

As Israel bombs ambulances and levels refugee camp, Netanyahu receives bipartisan invitation to address US Congress

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The death toll from the Israeli offensive on Rafah, the southernmost city of Gaza, and attacks throughout the Strip continues to grow, with reports in recent days of widespread deaths and injuries to children, aid workers and other civilians.

Signaling their ongoing support for the murderous onslaught, the leaderships of the Democratic and Republican parties issued an effusive open letter to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu yesterday, hailing him as a leader of a global fight against “terrorism” and inviting him to address the US Congress.

That invitation was made a day after the Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) issued a statement detailing the deliberate killing of two of its paramedics in the Tel Sultan area west of Rafah.

According to the PRCS, on May 29, a convoy of three ambulances was bombed by Israeli war planes. When one of the ambulances caught fire as a result and the paramedics attempted to extinguish the blaze, Israeli soldiers “opened heavy fire towards the teams, forcing them to withdraw from the site before they could retrieve the paramedics’ bodies, which were found in pieces this morning.”

The PRCS noted that with these latest killings, it has now lost 19 paramedics killed by Israel. An estimated 270 aid workers have been murdered throughout the genocide. The PRCS said that it “holds the international community fully responsible for the continued targeting by the Israeli occupation of the PRCS teams, facilities, and ambulances, clearly marked with the Red Crescent emblem, protected under international humanitarian law.”

The two paramedics were among at least 113 Palestinians killed between the afternoons of May 29 and 31, according to Gaza’s health ministry, along with 637 injured. They join the more than 36,000 recorded Palestinian deaths over the past seven months, but with reporting having broken down, estimates place the true death toll at tens of thousands more.

The United Nations and aid agencies are warning that in addition to the direct killings, the offensive against Rafah is creating a massive humanitarian crisis. The assault has displaced an estimated 1 million of Gaza’s 2.1 million people;

deliveries of food and other essentials have been restricted, and humanitarian groups have been forced to withdraw.

On Wednesday, the World Health Organization reported that just three of its aid trucks had been able to enter Gaza since the assault on Rafah began, with 60 more stuck at the Egyptian border.

That prompted the World Food Programme to warn that “Constrained access to southern parts of Gaza risks causing the same catastrophic levels of hunger witnessed in the north,” where there have been shocking scenes of death from starvation as hundreds of thousands have been forced to subsist on the equivalent of less than a small can of beans a day.

On Thursday, Médecins Sans Frontières closed its primary care centre in Al Mawasi, the deserts piece of land at the southwestmost point of Gaza, to which Israel is herding hundreds of thousands of people from Rafah. The doctors’ group reported that the centre had treated more than 33,000 people since February and stated that its forced closure marked “another step in Israel’s systematic dismantling of Gaza’s health system.”

Earlier in the week, it had been forced to end operations at a stabilisation centre in Tel Sultan. SOS Children’s Villages, which provides assistance to the displaced with a focus on children, also announced that it was evacuating from Rafah.

Meanwhile, the healthcare system there is on the brink of a complete collapse. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported yesterday that “key health services, such as dialysis, medical imaging, surgery, internal medicine, and maternity and pediatric care, are no longer available, and many of the highly skilled doctors and nurses have been displaced from the city. With Al Emirati Maternity Hospital ceasing operations, all three hospitals in Rafah that were partially functional prior to the Israeli military operation are now out of service.”

While Israel is besieging the people of Rafah, it is also intensifying operations in central and northern Gaza, from which many of them were forced to flee. The clear aim is to render the strip entirely uninhabitable and to complete its ethnic cleansing of Palestinians.

This week Israel ended a siege of the Jabalia refugee camp in northern Gaza that it began on May 11. In those three weeks, the Zionist forces had carried out mass roundups, executions and indiscriminate shootings, killing hundreds.

With the operation over, a Euro-Med Monitor field team that surveyed the damage reported that “not a single residential building was spared from bombing, bulldozing, or burning operations.”

It continued:

The complete destruction of the area’s infrastructure was evident, as was the burning of the main market and shops in the streets surrounding it, to the point where walking on the roads of most of the camp’s “blocks” has become impossible due to the rubble and massive destruction.

The headquarters in the camp of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) had been completely demolished through systematic shelling and arson with petrol, along with six school buildings.

In the final stages of this destruction operation, at least four Palestinian civilians, including a child, were killed by Israeli forces on Tuesday.

The OCHA also reported that in central Gaza, “four Palestinians, including two women, were reportedly killed and 15 injured when a house was hit in Bloc C of An Nuseirat Refugee Camp, in Deir al Balah” on Thursday. Five were killed the day before in Gaza City when a bomb was dropped on a residential house.

In the southern city of Khan Younis, from which many now in Rafah fled, at least 12 civilians, including two children, were killed Wednesday in separate bombings of two residential buildings.

While US and other imperialist leaders have shed cynical crocodile tears over the onslaught against Rafah, they continue to oversee the genocide, which has been facilitated militarily, politically and diplomatically by American imperialism and its allies.

The ongoing line-up was underscored by the joint letter to Netanyahu, signed by the fascistic Republican Speaker of the House Mike Johnson and Republican Senate leader Mitch McConnell, together with Democratic Party Senate Majority Leader Charles Schumer and Democratic House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries.

Inviting the Israeli mass murderer to address a special joint session of Congress, the Democratic and Republican leaders gushed:

To build on our enduring relationship and to highlight America’s solidarity with Israel, we invite you to share the Israeli government’s vision for defending democracy, combatting terror, and establishing a just and lasting peace in the region.

The historical analogy that presents itself would be an invitation to Hitler or Mussolini to explain his “vision for peace.”

The letter linked this endorsement of the genocide with American imperialism’s broader war drive, including its moves to provoke a conflict with Iran in the Middle East and its confrontations with Russia and China. Those three countries were joined together as a threat to “security, peace and prosperity... around the world.”

The letter again makes plain that the US support for Israel is bound up with its broader program of global war, including the intensifying proxy war against Russia in Ukraine and the continuous military buildup against China, which is viewed as the chief threat to US capitalist dominance.

The Israeli “solution” of the “Palestinian problem” is viewed as a means of clearing the decks to enable the Zionist regime and the US to pursue this program more directly in the Middle East, including through war with Iran.

In addition to backing an Israeli strike on Iran last month, the US is already engaged in war with Iran-aligned forces throughout the region. Yesterday, the Houthis reported that joint US and British strikes on Yemen the day before had killed at least 16 people and wounded 42 others. The Houthi statement claimed that air strikes had hit a building housing Hodeida Radio and civilian homes in the port city on the Red Sea.

US officials confirmed the strikes were carried out by F/A-18 fighter jets that took off from the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower aircraft carrier in the Red Sea, along with other US warships that are stationed in the region, from which they can carry out attacks not only against the oppressed Yemenis but potentially more broadly.



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