

Russia, China, Iran criticize Israeli onslaught against Gaza

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The Israeli armed forces' bloody slaughter of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip has provoked criticisms in Moscow, Beijing and Tehran. These statements, however, only underscore the class gulf separating the sentiments of billions of workers, horrified at the Israeli onslaught against the defenseless enclave, and the mealy-mouthed positions of capitalist regimes across Eurasia.

The Kremlin, which has close ties with Israel, struck a hypocritical pose of neutrality between Israel and Gaza, calling for the so-called Middle East Quartet—comprised of the United Nations, the United States, the European Union and Russia—to negotiate a peace deal.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said, “We condemn attacks from both sides, targeting residential areas. ... We believe the international community must not be indifferent to what is happening. There is the Quartet of international mediators who are directly obliged to contribute to the solution of the Palestinian question.”

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov warned that the Israeli attack could trigger a broader war. Stating that Moscow is “extremely concerned about the increasing number of human casualties,” he euphemistically declared, “In general, the region has a rather fragile security system, a huge lack of mutual trust, and a long-standing potential for regional conflicts, which does not contribute to stabilization.”

Israel dismissed an announcement by the Russian foreign ministry that it had called in Israeli diplomats on Wednesday to say that further civilian casualties in Gaza are “unacceptable.” It responded with a statement that it would set no timeframe for ending the attacks on Gaza.

As for Beijing, it appealed to Washington to negotiate with Israel. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi asked Washington “to shoulder its responsibilities, taking a just position” in Sunday’s UN Security Council debate on Palestine. Yi also warned against military escalation, calling “to prevent the situation from further

deteriorating, to prevent the region from falling again into turmoil.”

Significantly, Yi also indicated that China could host Israeli-Palestinian talks, stating: “China reiterates its invitation to peacemakers from Palestine and Israel to come to China for dialogue, and welcomes negotiators from Palestine and Israel to hold direct talks in China.”

Yi refrained from asking Israel to immediately halt the slaughter, however, only asking that it “end the blockade and the siege of Gaza as soon as possible, guarantee the safety and rights of civilians in the occupied Palestinian territory, and provide access for humanitarian assistance.”

When Beijing’s appeals to Washington failed, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian complained Tuesday that US vetoes paralyzed the Security Council. “People cannot help asking whether this is the diplomacy of values and human rights the US government has announced. Why has the US been so callous about the Palestinian people’s human rights while it keeps talking about upholding Muslims’ human rights?”

This was apparently a discreet reference to the staggering hypocrisy of Washington’s backing for Israel’s war on Gaza, while it mounts a campaign of lies accusing Beijing of carrying out a “genocide” of Muslim Uyghurs in western China.

Complaining that the “US focus has completely shifted to major-power competition,” China’s state-run *Global Times* criticized Washington, remarkably, for not being involved in the Middle East: “In order to focus on China and Russia, Washington is eager to retreat from the Middle East and does not want to invest in new energy and resources for the sake of Palestine-Israel peace. ... But Washington must be made to know that justice cannot be buried alive.”

In fact, imperialist wars in the Middle East in the three decades since the Soviet and Chinese Stalinist bureaucracies restored capitalism in 1989-91 have made

one thing clear. It is pointless to appeal to US or European imperialism for “justice.” Since the Stalinist dissolution of the Soviet Union removed the main military counterweight to Washington, they have waged aggressive wars for regime change, including in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Syria, leaving millions dead and entire societies shattered.

In particular, they have repeatedly given unstinting support to one-sided Israeli massacres in Gaza in 2009, in 2012, in 2014 and now in 2021.

China’s economic rise as a cheap-labor haven for transnational corporations has of course increased its influence in the region. The *Global Times* reported that China is now the Arab countries’ largest trading partner, with a yearly trade volume of nearly \$240 billion, as China imports 250 million tons of crude oil from them. The *Jerusalem Post* called China-Israel trade “a marriage made in heaven,” growing “from \$50 million to \$13.1 billion from 1992 to 2017,” making China Israel’s third-largest trading partner. China even recently signed a \$400 billion, 25-year trade deal with Iran.

US imperialism remains the dominant financial and military power in the region, however, and it has backed Israeli attacks against Gaza. This underlies the bankruptcy of any perspective to defend Gaza that does not rely on mobilizing international opposition in the working class to imperialism and war.

While there is deep opposition in the Israeli, American and international working class to social inequality and the politically criminal official handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, Moscow, Beijing and Tehran are incapable of and hostile to appealing to such sentiments.

The Russian, Chinese and Iranian regimes fear growing working class opposition at home. Beijing is preparing a deeply unpopular increase in the pension age, even as over 400 billionaires in China have collectively amassed over US\$2 trillion in wealth. Iranian President Hassan Rouhani noted that his regime is terrified that amid the pandemic, “people, facing hunger, poverty and unemployment, would go into the streets.”

The Iranian regime felt compelled to make more critical statements on Gaza, amid pro-Palestinian protests in Tehran and mounting anger across the Middle East. The war in Gaza follows US and Israeli provocations against Iran, including murderous sanctions on critical health supplies amid the COVID-19 pandemic and Israel’s criminal attacks on Iran’s uranium enrichment facility at Natanz.

After Israelis struck the Qatari Red Crescent building in

Gaza, the Qatari Foreign Ministry condemned Tel Aviv on Monday. Moreover, Turkey’s state-run Anadolu Agency reported that its photojournalist Mohammad Dahla was injured on Wednesday by an Israeli missile in Gaza, after “two Anadolu Agency journalists were injured while covering Israeli attacks on the Gaza Strip last week.” Israel also bombed a media center housing AP and Al Jazeera operations in Gaza.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani told Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan that “Palestine is the most important common issue of the Islamic community” in a Sunday phone call. According to the IRNA news agency, he said that “confronting the crimes against Palestine and immediately stopping killing oppressed and defenseless people is critical,” adding, “Islamic states should cooperate to utilize the capacity of international bodies such as the United Nations and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to confront the Zionist regime’s aggression.”

Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif reportedly canceled a scheduled visit to Vienna after Israeli flags were hoisted on government buildings to show support for the Israeli war. He tweeted: “As US-made munitions rain down on innocent Palestinians, US gives another \$735M in ‘precision’ missiles to Israel to kill more children with more precision.”

Zarif also criticized reactionary regional regimes, including Bahrain, Sudan and Morocco, who have “normalized” relations with Israel, saying: “The massacre of Palestinian children today follows the purported normalization.”

Tehran is, however, in talks to restore relations with Saudi Arabia, a key architect of this “normalization” and a leading ally of the Israeli government. This underscores the cynicism of Iranian policy and the urgent necessity of building an international antiwar movement based on a socialist program in the international working class to halt the attacks on Gaza.



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