-fire.

Joining the US for the first time in all but openly siding with Israel are the four Arab states who have signed the Abraham Accords normalizing relations with the Netanyahu government—the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Morocco and Sudan. “In what appeared to be a state-backed response, the hashtag ‘Palestine is not my cause’ circulated in the UAE, Bahrain and Kuwait over the weekend,” the *Guardian* reported.

The attacks on Gaza overnight Sunday/Monday were more intense, covering a broader area and lasting longer than the bombardment the previous night in which 42 Palestinians were killed. A reported 54 fighter jets dropped 110 precision munitions on 35 targets in 20 minutes. Casualties in Gaza already stand at over 200, including two doctors, at least 35 women and 58

children, and about 1,300 wounded since Israel started its bombardment of the besieged enclave last Monday. Over 700 homes and 80 buildings have been destroyed, displacing 34,000 people who now lack the most basic necessities of life, including food. There have been 10 deaths in Israel, including two children and a soldier, killed by some of the 3,100 projectiles launched from Gaza.

Civilians have borne the brunt of the Israeli attacks. The Palestinian news agency Wafa reported that the raids had targeted houses and government buildings, including a four-storey home near al-Shifa hospital, Gaza’s main medical facility. According to other local media reports, the airstrikes also hit the main coastal road west of the city, security compounds and open spaces, while Gaza’s power distribution company said the airstrikes had damaged a feeder line from the only power plant to much of southern Gaza City.

Israel Defense Forces (IDF) spokesperson Brig.-Gen. Hidaï Zilberman reported that IDF warplanes had hit 15 kilometers of Hamas’s underground tunnel network for the third time, as well as nine residences it claims belonged to high-ranking Hamas commanders. This follows the destruction of the homes belonging to Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar and his brother Muhammed, several other homes of Hamas officials and commanders.

Islamic Jihad reported that an Israeli air strike had killed Hussam Abu Harbeed, one of the group’s leaders. Hamas has previously confirmed that Israel had assassinated 20 of its leaders, although the IDF claim that the total of senior militant leaders is far higher.

The Palestinian Foreign Minister Riyad al-Maliki and B’tselem, the Israeli human rights group, have accused Israel of committing war crimes in Gaza against civilians, pointing to the bombing of a house in a

refugee camp that killed 10 people, leaving only a baby alive out of an entire family gathering, a building housing media organisations, including the Associated Press and Al Jazeera, and a 13-story office and apartment building. The IDF has posted before and after pictures, boasting of its crimes.

The IDF is targeting so-called “military” locations in the full knowledge that civilian deaths are inevitable. The *Guardian* quoted the Israeli army spokesperson’s office who said that on Monday Israel hit Hamas’s “underground military infrastructure.” The newspaper said the spokesperson’s office revealed that as a result of the strike, “the underground facility collapsed, causing the civilian houses’ foundations above them to collapse as well, leading to unintended casualties.”

Israeli security forces have also escalated their terrorization of the Palestinians in the occupied West Bank. According to the Palestinian Authority (PA) Ministry of Health, 21 Palestinians have been killed since May 7, along with 3,728 wounded, of whom at least 441 were hit by live ammunition. Most were killed or wounded during the demonstrations, culminating in the Nakba Day protests, that have swept across the occupied territory, making it the worst single day of fatalities since April 2002.

Palestinians initially took to the streets in protest against Israel’s storming of the al-Aqsa Mosque during Ramadan and the planned evictions of Palestinian families from the Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan neighbourhoods adjacent to the Old City in occupied East Jerusalem. This is part of Israel’s broader programme of ethnic cleansing to remove Palestinians.

Palestinian villagers have also faced escalating violence at the hands of armed settlers who have mounted attacks under the protection of soldiers who shoot those who oppose such pogroms with rubber-coated bullets or live ammunition. The IDF has now deployed 24 battalions to the West Bank, nearly double the usual number, replacing the Border Police sent to crush the growing Palestinian unrest within Israel.

Netanyahu and Israel’s political leadership have given the go-ahead to his fascistic allies to send gangs of gun-toting settlers, right-wing football hooligans and ultranationalist bigots to the towns and cities where Palestinian citizens of Israel reside. The violence, which continued over the weekend in towns and cities across the country, including East Jerusalem, has led to

the deaths of a dozen people and the arrest of nearly 1,000—850 of whom are Palestinians. In Lod, the authorities have declared a state of emergency, imposed a nighttime curfew and banned non-residents from entering the town after the killing of a Palestinian by a Jewish supremacist.

The High Follow-up Committee for Israel’s Palestinian citizens have called a general strike to be held on Tuesday over the conflict at the Al-Aqsa Mosque and violence by settlers in the mixed-population cities.

So far, the state prosecutors have only pressed charges against the Palestinians. Of the 116 indictments, most are for assaulting police officers, *Ha’aretz* was informed that they plan to press more charges “soon,” supposedly including against Jewish citizens involved in anti-Palestinian violence.

On Friday, the police arrested Sheikh Kamal Al-Khatib, the deputy head of the northern branch of the Islamic Movement in Israel, in the northern town of Kfar Kana on suspicion of incitement, prompting angry clashes that resulting in the wounding of 28 people, four of them seriously.

According to *Ha’aretz*, the police have handed over the most serious cases of violence to Israel’s domestic spy agency Shin Bet. This follows Netanyahu’s pledge that the police should not fear any investigation of their actions in suppressing the riots and clashes.



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