

Blinken-Abbas meeting: Palestinian Authority courted as Israel's policeman in Gaza

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US Secretary of State Antony Blinken made an unannounced visit to Ramallah in the Israeli-occupied West Bank Sunday to meet Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas.

His declared purpose was to discuss a possible role for the PA in running Gaza once Hamas has been removed from power. That Abbas agreed to such a meeting with a member of the Biden administration is proof—if one were still needed—that the Fatah-led administration functions as a police force for Israel and its imperialist backers.

The Biden administration has given its full backing for Netanyahu's murderous carpet bombing of Gaza and an unfolding ground invasion aimed at mass murder and the ethnic cleansing of Gaza. The ferocity of Israel's offensive against one of the most densely populated areas in the world, supported by up to 350,000 army reservists, has already claimed over 10,000 lives, including 4,000 children, 2,500 women and 500 elderly people. That means that at least 70 percent of the total death toll are civilians.

A further 25,000 people have been wounded. Israel has stopped fuel, food, electricity and even drinking water from reaching the besieged enclave, which will kill thousands more. Its army has cut Gaza in two, severed communications, bombed the homes of one quarter of Gaza's residents, rendering them homeless, as well as United Nations facilities where Palestinians had sought refuge, and hospitals, schools and mosques.

All this death and destruction has been carried out with sophisticated weaponry supplied and paid for by US imperialism. At the same time, the Israeli settlers and the military have intensified their attacks on the Palestinians in the West Bank, killing at least 150 Palestinians since October 7. This comes atop the escalating army raids and attacks by armed settlers

since early last year that killed at least 200 Palestinians in the first nine months of 2023.

None of this deterred the utterly shameless Abbas from meeting Blinken to discuss what role the PA might play in Gaza after Netanyahu and his gang of bloodthirsty fascists have reduced most of it to rubble. He instead urged the US to back a ceasefire while the war criminal Blinken made fatuous claims about Washington's efforts to get Israel to "minimize civilian harm."

The Biden administration knows full well that the Netanyahu regime has no plan for Gaza that includes those Palestinians it has not butchered living there. Israeli officials have declared that "eradicating every last trace of Hamas" the Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated group that has ruled Gaza since 2006—means "not just decapitating Hamas tactically, but also crushing its ability to have any military or jurisdictional ruling capabilities in Gaza."

Israel intends to take full control of the Gaza Strip, with the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) already preparing the groundwork for direct military rule. Far-right legislators have raised the possibility of taking over at least parts of Gaza and reestablishing settlements there.

Thus far, senior officials have publicly rejected taking over Gaza—US President Joe Biden has warned Netanyahu that re-occupying Gaza would be a "big mistake." But internal documents have been leaked and then published laying out plans to transfer the entire population to Egypt's Sinai desert or Israel's Negev as an alternative. Even as Blinken and Abbas were meeting, Israel's Heritage Minister Amichai Eliyahu, a member of Jewish Power, suggested that using a nuclear bomb on the Gaza Strip could be one way of dealing with the Hamas threat. "There's no such thing as innocents in Gaza," he said, and they should all go to

“the desert or Ireland.” An embarrassed Netanyahu took the token action of suspending him from the cabinet.

To try and conceal the stark reality of Israel’s plans, the US has raised the possibility of an international force—possibly from the Arab states and supported by the US, the European Union and United Nations—taking charge, and is now sounding out Abbas to provide a Palestinian veneer for the de facto seizure of Gaza by Israel. This was in large measure an attempt to make things easier for the corrupt Arab regimes and Turkey to continue to do nothing as Israel lays waste to Gaza while Blinken tours the Middle East seeking backing for a wider war targeting Iran.

Abbas’ spokesperson made great play of telling Blinken that the PA would not agree to a role in Gaza without a “comprehensive political solution” to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Fatah might think this provides them with some cover for the criminal role they are being asked to play, but this is delusional. Israel already barely tolerates the PA, despite its role in suppressing Palestinian opposition. It has repeatedly withheld its tax revenues, stepped up the expansion of the settlements and supported attacks on Palestinians by armed settlers aimed at driving them off their land.

It will not be long before the ethnic cleansing of Gaza is followed by a similar operation in the West Bank. Far-right Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, who heads Religious Zionism, and National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, who heads Jewish Power, have done everything in their power to bring about the collapse of the PA as part of their plans to annex the West Bank. Zionist settlers, numbering 700,000 have already been armed with assault rifles, supplied by the US, stepping up their terror attacks on the Palestinians under the protection of the IDF.

As one of the negotiators of the Oslo Accords that served to entrench Israeli domination over the Palestinians, Abbas is regarded as Israel’s lackey, presiding over a corrupt and incompetent administration. It was the widespread hostility to his Fatah faction of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) that led to Hamas’s victory in the 2006 elections.

With Israel’s backing, Abbas waged an ultimately unsuccessful civil war against Hamas in its Gaza stronghold, and following his defeat, collaborated with

Israel in blockading, isolating and starving Gaza. The PA did nothing to defend the citizens of Gaza against Israel’s murderous assaults in 2008-09, 2012, 2014, 2018, 2021 and 2023 that led to the loss of thousands of lives. Fatah became so unpopular that Abbas refused to hold any elections after 2006.

This record of betrayal would pale into insignificance if Abbas were to accept a role for the PA fronting for a barbaric Israeli dictatorship in Gaza after it had been bombed back to the Stone Age.

The talks in Ramallah demonstrate the degree to which the nationalist project of building an independent Palestinian state in the occupied territories has proved to be the means of oppressing the Palestinians, confined to impoverished Bantustans in the West Bank and an open-air prison in Gaza. Hamas’s rise has been the result of the mass disillusionment with the secular bourgeois nationalist PLO, but the Islamist movement offers no viable alternative.

The liberation of the Palestinian people can never be achieved via an abortion of a nation-state brokered by imperialism. It is only the working class, uniting across national and religious boundaries in a common struggle against imperialism and its local agents, both Israeli and Arab, in the struggle for a multinational state with equality for all citizens and the United Socialist States of the Middle East that can put an end to oppression, poverty, ethnic cleansing and war.

The growth of the class struggle internationally is providing the basis for putting an end to imperialist domination. The struggle against the war in Gaza must be connected to the worldwide struggle of workers against inequality and exploitation and developed as a conscious political movement for international socialism.



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