

Israeli regime assassinates journalist in Gaza amid growing threat of region-wide war

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The Biden administration dispatched National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan to Tel Aviv Friday to underline Washington's unyielding support for the Israeli regime's genocide against the Palestinians. As Sullivan reiterated that US imperialism places no restrictions on Israel's onslaught and threatened a wider war against Hezbollah and Iran, the Israeli regime continued its savage onslaught on Gaza's defenceless population.

The Zionist regime's barbarism was demonstrated once again Friday with the targeted killing of *Al Jazeera* cameraman Samer Abudaqa. Abudaqa was fatally wounded in a drone strike on a school in Khan Younis. His colleague, *Al Jazeera* Gaza bureau chief Wael Dahdouh, suffered light injuries. A third journalist, Ramy Budair of the New Press Agency, also died in Khan Younis Friday. Earlier in the conflict, Dahdouh was forced to mourn the loss of almost his entire family following a deliberate Israeli air strike on his house.

"The Network holds Israel accountable for systematically targeting and killing *Al Jazeera* journalists and their families," stated *Al Jazeera* in an official statement condemning Abudaqa's killing. "In today's bombing in Khan Younis, Israeli drones fired missiles at a school where civilians sought refuge, resulting in indiscriminate casualties. Following Samer's injury, he was left to bleed to death for over 5 hours as Israeli forces prevented ambulances and rescue workers from reaching him, denying the much-needed emergency treatment."

Denouncing Israel for "carnage and crimes against humanity," the statement called for the International Criminal Court to pursue war crimes charges. The statement noted that over 90 journalists and media workers have been killed in Gaza since 7 October.

Dahdouh later described how the attack unfolded as the media team accompanied a civil defence unit seeking to evacuate a family from their destroyed home. "We captured the devastating destruction and reached places

that had not been reached by any camera lens since the Israeli ground operation started," he recounted. While he managed to escape to safety, Abudaqa remained stranded. An ambulance trying to rescue the cameraman came under fire from Israeli soldiers.

Abudaqa's killing prompted international outrage. The Committee for the Protection of Journalists appealed for "international authorities to independently investigate the attack and hold those responsible to account." The International Federation of Journalists and Reporters Without Borders issued their own statements condemning the deliberate attack.

Israel has a notorious record when it comes to the targeted killing of journalists. In May 2022, IDF snipers shot and killed respected journalist Shireen Abu Akleh. The 51-year-old Palestinian-American reporter was covering brutal Israeli raids in the West Bank city of Jenin for *Al Jazeera* when she was assassinated.

On Friday, video emerged of Israeli security forces beating photo journalist Mustafa Haruf in East Jerusalem.

The Zionist regime's deliberate targeting of journalists is inseparable from its explicit policy of genocide against the Palestinians. The savage bombardment of Gaza has officially claimed the lives of well over 18,000 people, with an additional 7,000 people reported missing. Some 85 percent of the enclave's 2.3 million residents have been forced to flee their homes. Using bombs supplied by the United States, the IDF has systematically targeted academics, engineers, artists, and other prominent Palestinians. The targeted killing earlier this month of professor and poet Refaat al-Ar'eer provoked a wave of outrage around the globe.

The strategy of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's far-right government is to ethnically cleanse the Gaza Strip and force the remaining inhabitants into Egypt's Sinai Desert. The elimination of journalists on the ground is a critical component of this plan. The fascistic members

of Netanyahu's government hope that they can conceal the horrendous war crimes they are committing from the world.

Sullivan left no doubt during his visit of US imperialism's endorsement of Israel's savagery. There are "no disagreements" between the White House and Netanyahu's government that the war in Gaza will take "months," he told a press conference.

Reiterating the blank cheque extended by Washington to Israel throughout the onslaught, he added, "We're not here to tell anybody you must do X, you must do Y." Sullivan added that in his meetings with Israeli government officials, he "did not hear [them]... say things that would lead me to feel I need to answer the hypothetical question of how Washington will respond if the current phase drags on." In other words, Israel can continue using US-supplied weapons to indiscriminately slaughter men, women and children with impunity.

Underlining the looming danger of an escalation into a region-wide conflict, Sullivan also took aim at Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Houthis in Yemen. Israeli citizens from areas near the northern border with Lebanon "have to be able to return to their homes and have to be able to do so with a true sense of security," Sullivan said. This entails "dealing with the threat that comes from the other side of the border." Although he asserted that for the time being, Washington feels "that threat can be dealt with through diplomacy and does not require the launching of a new war," he added ominously that "deterrence" is needed to send a "clear message" to Hezbollah.

Shortly after Sullivan's remarks, reports emerged of the Israel Defence Forces dropping leaflets over southern Lebanon threatening civilians who fail to "stop" Hezbollah from "infiltrating" the area. The IDF is currently conducting "intensive war simulations" on the Lebanese border for mandatory and reserve troops entitled "Valuable Time."

Some of Sullivan's most provocative remarks were reserved for the Houthis in Yemen, who have fired missiles at several ships in the Red Sea bound for Israel. The Houthis are a "threat to freedom of navigation," he declared, and added that Washington "is working with the international community, with partners from the region and from all over the world to deal with this threat." "While the Houthis are pulling the trigger," he continued, "...they're being handed the gun by Iran."

Coming from one of the Biden administration's top representatives, these statements must be taken with the utmost seriousness. US President Joe Biden has already

deployed two aircraft carrier battlegroups to the region and a nuclear-capable submarine.

Earlier this week, Central Command chief Erik Kurilla paid unannounced visits to Iraq and Syria to discuss "current regional and local security concerns" with Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani and visit "multiple bases" in Syria, according to the Pentagon. US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin spoke by phone Friday with his British counterpart Grant Shapps to discuss the "significant international problem" posed by the disruption to the Red Sea, a key trade route.

The largest presence of US military hardware in the region for decades is aimed at setting the stage for a war engulfing the entire Middle East. Iran is viewed by American imperialism as a major regional obstacle to the consolidation of its hegemony. Washington's goal is to expand the Middle East front in what is increasingly developing as a third world war to secure the lion's share of the spoils in a new imperialist redivision of the world.

The task of halting the imperialists' war plans and stopping the genocide in Gaza falls to the working class. The mobilization of workers in every country to prevent the supply and manufacture of all military equipment destined for Israel must be combined with the struggles of the working class developing in all the major imperialist powers against the ruling elite's attempt to make working people pay for the war through austerity and wage cuts. This fight necessitates the construction of a global anti-war movement guided by a socialist and internationalist perspective.



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