

After denouncing Gaza genocide, Lula embraces “Genocide Joe’s” emissary in Brasilia

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Statements made by Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva of the Workers Party (PT) during a diplomatic trip to Africa denouncing the genocidal nature of the Israeli war in Gaza have provoked international repercussions.

During a press conference in Ethiopia on February 18, Lula compared Israel’s massacre of Palestinians to the Nazi Third Reich’s extermination of European Jews: “What is happening in the Gaza Strip to the Palestinian people hasn’t occurred in any other time in history. In fact, it did when Hitler decided to kill the Jews.”

Lula’s trip to Egypt and Ethiopia, countries that recently joined the BRICS group, was promoted by the PT government as a milestone in a Brazilian foreign policy in Africa aimed at strengthening the political influence of the so-called Global South.

Lula’s statements sparked a barrage of condemnation for contradicting the official narrative imposed by US and European imperialism defending the massacre in Gaza on the fraudulent grounds that Israel is fighting a “defensive” war.

Benjamin Netanyahu’s fascist Israeli government, which plays the role of world imperialism’s “mad dog” in the Middle East, responded to Lula’s statements with a series of abusive attacks against the Brazilian government. Summoning the Brazilian ambassador for a humiliating reprimand at the Holocaust Museum in Jerusalem, the Israeli government declared Lula “persona non grata” and branded him a “Holocaust denier.”

In Brazil, Lula became the target of a widespread campaign by the press and broad sections of the political establishment based on hysterical accusations of “anti-Semitism” and demands that the president recant.

Allies of Brazil’s fascist former president Jair Bolsonaro, who faces prosecution on charges of attempting a coup d’état, used the episode to launch an impeachment petition against Lula in the Brazilian Congress based on the accusation of “anti-Semitism.” These fascist forces cultivate close relations with the Israeli government, which continues to promote Bolsonaro as the premier representative of its interests in Brazilian politics.

The bloodbath promoted by Israel and its imperialist backers in Gaza, accompanied by the rehabilitation of fascism and all forms of political reaction around the world, is provoking continuous waves of mass opposition among the working class and youth internationally.

As Israel prepares for a military assault on Rafah, in the south of the Gaza Strip, which will dramatically escalate the extermination and ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians, massive protests are breaking out around the world. More than 250,000 people took to the streets in London last weekend. In the US, growing sections of the population identify President Biden as “Genocide Joe” because of his principal responsibility for the war. His public appearances have become occasions for constant protests over the last months.

The North African region, visited by Lula during his trip, has been the scene of protests by millions of workers. Opposed to the policies of conciliation between the despotic Arab regimes and Netanyahu, they have demanded that their governments abandon all relations with Israel since the bombings began.

Under these explosive conditions, Lula’s statements are nothing more than a cynical attempt to exploit the mass popular anger against the criminal war in Gaza. With a political career of more than half a century dedicated to betraying the struggles of the working class, the former trade union leader and three-time president of Brazil mourns the atrocities against the Palestinians while in practice covering up for its main perpetrators.

In response to one of the worst crimes in modern history, Lula advocates the failed “two-state solution,” used throughout the post-war period to block a combined struggle of the working class and the oppressed people in the region against imperialism and the Arab and Israeli bourgeoisies.

This “solution” follows the same illusory principles as Lula’s proposal to end the war in Ukraine by forming a “peace club” that brings together the US, its NATO allies, Russia and China. All it would supposedly take is enough pressure on Washington and the European capitals for them to abandon their already advanced global war campaign as just a big misunderstanding.

The bankruptcy of Lula’s perspective was exposed by the

very context in which he began his denunciations of the war in Gaza, accompanied by Egyptian dictator Abdel Fatah al-Sisi. That same week, it was revealed by the press that al-Sisi, the “butcher of Cairo,” was discussing the construction of concentration camps in the desert for Palestinians expelled by Israel from their territories, collaborating with the Zionist ethnic cleansing operation.

On the same occasion, Lula said that “Brazil strongly condemned the position of Hamas in the attack on Israel and the kidnapping of hundreds of people and we call it a terrorist act,” giving credence to Netanyahu’s government spurious claim of “right of self-defense” used to justify the bombing of hospitals, schools and Gaza’s entire civilian infrastructure.

But the hypocrisy of Lula’s posturing as a hero of the Palestinians and all peoples oppressed by imperialism was most fully exposed by his friendly meeting with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken during the G20 foreign ministers’ summit in Brazil, just days after his visit to Africa.

In his meeting with Washington’s chief diplomatic representative, Lula not only limited himself to emphasizing his common views and interests with the Biden administration, but sought to present US imperialism, the main promoter of the Palestinian genocide, of the war in Ukraine and growing conflicts around the world, as an actor for world peace. Lula tweeted about his discussion with Blinken: “We talked about @g20org, the initiative for the improvement of the condition of workers that we launched with President Biden, the protection of the environment, the energy transition, the expansion of investment and cooperation ties between our countries and about peace in Ukraine and Gaza.”

By covering up the central role of the Biden administration and US imperialism in the massacre in Gaza and the transformation of virtually every corner of the globe into a war zone, Lula performs a criminal service against the international working class. Precisely because of this, the middle class pseudo-left organizations in Brazil and internationally have rallied in defense of Lula and his reactionary bourgeois nationalist perspective.

Jacobin magazine, backed by the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), praised Lula’s statements portraying him as the “leader of the Global South” who “paved the way in Latin America by holding Israel accountable.” Contrasting his stance with what they called the “shameful complicity” of the Biden administration, *Jacobin* lionized Lula as he demands that the US become one of the “actors for peace” rather than “promoters of war.” Lula’s inconsequential rantings conveniently aid the DSA, itself a faction of the Democratic Party, in washing its hands after backing the crimes of US imperialism in Gaza and Ukraine, and in fostering illusions in a pacifist re-orientation of Washington’s policy.

While *Jacobin* openly praises Lula as the great leader of the world’s “left,” other sections of the pseudo-left seek to falsely present themselves as a left-wing opposition to the Brazilian

president by demanding he take more radical measures.

This stance was exemplified by the Brazilian Morenoites of the Unified Socialist Workers Party (PSTU). In response to Lula’s statements and their repercussions, the PSTU launched the campaign “Lula must break relations with Israel, now!”, claiming that he is “right to denounce the genocide, but we must go beyond words.” Despite sounding radical, this demand is merely an ultra-left variation of a reactionary bourgeois nationalist perspective in response to the crisis of imperialism.

These different pseudo-left tendencies play their specific roles in a division of political labor directed at disorienting the international working class. The illusions they foster in a response led by the so-called Global South to ferocious US and European imperialism, whether through pacifist or aggressive means, are based on the class interests of the national bourgeoisies in these countries in their quest to reach a mutually profitable accommodation with imperialism.

Lula represents sections of the Brazilian and Latin American ruling elites who, based on the economic and trade relations developed especially with China over the last decades and accelerated under the Belt and Road initiative, have expectations of consolidating these relations under a new “multipolar” order. In Ethiopia, Lula argued that “the consolidation of BRICS as the main forum for emerging countries is an undeniable step forward.”

Contrary to these illusions, the relative decline in the economic influence of the United States is being answered with an explosion of imperialist violence on an even greater scale than in the two world wars, as has already been proven. This course can only be changed by overthrowing the world capitalist system, the root cause of all the fundamental ills of global society.

The crucial question is building a politically conscious and unified movement in the international working class against war and for socialism. Such a movement has in Lula and the bourgeois representatives of the “Global South” not allies, but fierce enemies, whose fear of the revolutionary movement of the working class far exceeds their feigned opposition to the crimes of imperialism.



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