

US media covers up Israeli war crimes in Jenin

Patrick Martin
6 July 2023

A United Nations panel of human rights experts issued a statement Wednesday condemning Israeli military operations in Jenin and elsewhere on the West Bank, declaring they “amount to egregious violations of international law and standards on the use of force and may constitute a war crime.”

The three-member group, which operates under the aegis of the UN Human Rights Commission, pointed to a series of actions by the Israeli military which had resulted in “killing and seriously injuring the occupied population, destroying their homes and infrastructure, and arbitrarily displacing thousands.”

The two-day attack on the large, semi-permanent refugee camp outside Jenin, with 14,000 residents, led to pitched battles with Palestinian militants and deliberate and widespread destruction of civilian infrastructure, including water and electricity supplies and healthcare facilities. At least 12 Palestinians were killed, including four teenagers. More than 100 were injured, and one-quarter of the camp’s population was forced to flee.

Eyewitnesses, including journalists, described both houses and larger structures destroyed by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), which sent 1,000 soldiers, mostly drawn from elite commando units, into the densely populated residential area.

According to the UN panel, “The attacks were the fiercest in the West Bank since the destruction of the Jenin camp in 2002.” They included air strikes, the first in two decades. The healthcare system was a particular target, with multiple reports of ambulances being prevented from evacuating the wounded and IDF troops firing tear gas into Jenin General Hospital.

“The attacks constitute collective punishment of the Palestinian population, who have been labelled a ‘collective security threat’ in the eyes of Israeli authorities,” the UN panel said.

The UN statement continued:

The Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territory are protected persons under international law, guaranteed of all human rights including the presumption of innocence... They cannot be treated as a collective security threat by the occupying Power, all the more while it advances the annexation of occupied Palestinian land and displacement and dispossession of its Palestinian residents.

In the American media, however, there is virtually no mention of the actual conditions on the ground in Jenin, or the findings of the UN panel. The reporting on the Israeli operation has generally been limited to rehashing claims that its purpose was “counter-terrorism.” The *Washington Post* devoted a single sentence to the UN panel’s condemnation of the Israeli operation as a violation of international law. The *New York Times* wrote nothing at all. The television networks were equally silent.

Here is the brutal reality in the West Bank under Israeli occupation: ongoing and systematic violence and repression against the Palestinians. Both Israeli soldiers and ultra-right settlers are murdering people, shooting them down, destroying their homes, pillaging the land where they have lived for centuries.

The government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is a coalition of right-wing parties, including outright fascists, with a large base in the illegal settlements on the West Bank. The regime is preparing for the logical conclusion of this campaign of terror and murder: the forcible displacement of millions of Palestinians and the incorporation of the West Bank into Israel.

Leaders of the fascist parties speak openly of their determination to remove the entire Arab population of the West Bank and annex the territory. In this, they are modeling themselves on the pogroms against Arabs which

accompanied the foundation of Israel in 1947-48. This campaign, which today would be called “ethnic cleansing,” transformed the Arab-majority territory of Palestine into the Jewish-majority state of Israel.

The Israeli aggression on the West Bank is taking place with the full approval of the US government. The Biden administration certainly green-lighted the operation in advance, and voiced approval of it after the fact.

White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said Wednesday:

We have said this many times: We support, certainly, Israel’s security and right to defend its people against Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and other terrorist groups... Israel is a close ally and partner, and we are in touch with the national security and, certainly, the defense officials. So don’t have anything to read out on our conversation, but we are in regular contact.

The coverage in the corporate media took its cue from Biden in its indifference to the barbarism displayed by Israel on the West Bank, where military violence has been combined with rampages by armed settlers against Palestinian towns and villages to enforce the increasingly stifling grip of the occupation regime. At least 155 Palestinians have been killed by soldiers and settlers so far this year, the largest total since the second *intifada* in 2002.

Meanwhile, the media witch-hunts anyone who criticizes the conduct of the state of Israel, condemning them as anti-Semites. This is especially directed against public figures, most recently the musician Roger Waters, founder of the rock band Pink Floyd, who has been a principled supporter of the Palestinian people for many decades and is now one of the few prominent opponents of the US-NATO war in Ukraine.

The American media maintains a shameless double standard in relation to the war in Ukraine and the ongoing attacks on Palestinians living in the West Bank. While covering up Israeli violence and dispossession in the occupied territories, the media has been engaged for more than a year in a hysterical campaign claiming the Russian military is engaging in genocidal crimes in Ukraine.

There is no reason to disguise or excuse the brutality of the Putin regime, which represents the interests of the oligarchy of capitalist billionaires who built their fortunes

on the dismantling of the Soviet Union. But the same standard should apply to the Ukrainian regime of President Volodymyr Zelensky, riddled with fascists and worshippers of the Nazi ally Stepan Bandera. And it should apply as well to the crimes of the state of Israel, long the principal ally of American imperialism in the Middle East.

Neither the *New York Times* nor the *Washington Post* bothered to comment editorially on the Israeli onslaught in Jenin, although such an operation by a regime at odds with the US government would have provoked strident denunciation.

The day before the attack, the *Post* published an editorial with the headline, “Hold Russia accountable for its war crimes.” It cited the findings of an array of UN and human rights organizations about Russian actions in Ukraine—the same type of evidence that it ignores or dismisses when it comes to the Israeli operation in Jenin.

The editorial draws the remarkable conclusion that in addition to specific atrocities, “In fact, Mr. Putin and a coterie of his top advisers have committed a broader offense by unleashing the war in the first place—the crime from which all the subsequent atrocities arose. They should face prosecution for waging a crime of aggression—the very charge used against Nazi war criminals in the Nuremberg trials after World War II.”

The *World Socialist Web Site* has repeatedly cited the Nuremberg precedent as applying to the actions of American administrations, from George W. Bush in Afghanistan and Iraq onward. There is no government in the world which is more steeped in “waging a crime of aggression” by unleashing war than that which resides in Washington, DC.

The Nuremberg Tribunal also convicted the main media apologists of the Nazi regime of war crimes. The editors of the *Post*, faithful advocates of every US military adventure, should be careful what they wish for.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact