

# India and Sri Lanka “stand with” Israeli state amid its barbaric assault on Gaza

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The right-wing, US-aligned governments of India and Sri Lanka have joined their imperialist masters in denouncing the Palestinian uprising against decades of brutal occupation, and in supporting the Netanyahu government’s barbaric onslaught on the people of Gaza.

On Saturday, just hours after Hamas fighters had broken through Israel’s more than 15-year blockade of Gaza, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi issued a tweet declaring, “We stand in solidarity with Israel at this difficult hour.”

Modi, who heads a government synonymous with communal incitement and violence and who as the state’s Chief Minister presided over the 2002 Gujarat anti-Muslim pogrom, joined US President Joe Biden, British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz in hypocritically denouncing “terrorism.” He declared India to be “deeply shocked by the news of terrorist attacks in Israel. ... We stand in solidarity with Israel at this difficult hour.”

Three days later, following a telephone call from the Israeli prime minister, Modi indicated his government’s full-throated support for the criminal actions taken by the Netanyahu regime—its cutting off of Gaza’s access to all food, water, energy, and medicine; massive aerial bombardment of Gaza in which entire neighbourhoods have been flattened; and preparations for a genocidal ground assault on the tiny enclave that is home to 2.3 million Palestinians.

“I thank Prime Minister Netanyahu,” tweeted Modi in a brief statement subsequently re-issued by his office, “for providing an update on the ongoing situation. People of India stand firmly with Israel in this difficult hour. India strongly and unequivocally condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.”

Modi’s embrace of the Netanyahu government as it perpetrates horrific war crimes attests to the very close and utterly reactionary military-strategic ties New Delhi has forged with Tel Aviv under his nearly decade-old BJP government. In their common animus toward Muslims, there is also a strong bond of ideological affinity between the BJP Hindu supremacists and Netanyahu and his far-right coalition partners.

However, India’s staunch support for Israel in its one-sided war on the Palestinian people is first and foremost the outcome of its “Global Strategic Partnership” with US imperialism and its ever-deeper integration into Washington’s all-sided economic, diplomatic and military-strategic offensive against Beijing. In a chilling indication of the extent to which India has been

transformed into a US frontline state against China, the Indian military recently revealed that it is urgently drawing up plans as to how it would aid the US if and when Washington goes to war with China.

For decades Israel has been US imperialism’s most important strategic partner in the Middle East, serving as its attack dog against various bourgeois nationalist regimes that have cut across its interests, and the region’s oppressed workers and toilers. Washington has very much encouraged the strengthening of Indo-Israeli ties and, with some success, has drawn New Delhi into its attempts to broker closer relations between Israel and the absolutist Gulf State monarchies to counter increasing Chinese and Iranian influence in the region.

So strident have been Modi’s declarations of support for the Netanyahu regime and its onslaught on the Palestinian people that even some of the pro-US Gulf States have reportedly expressed dismay. They are said to be hoping that an Indian Foreign Ministry statement will break New Delhi’s hitherto total silence on its previous professed opposition to the Israeli occupation and brutal repression of the Palestinians.

To date however, Modi has ordered the Foreign Ministry to remain silent. He prefers to personally dictate and articulate his government’s position—a position that mirrors Washington’s and amounts to giving Netanyahu and the Israeli military free rein to slaughter and/or expel the people of Gaza.

New Delhi established diplomatic relations with Israel in 1992 amid a strategic reorientation. Its state-led development strategy having failed, the Indian bourgeoisie sought full integration into the US-led world capitalist order, India’s transformation into a cheap-labour haven for global capital, and much closer ties with Washington. Within little more than a decade, the Indo-US strategic partnership was the cornerstone of New Delhi’s foreign policy. Indo-Israeli ties similarly took off, especially military and intelligence cooperation.

Israel provided India with mortars and ammunition during its 1999 Kargil border war with Pakistan and ever since has either been India’s second or third largest foreign source of weapons and weapon systems. The equipment India has acquired from Israel includes Falcon AWACS (Airborne Warning and Control Systems), Heron, Searcher II, and Harop drones, as well as Barak anti-missile defence systems and Spyder quick-response anti-aircraft missile systems.

In a marked change from India’s traditional stance, the BJP

government abstained in 2015 and 2016 on UN resolutions critical of Israel's wanton slaughter of Palestinian civilians during the 2014 Gaza war.

But it was with Modi's visit to Israel in July 2017, the first ever by an Indian prime minister, that placed Indo-Israeli relations on a new plane by proclaiming a strategic partnership. Since then, Modi has made expanding India's military-intelligence and economic ties with Israel a key object of India's foreign policy. Toward that end, he has had as his ambassador to Israel for the past four years the career diplomat who served as his personal secretary from August 2014 through August 2019, or virtually all of his first term as prime minister.

With the development of a veritable New Delhi-Tel Aviv axis, Washington has sought to draw India ever more deeply into its Mideast policy. In October 2021, Washington formed the I2U2 group, comprised of India, Israel, the UAE and the US, to promote joint ventures in multiple economic sectors. At last month's G-20 summit in New Delhi, US President Biden announced Washington will anchor an India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor that is to facilitate India's emergence as an alternative global production chain hub to China. Under this scheme, the Israeli port of Haifa, recently purchased by India's Adani Group, is to serve as a key economic link between Asia and Europe.

India has balked at the demands from Washington, London, Berlin, Paris and Brussels that it dash its longstanding strategic partnership with Moscow and support them in their drive to defeat and subjugate Russia in their Ukraine war.

But on most other geopolitical fronts, its policy is ever more closely aligned with Washington's, notwithstanding the much touted claims of Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar that India is pursuing "strategic autonomy" and "friendly" relations with all in a "multipolar world."

Iran is a case in point. New Delhi has repeatedly acceded to US demands that it downgrade its relations with Iran. Its full-throated support for Israel's waging a war of annihilation against Hamas, an Iranian ally, will likely roil relations with Teheran. Especially as there are calls from many imperialist quarters for Iran to be held responsible and "made to pay" for last weekend's Hamas-led uprising.

There have been claims from various pseudo-lefts, like the US-based Communist Party of India (Marxist)-supporting academic Vijay Prashad, that the Indian bourgeoisie, and other right-wing capitalist elites from Turkey and Brazil to China and Putin's Russia can serve as a progressive antipode to the western imperialist powers.

In reality, all of their ruling classes are maneuvering to advance their own predatory ambitions and are uniformly hostile to the working class—the only force that has the social power to put an end to imperialist aggression and war and the capitalist system from which they arise.

The autocratic, far-right Modi regime and the Indian bourgeoisie only serve to highlight just what a reactionary dead-end the call for working people to support a "multi-polar world" is.

India is providing pivotal support to US imperialism in its war drive against China, and is now providing political-ideological cover for the US-armed and backed Netanyahu regime as it seeks

to crush the Palestinian people.

India's corporate media has largely aped the Modi government and western imperialists in their bloodcurdling denunciations of Palestinian "terrorism" and omission of any discussion of their repeated dispossession and bloody suppression over the last three-quarters of a century.

India's principal opposition party, the Congress Party, also initially echoed Modi. On Sunday its General Secretary in-charge of Communications, Jairam Ramesh, said that the Congress "condemns brutal attacks on the people of Israel." He made no mention of the suffering and repression of the Palestinians at the hands of the Israeli state, including the blockade of Gaza, or the never-ending series of provocations mounted by the Netanyahu government and its fascist allies over the past year.

On Monday, however, the Congress Working Committee took a slightly different tone. It passed a resolution that voiced "dismay and anguish on the war that has broken out in the Middle East," urged an "immediate cease-fire," and declared its "support for the rights of the Palestinian people to land, self government and to live with dignity and respect."

This recalibration arose from its recognition that that there is immense sympathy for the Palestinian people among the Indian masses, including its much victimized 200 million-strong Muslim minority, and that this opposition needs, from the standpoint of the bourgeoisie, to be politically contained and diverted.

Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe has also lined up with Israel. In a statement issued Monday he was quoted as deploring the "unprecedented attack" on Israel and the "killing of large numbers of civilians." His statement remained totally silent on Israel's siege and pummeling of Gaza.

Wickremesinghe's shock and outrage over the deaths of civilians is as counterfeit as Modi's. He and the Sri Lankan political establishment, of which he has been a member since the late 1970s, mounted a quarter-century-long racist war against the country's Tamil minority that cost more than 100,000 lives—Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim. The war ended in May 2009 with a massacre in which the Sri Lankan military killed tens of thousands of civilians. Moreover, in recent months his government has been strengthening the forces of state repression in anticipation of a renewed mass upsurge against his government's scorched-earth IMF austerity policies.

The working masses in India and Sri Lanka need to come forward to prevent the Netanyahu government from realizing its genocidal plans to crush the Palestinians of Gaza, with the full military and political support of US imperialism and the connivance of the Indian and Sri Lankan governments and ruling elites.



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