

At least 80 dead as Israel bombs UN schools in Gaza

Alex Lantier

20 November 2023

Over the weekend, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) intensified its relentless campaign of atrocities against the Palestinian people of Gaza, bombing two UN schools. Dozens were killed and hundreds wounded as the IDF also bombed refugee camps in Bureij and Nuseirat in central Gaza, killing 31.

The Gaza Health Ministry reported that IDF strikes killed at least 50 people at the Jabaliya refugee camp's Al Fakhoura school and caused dozens of casualties at the Tal az-Zaatar school. It has, however, been a week since the ministry ceased publishing official casualty figures from the Israeli war on Gaza which they can no longer reliably establish, as the IDF bombs destroy and forces occupy hospitals and other health facilities across the Gaza Strip.

Ahmed Radwan, who was wounded in the Al Fakhoura bombing, told AP: "The scenes were horrifying. Corpses of women and children were on the ground. Others were screaming for help."

Another witness told Al-Jazeera at the scene: "Dead bodies [are] scattered ... pieces of flesh. No one can recognise their sons. Our life is hell."

Yesterday, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres formally condemned the IDF bombings of UN facilities, saying: "I am deeply shocked that two UNRWA schools were struck in less than 24 hours in Gaza. Dozens of people, many women and children, were killed and injured as they were seeking safety in United Nations premises. ... Hundreds of thousands of Palestinian civilians are seeking shelter at United Nations facilities throughout Gaza due to the intensified fighting. I reaffirm that our premises are inviolable."

Guterres called the number of Palestinian civilian casualties—estimated to include at least 13,000 deaths—"staggering" and "unacceptable" and said that the Israel-Gaza war "must stop."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who

already dismissed Guterres' previous calls to protect UN facilities with demands that Guterres resign, no doubt plans to react to these comments with new acts of mass murder targeting hospitals, schools and refugee camps.

Israel's Zionist regime is trying to resolve the Palestinian question via genocide, with the support of the NATO imperialist powers. US President Joe Biden, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, French President Emmanuel Macron and Italian Prime Minister Georgia Meloni all have traveled to Israel to hail Netanyahu and endorse Israel's "right to defend itself." By this, they mean the systematic use of massive IDF firepower from bombers, drones, tanks and artillery to massacre Gaza's defenseless civilian population.

Since the October 7 Palestinian uprising against the illegal Israeli blockade of Gaza, at least 400,000, or over half, of Gaza's buildings have been destroyed, according to Palestinian officials. The IDF cut off water, food, electricity and fuel to Gaza and ordered the total evacuation of northern Gaza. Now, 1.7 million of Gaza's 2.2 million inhabitants have fled their homes. Only 10 of Gaza's 36 hospitals are still functioning, with only 1,400 beds to treat tens of thousands of wounded without anesthetics or other critical medical supplies.

The Netanyahu regime has reacted to mass protests internationally against the war on Gaza by escalating its bombing of civilians, repeatedly striking targets like the Jabaliya refugee camp and Al-Shifa Hospital, which IDF forces surrounded and stormed last week.

On Sunday, a World Health Organization (WHO) team at the Al-Shifa Hospital called it a "death zone." A mass grave has been dug next to Al-Shifa's entrance, after the IDF forced hundreds of patients, including amputees, to evacuate the building Saturday on foot, in a death march. WHO officials stressed their concern for 29 patients, who cannot move due to serious spinal injuries, patients with

wounds infected for lack of antibiotics, and 32 babies in “extremely critical condition.”

The NATO imperialist powers’ unconditional support for IDF atrocities in Gaza is a warning: This genocide cannot be halted through appeals to capitalist governments but only by forging a common struggle by workers internationally against these governments. Already, calls are circulating among workers across America, Europe and the Middle East to refuse to handle arms shipments to Israel. However, uniting and developing such calls into an international movement to stop the war requires a conscious struggle against nationalism and the bankrupt capitalist nation-state system.

From the foundation of the state of Israel in 1948, based on the Zionist perspective of building a Jewish-exclusivist capitalist state in Palestine, the construction of this state proceeded based on the forced displacement of the Palestinians through the application of massive violence. Palestinians were forced into the enclaves in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and turned into second-class pariahs by the assertion of the Israeli state’s exclusively Jewish identity.

The IDF onslaught against Gaza and the imperialist powers’ support for it flow from a mortal crisis of the Zionist regime and of the broader, imperialist-dominated nation-state system in the Middle East of which it is a part.

Particularly since 1991, with the Stalinist dissolution of the Soviet Union and the first Gulf War against Iraq, the Israeli state has emerged as a critical Middle Eastern outpost of US imperialism, which armed Israel to the tune of billions of dollars. Since 2011, when NATO launched a war against the Russian- and Iranian-backed Syrian regime, the IDF has played a key role in bombing Iranian and Syrian regime targets in Syria and across the region. But its role in the emerging world war’s Middle Eastern front is taking place hand in hand with a deepening crisis at home.

As Palestinians came ever closer to being the majority, so did the insoluble contradiction between Israel’s democratic pretensions and its reactionary definition as an exclusively Jewish state. In the 21st century, Israeli capitalist politicians and media called Palestinian population growth a “demographic time bomb” and spoke of a Jewish-Arab “demographic war” in Israel. Netanyahu helped lead this campaign, having denounced Israeli Arabs as a demographic threat already in 2003.

Last year, the *Times of Israel* cited a study by Israeli

demographer and Haifa University Professor Arnon Soffer which found that only 47 percent of the population of Israel, the West Bank and Gaza were Jewish. It included 7.45 million Jews, 7.53 million Arab Israelis and Palestinians and several hundred thousand others. The *Times* cited Soffer’s warning that “the Israeli population is unaware of the democratic peril the country is sliding into by possibly becoming a ruling minority in the area.”

The *Palestine Chronicle* commented: “Israeli officials often refer to the growing Palestinian population as a ‘demographic bomb’, thus developing state policies to ensure the constant growth of the country’s Jewish citizens at the expense of Palestinian Arab communities. ... Soffer’s research is a rare admission that Israel’s so-called ‘demographic war’ has been lost.”

The IDF’s constant atrocities in Gaza, far-right Israeli Minister of Heritage Amichai Eliyahu’s call to drop nuclear bombs on Gaza, and Israeli intelligence reports planning to deport surviving Palestinians in Gaza to concentration camps in Egypt all reveal one political reality: The Israeli ruling elite, incapable of finding any peaceful or progressive solution to the contradictions of Israeli society, is moving to try to “resolve” them through genocide.

In the West Bank, IDF forces and far-right settler militias are imposing a reign of terror, imposing a lockdown on and shooting Palestinians. At least 130 Palestinians have died at the hands of the IDF or far-right Jewish settler militias in the West Bank since the latest Gaza war began. This weekend, Israeli forces shot and killed two men: Issam al-Fayed, a disabled Palestinian aged 45, amid a massive raid on Jenin, and Omar Ali al-Laham, in a raid on Bethlehem.

The only progressive way forward is to mobilize the working class across the Middle East and internationally against imperialism and its Zionist allies, in a revolutionary struggle to build a united socialist federation of all the peoples of the Middle East.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)