

Netanyahu war on Gaza continues as imperialist powers and Arab states feign ceasefire efforts

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The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) continued its murderous assault on Gaza overnight Wednesday, pounding central Gaza and the al-Rimal neighbourhood in an effort to destroy Hamas's network of tunnels, destroying homes and killing at least nine people.

The IDF also shelled "a number of targets" in southern Lebanon after four rockets were fired from Seddiqine, a village near the coastal city of Tyre, into northern Israel—the third such flare up since the start of the war on Gaza on May 11.

At least 20 of Hamas's military leaders have been assassinated, with IDF spokesman Brig.-Gen. Hidai Zilberman admitting, "Throughout the operation we have tried to assassinate Mohammed Deif. We've tried to kill him several times." Deif is the head of Hamas's military wing, the Izzedine al-Qassam Brigades, and has escaped numerous assassination attempts.

Israel's sophisticated weaponry has killed at least 227 Palestinians, including 63 children and 36 women, and injured 1,530 others since May 10, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. This contrasts with the toll from the Palestinians' largely home-made projectiles that have killed 10 Israelis, including two children and a soldier, as well as two Thai migrant workers.

Speaking to foreign diplomats Wednesday afternoon, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu made clear that he had no interest in reaching a ceasefire with Hamas until he had achieved his objective of obliterating Hamas and further degrading Gaza.

A further military escalation on Gaza was possible, he said, as Israel seeks to "degrade Hamas' capabilities." He added, "You can either conquer them, and that's always an open possibility, or you can deter them, and we are engaged right now in forceful deterrence. But I

have to say we don't rule out anything." That was taken to mean that eradicating Hamas as a political force and re-occupying Gaza were also being considered.

Netanyahu can maintain his bellicose stance, despite mass popular opposition globally to his criminal war on Gaza, his plans to drive out the Palestinians from occupied East Jerusalem and sending fascistic goons to terrorise Israel's Palestinian citizens because he knows he has Washington's backing. He stressed that he "appreciate[d] the support of our friend, US President Joe Biden, for the State of Israel's right to self-defence."

Biden has three times blocked the UN Security Council from issuing a non-binding statement criticizing Israel and calling for a halt to the war, has agreed a \$735 million arms package for Israel and called for a ceasefire only at some unspecified time. On Wednesday, Biden issued an equally meaningless plea for a "de-escalation."

Netanyahu also has the support of the European powers who, despite their handwringing and calls for a ceasefire, refuse to denounce Washington or oppose its support for the Zionist State and its criminal war.

Netanyahu's key ally in the region has long been Egypt, whose brutal dictator General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi overthrew the Muslim Brotherhood-led government of President Mohammed Morsi in a bloody coup in 2013. El-Sisi has aided and abetted Israel's blockade of Gaza, closing the enclave's southern border at Rafah with Egypt. He has clamped down on any show of solidarity with the Palestinians, including arresting a doctor who volunteered to tend the wounded in Gaza and others who have waved the Palestinian

flag.

Providing further comfort and reassurance for Netanyahu are the Arab regimes which have thrown the Palestinians to the wolves in pursuit of an anti-Iran alliance and their own commercial deals with Israel. The states that signed the Abraham Accords with Israel—the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, Sudan and Morocco—and Saudi Arabia, which has pursued its own relations with Israel and recently hosted a secret meeting with Netanyahu, made pro-forma criticisms of Israel's storming of the al-Aqsa Mosque compound during Ramadan. But they have been virtually silent about merciless firing of missiles, bombs and shells on Gaza's defenceless population. Articles about the destruction wrought by the war are all but absent in the Arabic media.

UAE leader Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan meekly asked Israel to “prevent practices that violate the sanctity” of the al-Aqsa Mosque. Morocco's King Mohammed VI organized a diversionary stunt by opening Morocco's border with the Spanish enclave of Ceuta, allowing 8,000 people to enter Spanish territory, enraging the Spanish government, which brutally deported many of them back to Morocco. This was in large part aimed at deflecting the anger that has led to mass rallies in support of the Palestinians and opposing his de facto support Israel's atrocities, under conditions where his mismanagement of the pandemic has pauperized millions.

Workers and youth all over the world, including in Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Yemen, have also poured onto the streets to express their support for the Palestinians.

On Tuesday, Palestinians in both the occupied territories and Israel took part in their first ever joint general strike, shuttering workplaces, businesses and shops and closing schools, despite some workers employed by Jewish Israelis being threatened with losing their jobs.

Within Israel, there have been long been joint Jewish and Palestinian rallies in Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan in East Jerusalem over the planned evictions of Palestinian families. In recent weeks there have been several demonstrations, albeit small, opposing the war, the storming of the al-Aqsa Mosque and the communal violence of far-right extremists.

On Saturday, several joint demonstrations organized

by Standing Together, Windows-channels for Communication, Rabbis for Human Rights and other groups took place across the country carrying signs saying, “In Gaza and Sderot [a southern town in Israel, bordering Gaza], children want to live,” and chanting “Jews and Arabs refuse to be enemies.”

In Jerusalem, police tried to disperse a small rally before it began, ostensibly to prevent clashes with a right-wing demonstration, later arresting at least six people. In Tel Aviv, a larger rally was addressed by legislators Ayman Odeh who heads the Joint Arab List, Ibtisam Mara'ana-Menuhin from the Labour Party and Meretz's Mossi Raz.

Of greater significance were rallies at the Rambam Hospital in Haifa and the Emek Medical Centre in Afula, in northern Israel, where Palestinian and Jewish medical staff joined together to call for an end to the recent violence and sing “peace will come” in Arabic and Hebrew.

This points to the way forward. It is the working class, both Jewish and Palestinian, that must now play the decisive role in the struggle for the social, economic, and political rights of all, in a struggle against Israel's financial elite, the Arab bourgeoisie, and the imperialist powers. This struggle cannot succeed if it is confined to the national soil.

The war against Gaza and the tentative outbreak of organised working-class opposition in Israel takes place amid a growing wave of militant struggle in the wake of the pandemic that has impoverished millions of workers throughout the region, as evidenced by the strikes and demonstrations by workers in Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco. Workers in Israel/Palestine must seek consciously to unify their fight with their brothers and sisters throughout the region and with workers in the imperialist centres, in the struggle for socialism.



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