

Gaza slaughter: Israel's war crimes and US hypocrisy

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8 August 2022

Over the past three days, relentless Israeli airstrikes killed at least 45 Palestinians, including 16 children, and caused extensive devastation.

At least 400 were wounded, many severely, and the handful of barely functioning hospitals and clinics were overwhelmed. Some 2.3 million Palestinians live in Gaza, confined by Israeli and Egyptian military cordons and fences. Hundreds of powerful bombs and missiles have rained down on a territory comprising only 141 square miles—exactly equal in area to the city of Detroit.

The most heavily bombed neighborhoods, where Israeli officials claimed leaders of the Islamic Jihad were the targets, were scenes of apocalyptic destruction, with apartment buildings transformed into craters and body parts strewn about. An Al-Jazeera montage of the faces of 12 martyred children, supplied by the Palestinian Health Ministry—shown here—was circulated throughout the Arab world, producing widespread outrage.

If it were Ukrainian children who suffered the same fate, there is no doubt that the American corporate media, the faithful servant of the CIA and State Department, would be providing saturation coverage. There would be endless hours devoted to mourning the loss of innocent lives and branding those responsible for their deaths as murderers and war criminals. No such terms will be used for Israeli Prime Minister Yair Lapid, Defense Minister Benny Gantz and other top Israeli military and intelligence officials.

The *New York Times*, which has spearheaded the media's campaign over supposed Russian atrocities in the Ukraine war, began its report on the temporary halt in the Gaza bombardment this way: "A cease-fire ending three days of fierce cross-border fighting between Israel and a Palestinian militant group in Gaza

appeared to be holding on Monday, and life on both sides of the lines began to return to normal."

The supposed "fierce cross-border fighting" was a completely one-sided affair, with the Israeli military, the most powerful in the Middle East, armed to the teeth by US imperialism, dropping bombs and missiles on a defenseless population. Meanwhile, militants of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) fired off hundreds of rudimentary home-made rockets, nearly all of them landing harmlessly or shot down by Israeli's antimissile system.

As to the "return to normal," for the people of Gaza, this means unbearable poverty, a 50 percent unemployment rate and a smashed infrastructure, in what is routinely described by observers as the largest open-air prison camp on the planet. Electricity is available only 11 hours a day even when the Gaza power plant is running, but it was shut down, not because of the bombing, but because Israel and Egypt halted the delivery of fuel supplies required to keep it running.

The Biden administration issued a brief statement welcoming the ceasefire, expressing appreciation for the role of Egypt, Qatar, Jordan and other reactionary Arab dictatorships and monarchies for their role in the diplomacy that brought a temporary end to the violence, while condemning Islamic Jihad for "indiscriminate rocket attacks." Biden reaffirmed his "long-standing and unwavering" support for Israel, adding, "I commend Prime Minister Yair Lapid and his government's steady leadership throughout the crisis."

There is no doubt that the onslaught against Gaza was discussed and approved during Biden's visit to Israel July 13-15, just three weeks before the well-prepared attack began. The Pentagon will now rush to resupply the munitions expended by the Israel Defense

Force during the bombing campaign.

The rocket exchanges with PIJ were deliberately provoked by Israel's arrest and detention of the senior leader of the group on the West Bank, Bassam al-Saadi, on August 1 in the city of Jenin. This was part of a systematic campaign of Israeli military violence in Jenin which has killed at least 30 Palestinians and wounded hundreds since the beginning of this year.

The timing of the attack seemed calculated to benefit Prime Minister Lapid, who heads a caretaker coalition regime headed into a November 1 general election. A *Times of Israel* headline declared: "With elections looming, Lapid's Gaza gamble seems to have paid off" and cited the former television broadcaster's need to burnish his military credentials before a contest where the main opposition comes from the right-wing militarist Benjamin Netanyahu, whose Likud Party coalition was ousted just last year.

Israeli press reports suggest that the main shift in policy since the fall of Netanyahu has been a decision to concentrate on the destruction of Islamic Jihad, the smaller of the two Islamist groups in Gaza, noting that Lapid had not mentioned Hamas, the ruling party in Gaza, in his public statements on the Israeli military attack. On Saturday night, General Oded Basyuk, the head of the Israeli Defense Forces Operations Unit, told reporters that the IDF had successfully killed "the entire senior security echelon of Islamic Jihad's military wing in Gaza."

The response of the Arab rulers to the three-day bombardment of Gaza provided example of their cynical treachery and betrayal of the interests of the Palestinian people and the Arab masses as a whole. Most of the Gulf sheikdoms followed the lead of Saudi Arabia, whose media denounced Islamic Jihad as a tool of Iran and suggested that PIJ had provoked the conflict in conjunction with the resumption of nuclear energy talks between Iran and the so-called P5+1 group (the five full members of the UN Security Council plus Germany). These talks resumed in Vienna on August 4.

This allegation turns the world upside down. It is far more likely that the Israeli regime, not Islamic Jihad, timed the conflict to disrupt the nuclear talks because it stridently opposes any deal that would ease sanctions on Iran.

The bloodstained Egyptian military regime brokered the ceasefire, while maintaining its iron grip on Gaza's

western border, which it has largely closed since Hamas came to power in the territory in 2007.

The Gaza bloodbath also demonstrates the impotent and bankruptcy of the Palestinian bourgeois nationalists of every stripe, whether the Islamist variety, like Hamas, or the secular Fatah group which controls the Palestinian Authority and acts as Israel's appointed prison guard on the West Bank. It is noteworthy that while the US and Israel still nominally treat Hamas as a "terrorist group," Egypt, Qatar and the UN mediators "dealt with the Hamas leaders as if they were the legitimate and sole rulers of the Gaza Strip," as the *Jerusalem Post* observed.

The situation in Gaza remains fraught. The Israeli military has called up 25,000 reserves and has no plans to demobilize them, while an Islamic Jihad leader said that if Israel did not release two imprisoned PIJ leaders, including Bassam al-Saadi, by the weekend—as was apparently promised to Egypt—the conflict would be resumed.

There is no way out of the intractable and bloody conflicts in the Middle East through any of the reactionary nationalist regimes or through maneuvers with the United Nations and the European imperialist powers, let alone through "peace" talks brokered by Washington, the center of world reaction and militarism. The only road forward is through an international movement of the working class and oppressed masses throughout the region, which unite Arab, Israeli, Turkish and Kurdish workers on the basis of a socialist and anti-imperialist program.



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