

Israeli military kill 10, wound 20 Palestinians in deadliest raid on Jenin in years

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Israel's military, police and security agency, the Shin Bet, carried out a mass slaughter of Palestinians in the refugee camp in the West Bank city of Jenin Thursday, killing nine people, including an elderly woman. At least 20 were wounded, four of whom are in a critical condition. Another died in clashes that continued Thursday evening. It was by far the deadliest such raid in years.

The Israeli army blocked Palestinian emergency services from reaching the scene, adding to the horror. Palestinian Health Minister Mai al-Kaileh said that Israeli forces had also "stormed Jenin Government Hospital and intentionally fired tear gas canisters at the paediatric department in the hospital," causing children to choke. Hospital videos showed women carrying children out of hospital rooms and into the corridor.

As well as 60-year-old Magda Obaid, the Palestinian Health Ministry said the dead included 24-year-old Saeb Essam Mahmoud Azriqi, 26-year-old Izzidin Yassin Salahat, Abdullah Marwan al-Ghoul and Moatassem Abu al-Hassan. Their funerals took place the same day, amid a general strike.

According to al-Kaileh, the situation in the camp, home to 10,000 people crammed into less than one square kilometre, is "dire." The city is a social tinderbox following the COVID-19 pandemic that has devastated the livelihoods of its inhabitants, the settlers' violent activities and harassment, constant raids and mass arrests by Israeli security forces since last March and the failure of the Palestinian Authority (PA) to provide any protection. Kamal Abu al-Rubsaid, Jenin's deputy governor, told AFP that residents were living in a "real state of war" and that "The Israeli army is destroying everything and shooting at everything that moves."

The massacre followed the near nightly search and arrest raids in the West Bank, which Israel has occupied illegally, along with East Jerusalem which it annexed, Gaza and Syria's Golan Heights, since the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. In 2022, Israeli military raids led to more than 2,500 arrests and left 271 Palestinians dead, mostly in the West Bank.

This latest slaughter brings to 30 the number killed since the beginning of this year, more than one a day. It came a day after a 20-year-old Palestinian from the Jenin refugee camp was shot dead after allegedly attempting to stab an Israeli soldier near the Kedumim settlement in the northern West Bank.

A senior Israel Defense Forces (IDF) official denied there had been any change of policy since the new far-right government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had taken office. The new government includes fascistic and openly racist forces determined to drive out the 100,000 Palestinians living in Area C, which accounts for 60 percent of the West Bank and is home to most of the Israeli settlements.

Anticipating a response from the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) in Gaza, the IDF spokesperson said it was "prepared for any scenario and there is no doubt that this may affect the southern arena as well," a reference to Gaza.

The Palestinian Authority (PA) of President Mahmoud Abbas issued a statement condemning the slaughter as "a massacre from the Israeli occupation government, in the shadow of international silence" and announced the PA was halting security coordination with Israel. The PA's Foreign Ministry made a futile appeal to the "international community" and the United States to "intervene immediately" against the "Israeli killing machine."

The Netanyahu government can only proceed with its agenda of territorial expansionism, Jewish Supremacy and the mass repression of the Palestinians because Washington and the major European powers lend it tacit support. They all have the same to-do list: wars of conquest abroad and class war at home, backed up by ever increasing authoritarianism in defence of their own financial oligarchs.

The Biden administration has stressed that its support for Israel will remain unconditional. In a statement issued Thursday announcing a visit by Secretary of State Antony Blinken. The statement said that he "will meet with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Foreign Minister Eli Cohen, and other senior leaders to discuss the enduring US support

for Israel's security, particularly against threats from Iran.”

Biden's administration did nothing to stop or sanction Israel for its apartheid policy, as documented by New York-based Human Rights Watch in April 2021; its bombing of Gaza in May 2021 that killed more than 250 Palestinians; the death of 80-year old American citizen Omar Muhammad Asaad after he was dragged out of his car by the police, beaten and left to die in the road in January 2022; the near daily raids on towns and cities in the West Bank; the deliberate murder of Al-Jazeera's Palestinian-American journalist Shireen Abu Akleh in May 2022; Israel's announcement the same month of its plan to build 4,000 settlement homes in the West Bank; or its killing of at least 271 Palestinians in 2022.

The US has approved \$1 billion in funding for Israel's Iron Dome missile defence system and published a report minimising Israel's responsibility for Abu Akleh's murder. Last week, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan travelled to Israel to discuss plans for ramping up the war drive against Iran, amid preparations for the largest ever joint military exercise—put together with unprecedented speed in just two months—designed to send a warning to Iran and underscore the Biden administration's commitment to Israel, just weeks after Netanyahu's government, stacked with fascists, took power.

Blinken's trip begins in Egypt, where he will meet President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi to “advance the US-Egypt strategic partnership and promote peace and security in the region,” the statement said.

The US-brokered Abraham Accords, which have seen the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain—as directed by Saudi Arabia—Sudan and Morocco open full diplomatic and commercial relations with Israel, have led to a drastic fall in the funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) by Arab donors. In 2018, Arab countries provided 25 percent of the agency's budget, but this fell to just 3 percent in 2021 and 4 percent last year.

Last year, UNRWA, which provides essential public services to nearly six million Palestinians registered in the Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, and Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, raised less than \$1.2 billion of the \$1.6 billion it had appealed for, ending with a deficit greater than \$70 million for the fourth year in a row.

Israel's massacre of Palestinians in Jenin comes amid moves to transfer the civilian authorities in the West Bank under the Civil Administration to the newly appointed Minister of Finance—the fascistic Religious Zionism leader Bezalel Smotrich—a move that will require amendments to two of Israel's Basic Laws.

The Civil Administration, an agency currently within the

Ministry of Defence, is responsible for planning and construction in Area C of the West Bank. Smotrich will have de facto control of settlement expansion, including the settler outposts currently illegal under Israeli law. The transfer of the Civil Administration to the Ministry of Finance will amount to the de facto annexation of Area C as the settlements will henceforth come under civilian not military rule.

Along with National Security Minister and Jewish Power leader Itamar Ben-Gvir's provocations at the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, aimed at securing Jewish prayers at the site, this is guaranteed to inflame tensions and precipitate an all-out war with the Palestinians, with Ramadan and Passover set to coincide in April.

Palestinian workers can no more trust their rapacious, bourgeois national leaders, secular or religious, to defend them against these fascistic forces than Israeli workers can trust their “anyone but Netanyahu” leaders to lead a struggle against his far right government's assumption of dictatorial powers.

The decisive question is the unification of both these struggles and the forging of a revolutionary leadership to secure the political independence of the Palestinian and Israeli working class from all forces that seek to maintain the grip of one or other wing of the ruling elite. Israeli and Palestinian workers must unite their struggle with those of their brothers and sisters throughout the region—Arab, Iranian, Kurdish and Turkish—and in the imperialist centres, against capitalism and for socialism. This is the perspective of permanent revolution fought for by the International Committee of the Fourth International.



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