

Israel warns more to come after withdrawal from Jenin

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Israel Defence Forces (IDF) pulled out of the northern West Bank city of Jenin Wednesday morning, ending its two-day invasion and bombardment of the city and the densely populated refugee camp.

Itamar Yaar, a former deputy head of Israel's National Security Council and a colonel in the reserves, insisted the withdrawal was not the end and threatened more action to come. "It doesn't mean we've done what we've done, we're out and that's it," he said. "The operation was relatively short and limited. That means we might see similar activities" that could take place in Jenin "even tomorrow."

This threat echoed the earlier remarks of the IDF chief of central command and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. It flows inexorably from the agenda of Netanyahu's far-right coalition, which is committed to the annexation of the West Bank in defiance of international law—preferably "cleansed" of Palestinians or failing that, crowded into isolated and blockaded enclaves—in pursuit of its aim of establishing a Jewish Supremacist state in both Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories. These fascist forces have encouraged and incited their supporters to carry out vigilante attacks in the West Bank to terrorise and drive out the Palestinians, while demanding that the IDF take ever more aggressive action against the Palestinians.

The entire Jenin operation, planned over months and conducted with the full knowledge and consent of US imperialism—that never ceases to justify its own military aggression in the name of "humanitarian intervention"—was in flagrant violation of the international conventions on war and human rights outlawing military action against civilians.

The 1,000 plus troops, replete with massive firepower, had entered Jenin in armoured vehicles and bulldozers under cover of armed drones and

helicopters. Their declared objective was to root out a few hundred Palestinian militants, including Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Lions' Den, the Jenin Brigades, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and others that Israel designates as "terrorists," and seize their arms and explosives. Israel's security forces claimed that more than 50 shooting attacks have been carried out by militants from the Jenin area since the start of the year.

An IDF spokesperson insisted, "We didn't come to conquer the refugee camp [in Jenin]. This isn't an operation against the Palestinian Authority, it's an operation against terror organizations in Jenin that are making the lives of the civilian population in Jenin miserable." The operation would continue indefinitely, he added. "This will be a continuum of operations that aren't necessarily limited in time throughout northern Samaria [the occupied West Bank], as intelligence and operational timing dictate."

This was the pretext for soldiers to go on a planned rampage, ploughing up streets, destroying the utility networks, smashing up many of the refugee camp's buildings—homes, residential buildings, medical facilities and mosques and destroying all the vehicles in their path—traumatizing the population and forcing around one quarter of the 14,000 residents of the refugee camp to flee their homes. They went on house-to-house searches, interrogated several hundred Palestinians of whom around 30 were detained for further questioning and seizing arms caches and explosives.

The IDF troops left behind whole areas of the city a war zone, with little or nothing for the fugitive families to return to—some 80 percent of the homes were damaged or destroyed—and no prospect of ever acquiring the financial and material resources to make

good the damage as the Palestinians' experience in Gaza has shown. This comes after decades of Israeli military control over Area C, some 60 percent of the West Bank, that has prevented the construction and rehabilitation of the water, sewerage, electricity and transport infrastructure, devastating the economy, wrecking livelihoods and causing untold suffering.

Israeli forces killed twelve Palestinians, including four minors. Palestinian Islamic Jihad claimed eight as its fighters. Israel injured more than 100, of whom 20 are in a critical condition, preventing many of the wounded from receiving medical treatment. It brings the total number of West Bank Palestinians killed by Israeli forces to nearly 150, while several dozen more have been killed in Gaza.

So one-sided was this week's operation that just one Israeli soldier was killed—and as the troops withdrew—which the IDF said this was likely due to “friendly fire.” The IDF admitted that there were few armed clashes with the militants because the 300 wanted gunmen had fled the area.

On Wednesday, the Palestinians held mass funeral processions for the dead, with angry crowds expelling Palestinian Authority officials who had come to pay their respects, denouncing them as “traitors” for doing nothing to protect them from Israel's attack and calling their actions “shameful.” Militants in the besieged Palestinian enclave of Gaza fired five rockets towards southern Israel in a token show of solidarity with Jenin that were intercepted by Israel's Iron Dome system.

On Thursday afternoon, a Palestinian shot dead an Israeli soldier near the West Bank settlement of Kedumim. Israeli security forces gave chase to a car driver and killed him. The Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, the military wing of Hamas, the clerical group that controls Gaza, claimed him as a member and said his action was a response to Israel's assault on Jenin.

On Thursday, the IDF carried out artillery strikes against southern Lebanon after an anti-tank guided missile fired from Lebanon exploded on the border fence close to the village of Ghajar that straddles the border. It comes amid rising tensions on the border. Last week, Hezbollah, the Lebanese clerical party allied with Iran that has provided vital support for President Bashar al-Assad during the 12-year long proxy war financed and supported by the Gulf States, Turkey and

the CIA—and aimed at toppling his regime—said it shot down an Israeli drone flying over a village in southern Lebanon.

Israeli jets also carried out airstrikes against targets near the Syrian capital of Damascus on Wednesday night, the second Israeli strike on Syria this week, likely targeting warehouses storing “advanced Iranian weapons,” according to a report on the *Ynet* news site. The strikes came as Syria and Russia were holding joint air exercises, scheduled to last for several days, focusing “on joint air, air defense and electronic warfare operations to counter airstrikes,” according to the Russian military.

Early on Sunday, the IDF said that its fighter jets had struck a Syrian air defense battery after a Syrian anti-aircraft missile launched from the system had exploded in Israeli airspace. This was apparently in response to several Israeli strikes near the city of Homs that Syria's state news agency reported had caused “material losses.”



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