

Israeli army lays siege to Gaza

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On Sunday, three days after Palestinian fighters in the Gaza Strip launched an offensive against Israeli occupation forces blockading the region, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's regime announced a siege of the Gaza Strip. After Netanyahu pledged to extract an "unprecedented price" in lives from Palestinians in Gaza, the Zionist regime is preparing bloody mass repression.

The fascistic outlook of top Israeli officials was bluntly expressed by Defense Minister Yoav Gallant. After of a meeting Monday morning of the Israel Defense Forces' (IDF) Southern Command in Beersheba, which is currently carrying out large-scale bombings of Gaza, Gallant declared: "I have ordered a complete siege on the Gaza Strip. There will be no electricity, no food, no fuel, everything is closed."

To justify his decision to target Gaza's entire population of 2 million, Gallant compared them to animals, saying: "We are fighting human animals, and we are acting accordingly."

In a nationally televised speech yesterday, Netanyahu stressed that Israel's current bombings of Gaza are "just the beginning" of the planned onslaught against Gaza. He declared, "I said that every place from which Hamas operates will turn into ruins. It is already happening today, it will happen even more in the future." He echoed Gallant's language, calling the Palestinians "animals."

Netanyahu added in a post on Twitter, "We will extract a price that will be remembered by them and Israel's other enemies for decades to come. ... They are savages."

The degraded threats of Netanyahu and Gallant must be taken as a warning by workers, youth and socialist-minded intellectuals in Israel, across the Middle East and internationally. Netanyahu intends to carry out the most ruthless measures, killing or displacing a substantial portion of Gaza's population, in order to crush resistance to the Israeli occupation. Halting the massive escalation of the bloodshed requires building a movement in the working class, in Israel and internationally, to stop this onslaught and Israel's oppression of the Palestinians.

Netanyahu's far-right regime plans to wage a politically criminal war on Gaza. Yesterday, Human Rights Watch's Israel and Palestine director Omar Shakir said: "Defense Minister Gallant's statements are abhorrent. Depriving the population in an occupied territory of food and electricity is collective punishment, which is a war crime, as is using starvation as a weapon of war. The International Criminal Court should take note of this call to commit a war crime."

Officials in neighboring Egypt are warning that the IDF may murder or expel Gaza's entire Palestinian population. The state-owned *Ahram Online* wrote: "High-level Egyptian sources warned on Monday against pushing Palestinian civilians towards the Egyptian borders and fueling calls for mass displacement ... Egypt intensified its communications with all relevant parties in the international community to halt the escalation and preserve the lives of the Palestinian people."

In reality, the central forces that are supporting and enabling the Netanyahu government's onslaught on Gaza are the leading NATO imperialist powers. Yesterday, French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, Italian Prime Minister Georgia Meloni, UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and US President Joe Biden held a joint discussion on the Gaza conflict. They then issued a cynical statement endorsing Netanyahu and denouncing the Hamas authorities in Gaza.

Stressing "our steadfast and united support to the State of Israel, and our unequivocal condemnation of Hamas and its appalling acts of terrorism," it pledged: "Over the coming days, we will remain united and coordinated, together as allies, and as common friends of Israel, to ensure Israel is able to defend itself ..."

This slander on the oppressed population of Gaza as "terrorists," claiming that the heavily armed Netanyahu government is simply "defending itself," is a repugnant political lie. Masses of people around the world sympathize with an uprising by the Palestinians who have been subjected for decades to bloody violence by the Zionist regime, which was armed to the tune of billions of

dollars by the major NATO powers.

Yesterday, the IDF boasted that its air force had hit 2,400 targets in Gaza since the beginning of the fighting on the night of Friday to Saturday. Israeli warships in the Mediterranean are also conducting missile strikes on Gaza, and there are reports that Israeli forces are using white phosphorus bombs—a banned chemical weapon that delivers agonizing burns to its victims. Over 123,000 people have already been displaced by the bombings, Gaza authorities reported yesterday.

Mohammed Saidam told *Le Monde* about life under Israeli bombing, as IDF forces regularly target apartment complexes and even hospitals. He said, “Initially it was like any other escalation. But afterwards it became terrifying. We hear explosions that are very close, walls vibrate like during an earthquake, we cannot sleep, and our nerves are on edge at the slightest sound.”

Adnan Abu Hasna, the spokesman of the UN Relief and Works Association (UNRWA) that cares for displaced people in Gaza, said his agency is overwhelmed. “We still have not managed to get over the wars in 2014 or 2021. All this is well beyond the UNRWA’s capabilities,” he said.

Since Israel’s blockade of Gaza began in 2007, the Zionist regime has repeatedly waged war on the people of Gaza. In 2014, 2,251 people were killed in repeated Israeli bombings of Gaza. In 2018, at least 270 Palestinians were killed and 7,000 injured, many of them permanently maimed, when Israeli troops opened fire on a peaceful march by Gazans demanding the right to return to the land of their ancestors inside the current boundaries of Israel.

The current uprising in Gaza is not an act of terrorism, but rather is legitimately seen by masses of people in Gaza as a heroic act of defiance against these crimes.

“The Palestinian resistance has managed to impose a new relationship of forces with the Israeli army, though it has weaponry and technology that is one thousand times superior,” filmmaker Iyad Alasttal told *Le Monde* from inside Gaza. “This has given Gaza back some of its dignity—something that the Arab countries, like the United Nations, have denied to us.”

Hamas—which has stated that its offensive aims to end Israel’s occupation and the blockade of the Gaza Strip that it has imposed since 2007—is continuing to attack Israeli targets. Its rockets fell on cities across Israel, including Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Sderot, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Rishon Lezion, and Beersheba. Large numbers of Israelis are in bomb shelters, and Israeli schools and universities

remained closed yesterday and today.

Videos online showed Palestinians destroying security cameras on the infamous border wall separating Gaza from Israel, and hitting Israeli tanks with drone strikes. Fighting also broke out along Israel’s northern border with Lebanon, as Israeli troops shot and killed three Hezbollah fighters, and Hezbollah units returned fire on Israeli military positions.

The IDF are clearly preparing a ground offensive into the Gaza Strip. They are calling up an unprecedented 300,000 reservists, preparing artillery emplacements along the Israel-Gaza border, and massing tanks and armored personnel carriers. Such an offensive—in a tiny area of 2 million people, which if it were a country would be the world’s third-most densely populated—would inevitably lead to horrific civilian casualties.

The escalation of Israeli state violence against Gaza is provoking mounting opposition and anger around the globe.

Protests in support of the Palestinians are taking place across the Middle East and internationally. Tens of thousands marched in the capital of Yemen, Sanaa, and thousands marched in Baghdad, Istanbul, and Tehran to oppose the crackdown on Gaza. There were smaller protests in New York, London, Sydney, and other cities, with protests in defense of Gaza called in Paris on Thursday. Iraqi cleric Moqtada al-Sadr has called for a “million-man march” on Friday in Baghdad.

The decisive question is arming the growing movement in the working class, including in Israel where the antidemocratic policies of Netanyahu’s far-right government provoked mass protests earlier this year, with a socialist and internationalist perspective to defend the Palestinian people.



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