

As Biden backs police assault on anti-genocide protests, Netanyahu prepares Rafah bloodbath

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Over the past week, police forces throughout the United States, working in coordination with the Biden administration, have beaten and arrested hundreds of students and faculty on university campuses for opposing the deliberate and systematic genocide of the Palestinian people by Israel.

In his remarks at the Oval Office on Thursday, US President Joe Biden backed the police onslaught on peaceful protests, making clear that this attack on fundamental democratic rights aims to prevent the population from influencing US policy in the Middle East.

Asked, “Have the protests forced you to reconsider any of the policies with regard to the region?” Biden declared categorically: “No.”

The message was clear: In the face of protests throughout the country, the Biden administration will continue its policy of arming, funding and politically supporting the Gaza genocide and shielding its perpetrators.

Against this backdrop, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reiterated his plans to carry out a ground assault on Rafah, the southernmost city in Gaza where over a million displaced people are sheltering. Netanyahu stated that the attack on the city would take place “with or without” any negotiated ceasefire.

The Israeli government has briefed the United States on its plans to expel the civilian population of Rafah ahead of the planned military operation, forcing them into tent cities it has constructed in central Gaza, *Politico* reported.

“Soldiers are on call waiting,” said Fleur Hassan-Nahoum, Israel’s special envoy for foreign affairs. “We will go into Rafah.” The same day, the *Wall Street*

Journal reported that the Israeli government has set a one-week deadline for Hamas officials to accept its demands or face the destruction of Rafah.

Over 1.2 million displaced people are currently sheltering in the city, fleeing nonstop Israeli bombardment and military raids. According to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, those sheltering in Rafah have “very little to eat, hardly any access to medical care, little shelter, and nowhere safe to go.”

In a statement on Friday, Guterres warned that “a military assault on Rafah would be an unbearable escalation, killing thousands more civilians and forcing hundreds of thousands to flee.” World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus warned of a “bloodbath” if the planned invasion takes place, while UNICEF stated that the invasion of Rafah “would bring catastrophe on top of catastrophe.”

But even before the onslaught against Rafah begins, the situation in Gaza is catastrophic:

- At least 34,622 Palestinians have been killed over the past seven months, with thousands more buried under the rubble of buildings, meaning that the real death toll is greater than 40,000. At least 254 aid workers, 492 health workers, and 141 journalists have been killed by Israeli bombs or bullets.

- 1.7 million people have been turned into refugees, or 75 percent of the population of the narrow enclave. Among those displaced in refugee camps, there is an average of 1 square meter of space per person.

- According to the United Nations, 1.1 million people face “catastrophic” levels of food insecurity. More than 30 percent of children under the age of two in northern Gaza suffer from acute malnutrition.

- Only one third of Gaza’s hospitals are partially functioning. The remaining facilities “are operating with limited capacities, overwhelmed with patients and coping with critical shortages of fuel, medicines, supplies, and staff,” the UN reports.

- Mass graves have been discovered at hospitals throughout Gaza, including Al Shifa Medical Complex and Nasser Medical Complex. In Nasser alone, over 390 bodies have reportedly been exhumed, with many bearing signs of summary execution.

- Every institution of higher education has been destroyed. Sixty percent of residential buildings and 80 percent of commercial facilities have been damaged or destroyed.

The United Nations has warned that the Gaza genocide has already set back human development in Gaza by more than 20 years.

This has all been funded, armed, and justified by the Biden administration and its imperialist allies. To date, the United States has provided over 100 separate arms shipments to Israel, the contents of which, amounting to billions of dollars, have not been publicly disclosed. Last month, Congress authorized tens of billions of dollars in additional weapons and funding to kill, starve, and displace the population of Gaza.

Further, the United States is actively shielding Israel from prosecution by the International Criminal Court. Israeli media sources reported in recent days that ICC arrest warrants could be imminently issued against Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, Israeli Defense Forces Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Herzl Halevi, and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The United States condemned the court, with White House spokesperson Karine Jean-Pierre declaring, “We’ve been really clear about the ICC investigation. We do not support it. We don’t believe that they have the jurisdiction.”

Ahead of the planned offensive on Rafah, US officials are intensely coordinating on the ground in the Middle East. On Wednesday, Secretary of State Antony Blinken visited Israel for discussions with the Israeli government, followed by a trip by CIA Director William Burns to Egypt.

During his trip, Blinken promoted a hostage transfer agreement, which he absurdly called a “ceasefire.” Blinken called the proposal “extraordinarily generous,” declaring Hamas to be “the only thing standing

between the people of Gaza and a ceasefire.”

This “extraordinarily generous” proposal would see the continued military occupation of Gaza, accompanied by the continuation of Israel’s deliberate starvation of the population of Gaza. In fact, the aim of Blinken’s statements was to place the blame for Israel’s planned onslaught on Rafah on the Palestinians themselves.

US imperialism sees the “final solution of the Palestinian question” as an integral element of its efforts to reorganize the Middle East under imperialist domination as part of the escalating US war against Russia and China.

All over the world, millions of people have taken part in mass protests against the Gaza genocide. It is urgently necessary to fuse these mass protests with the broader struggle against war and the fight by workers in every country to defend their jobs and living standards. A critical milestone in this struggle will be the May 4, 2024 online May Day rally. We urge all workers and youth to attend and build this event as a critical step in the struggle against the Gaza genocide and the global eruption of imperialist war.



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