

Mass protests erupt internationally against Israeli war on Gaza

Alex Lantier**13 October 2023**

A week after Palestinians initiated an armed uprising against Israel's blockade of the Gaza Strip, protests are erupting internationally against Israel's war on Gaza.

The fascistic regime of Benjamin Netanyahu has ordered 1.1 million Palestinians to flee Gaza City and go south, along roads bombed by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). Israel—which has now cut off Gaza's water, fuel and electricity, and whose leaders call the Palestinians "human animals"—is targeting the Palestinians for genocide.

As the scale of the crimes committed by the Israeli regime and its NATO allies has become clear, protests have erupted around the world in bold disobedience of media denunciations of Palestinians, police intimidation and protest bans.

The most significant demonstration Friday took place in New York City, where thousands rallied to oppose the onslaught against Palestine, in open defiance of the unrelenting pro-Israel propaganda of the entire American political establishment and corporate media. In the center of world imperialism, home to the largest Jewish population of any American city, masses of people—including over 1,000 Jews—expressed their revulsion with the unfolding crimes in Gaza.

Other protests on Friday involving hundreds of people were held in Pittsburgh, Portland and Washington D.C., with larger demonstrations planned across the US this weekend. Despite the efforts of the media and politicians to demonize all protests against Israel's policies as "antisemitic" and to isolate those feeling sympathy for the Palestinians, opposition is building among workers and youth of all backgrounds. A 2021 poll found that one-quarter of American Jews consider Israel to be an "apartheid state" hostile to the Palestinians, a figure that will only continue to grow.

Thousands also took to the streets in London once again on Friday, defying similar propaganda and threats from the British media and political establishment.

A series of larger demonstrations also swept across the Middle East, involving hundreds of thousands of people. In Jordan, mass protests in Amman demanded the opening of Jordan's border with the Israeli-occupied West Bank. Protesting crowds marched on the border with Israel, only to be turned back by Jordanian police.

Large protests took place in Sanaa and Tehran. In Cairo, tens of thousands rallied outside the Al Azhar Mosque, chanting "Free Palestine." Thousands defied a state ban to march in support of Gaza in Tunis. In Iraq, a country that has lost over one million lives after decades of US-led sanctions, war and occupation since the 1991 Gulf War, hundreds of thousands marched in Baghdad.

Protesters in the Middle East are effectively opposing not only the Israeli regime, but also their own governments, which have betrayed the Palestinians for decades. The Arab bourgeoisie's role is

exemplified by the treachery of the Egyptian military dictatorship. Having signed a treaty with Israel in 1978, Egypt has now closed its borders to Palestinians trying to flee Gaza.

In Israel itself, despite the ultra-reactionary political atmosphere fostered by Netanyahu's government, which has now been joined by the official opposition, there is explosive discontent. Millions joined protests earlier this year against Netanyahu's attempt to undermine the independence of the judiciary. The attack on the judiciary, as a letter titled "Elephant in the Room" from 3,000 predominantly Jewish intellectuals made clear, is intimately tied up with the conditions that led to the Hamas uprising.

The letter states:

(There is a) direct link between Israel's recent attack on the judiciary and its illegal occupation of Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Palestinian people lack almost all basic rights, including the right to vote and protest. They face constant violence: this year alone, Israeli forces have killed over 190 Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza and demolished over 590 structures. Settler vigilantes burn, loot, and kill with impunity. . . .

There cannot be democracy for Jews in Israel as long as Palestinians live under a regime of apartheid, as Israeli legal experts have described it. Indeed, the ultimate purpose of the judicial overhaul is to tighten restrictions on Gaza, deprive Palestinians of equal rights both beyond the Green Line and within it, annex more land, and ethnically cleanse all territories under Israeli rule of their Palestinian population.

All the major imperialist powers stand exposed by their support for Netanyahu and his war on the Palestinians. On Sunday, October 8, the heads of state of France, Italy, Germany, Britain and the United States pledged "steadfast and united support to the State of Israel," and an "unequivocal condemnation of Hamas." At a press conference in Qatar on Friday, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken doubled down in condoning Israeli crimes.

Asked by a reporter if Israel is "retaliating in a fury" and whether the US supports this, Blinken replied with total hypocrisy and double-talk: "What Israel is doing is not retaliation. What Israel is doing is defending the lives of its people. . . . I think any country faced with what Israel has suffered would likely do the same thing."

What message are the NATO powers sending? They aim to create on a global scale a new era of imperialist colonial rule. They brook no

resistance to the Israeli state's illegal, 16-year blockade of Gaza, its denial of food and medicine to the impoverished enclave, and its targeted assassinations of Gaza residents. If this united front of imperialist gangsters were to sum up its policy toward the Palestinian people in one phrase, it would be: "Slaves you were, and slaves you remain."

In a video released Friday, which has gone almost entirely unreported in the Western media, Hamas official Basim Naim summarized the background of Israeli oppression, which led to the October 7 rebellion.

He said:

We are speaking about a 75-year-old occupation that neglected and ignored all political and legal means to settle the conflict, where the Israeli enemy continued their policy of denial of the Palestinian people's existence and their national rights. We have repeatedly warned during the past few months and years that the situation on the ground was not sustainable and that the explosion was only a matter of time.

We have warned repeatedly about the Israeli continued violations in Al-Aqsa Mosque and their attempt to change its status quo in an apparent plan to divide the holy mosque spatially and temporally. We have also warned about the state terrorism implemented by the fascist settlers across the occupied West Bank. We have warned about the forceful expulsion of our people from Jerusalem. We have also warned about the systematic crimes against our prisoners, including women and children, in Israeli jails.

And lastly, we have warned about the Israeli siege on Gaza for more than 17 years, which is a war crime that turned Gaza into the biggest open-air prison on earth, where a whole generation has lost all kind of hopes. But unfortunately, no one listened to these warnings, and the international community, especially the Western countries, continue to give Israel the cover at all levels to continue committing its crimes.

In prosecuting their war against Gaza, the Israeli government and Western imperialist powers aim to obliterate this historical background and numb the population with wall-to-wall atrocity propaganda.

While the deaths of Israeli civilians are undoubtedly tragic, the violence that took place occurred in the context of a massively oppressed people rebelling against a heavily armed oppressor. Even if one were to accept all the accounts of Palestinian violence, it only raises the question—what could lead to such violence?

History judges differently the violence of a population rising up against oppression and the calculated resort to mass murder by capitalist state machines armed with vast military and financial resources. The imperialists have always claimed that the resistance of the oppressed to colonialism justifies their savage retribution. In exacting this retribution, they have always portrayed the oppressed as savages and murderers.

In 1899, the Boxers revolted against the division of China into imperialist spheres of influence. Citing the Boxers' killings of Christian missionaries and their seizure of foreign property, eight imperialist powers sent armies to sack Beijing and massacre the Boxers. Mounting conflicts between these powers over the division of

the spoils in China led ultimately to the bloody Japanese occupation of China in the 1930s and 1940s, which cost nearly 20 million lives, provoking the 1949 revolution that ended colonial rule over China.

In 1904, the Herero people in Namibia rose up against German colonial rule, killing more than 100 German settlers. The German army responded by carrying out the first genocide of the 20th century against the Herero, forcing them into deserts where they died of thirst, or imprisoning them in death camps prefiguring the extermination camps of the Nazi regime. In 2015, German officials formally acknowledged the genocide and offered a state apology.

Netanyahu's regime and its imperialist allies are resorting to similar methods against Gaza. However, the great anti-colonial struggles of the 20th century that broke out after the Russian revolutions of 1905 and October 1917 did not take place in vain. Among masses of workers and youth internationally, Netanyahu's barbaric methods provoke outrage. This opposition will grow as the monumental scale of the crimes being planned and committed against Gaza become evident to ever broader layers of workers and youth throughout the world.

The NATO powers' other justification for backing Netanyahu's crimes—that they are defending Jews and opposing antisemitism—is collapsing. In reality, they are supporting Netanyahu's genocidal campaign against the Palestinians in a close alliance with political descendants of the forces that carried out the Holocaust.

For nearly two years, they have waged a war on Russia in Ukraine in alliance with neo-fascists like the Azov Battalion, who hail the memory of the Nazi collaborationist and antisemite Stepan Bandera. NATO attempts to deny this fact or dismiss it as Russian propaganda have fallen apart. Last month, the entire Canadian parliament gave a standing ovation to the 98-year-old Ukrainian Nazi war criminal and former Waffen SS member Yaroslav Hunka.

As the capitalist ruling elites plunge into barbarism, a mass movement is emerging in the international working class. Protests against imperialism and Zionism are erupting amid mounting global struggles of the working class. Strikes against exploitation, austerity, inflation and police violence shook all the major imperialist powers this year and will intensify in the weeks and months ahead.

The liberation of Palestine is only possible in the context of the growth of a powerful socialist movement of the international working class, including within Israel itself. This will create the conditions for the overthrow of Zionist chauvinism and the unity of Palestinian and Israeli workers. The struggle against the war in Gaza must acquire a clear, anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist character, mobilizing the working class in a struggle for socialism across Palestine and the Middle East and internationally.



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