

As UN calls for Gaza ceasefire, Israel begins flooding Gaza with seawater

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The United Nations General Assembly voted overwhelmingly Tuesday to call for a ceasefire in Gaza, with the United States, the leading global enabler of Israel's genocide, voting against the resolution.

The vote totals saw 153 member states vote in favor of a ceasefire, while 10, including the United States, Israel and a handful of smaller countries—Austria, Czechia, Guatemala, Liberia, Micronesia, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay—vote against it. The United Kingdom, Germany and Italy abstained.

Speaking in support of the resolution, UN General Assembly President Dennis Francis of Trinidad and Tobago said, “Right now, what we are seeing is an onslaught on civilians, the breakdown of humanitarian assistance, and profound disrespect for international law.” He added, “Even war has rules, and it is imperative we prevent any deviation from these principles and values.”

He noted that thousands of women and children have been killed, and “even more have been forcibly displaced by the incessant violence, with nowhere—I repeat, nowhere—safe to go.”

In a statement on the vote, Avril Benoît, executive director of Doctors Without Borders, said, “Today the majority of the world stood together to demand an end to this bloodshed and suffering in Gaza. The United States has once again voted to allow the carnage against civilians in Gaza to continue.” She added, “The US is increasingly isolated in its steadfast support of a war that seems to have no rules and no limits.”

The resolution, however, is non-binding, enabling Israel to continue to murder hundreds of Palestinians each day, and the United States to fund, arm and logistically support the genocide. In a show of open defiance, Israel added to its war crimes on Monday, blowing up a United Nations UNRWA school in

Northern Gaza.

With potentially even more catastrophic effects, Israel has begun pumping seawater into Gaza with the stated aim of flooding underground tunnels and structures. The Netanyahu government has said the hostages are being held in underground tunnels, but President Joe Biden said on Tuesday he has been told Israel is not flooding tunnels where hostages are being kept.

Besides potentially drowning its own citizens being held hostage, Israel's pumping of vast quantities of salt water into Gaza will have catastrophic health and economic consequences for the enclave and its inhabitants.

A substantial portion of the water is likely to make its way into Gaza's underground aquifer, potentially poisoning the water supply. The salt water could also have a massive impact on Gaza's agriculture, as a high salt content in soil is poisonous to plant life.

In a meeting with families of the Israeli hostages held in Gaza, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said of the hostages, “currently it's not possible to bring all of them back.” In response, the families told Netanyahu they believed flooding the tunnels would lead to the hostages' deaths.

On Tuesday, when he was asked to comment on reports that the tunnels were being flooded, Biden replied that “assertions [are] being made that ... there's no hostages in any of these tunnels. But I don't know that for a fact.” In his remarks, Biden referred to “the indiscriminate bombing that takes place” on the part of Israel, contradicting the repeated false assertions of his administration that Israel is taking measures to protect the lives of civilians in Gaza.

Biden also for the first time admitted that elements within Israel's government are calling for the deliberate targeting of the entire civilian population of

Gaza. He said, “Ben-Gvir and company and the new folks, they... They not only want to have retribution, which they should for what the Palestinians— Hamas—did, but against all Palestinians.”

Despite these admissions, Biden was categorical that the United States would support Israel regardless, declaring that “in the meantime, none of it is going to walk away from providing Israel what they need to defend themselves and to finish the job.”

In announcing that the US would vote against a ceasefire in Gaza, US Ambassador to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield said, “Any ceasefire right now would be temporary at best and dangerous at worst.” She added, “Israel, like every single country on earth, has the right and the responsibility to defend its people from acts of terrorism.”

On Monday, the death toll in Gaza surged to 18,205, Gaza’s Ministry of Health said, with another 7,000 people missing. Some 70 percent of the dead are reported to be women and children.

The United Nations warned that disease is running rampant:

The spread of diseases in Gaza has reportedly intensified, especially due to overcrowded living conditions; which adds to the strain on an increasingly overwhelmed health system and an increased risk of people dying. On 12 December, the [Ministry of Health] spokesperson in Gaza said that the ministry had documented 360,000 cases of infectious diseases in shelters, noting that the actual number is believed to be higher.

The UN added that “cases of meningitis, jaundice, impetigo, chickenpox and other upper respiratory tract infections had been recorded.” It continued: “Additionally, the director of the Abu Youssef An Najjar Hospital in Rafah announced that... diarrhea and influenza were spreading amongst internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Rafah.”

On Tuesday, footage emerged on social media showing Israeli troops using Gazan civilians—stripped to their underwear—as human shields as they advanced into urban areas.

Meanwhile, Israel’s minister of communications wrote in a statement on Twitter that “we will never allow another state to be established between the Jordan and the sea,” making it clear that Israel is seeking the total annexation of Palestinian lands, with the unstated premise that its current inhabitants will either be killed or expelled.

Despite the overwhelming vote in the United Nations, Israel and the United States are bent on continuing their genocide in Gaza. All of the imperialist powers, including France, Germany and the UK, have declared their support for Israel’s “right to defend itself,” providing critical military, logistical and political support for Israel.

Stopping the massacre requires the deepening and expansion of the mass protest movement that has emerged against the genocide by turning to the working class and fighting for a socialist perspective. As the *World Socialist Web Site* wrote in its most recent editorial board statement:

Stopping the genocide in Gaza is the task of the working class. Workers should support the call by the Palestinian trade unions not to handle war materiel destined for Israel. The global demonstrations by millions of people against the genocide must be expanded and armed with a socialist perspective.

The struggle to put an end to Israel’s genocide in Gaza must be waged as a struggle against the imperialist governments that are responsible for it and the capitalist system whose barbarism is being put on hideous display before the world.



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