

Congress hails the war criminal Netanyahu

WSWS Editorial Board
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On Wednesday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu delivered an address to a joint session of the US Congress, boasting of the progress of the Gaza genocide to cheers and applause from the assembled Democrats and Republicans.

The reception of Netanyahu, in defiance of overwhelming public opposition, marked a new milestone in the breakdown of democratic forms of rule in the United States and the open and public embrace by the US government of genocide, ethnic cleansing and fascist barbarism.

Netanyahu's speech, and the rapturous reception he received, recalled nothing more than the appearance of Hitler before the German Reichstag. The German deputies who shouted "Heil Hitler!" and the American congressmen who barked "USA" are cut from the same cloth.

Netanyahu spoke as a war criminal among war criminals. The bipartisan ovations for this mass murderer confirmed the truth of Mark Twain's observation that "There is no distinctly native American criminal class except Congress."

While some Democrats did not take part in the event, and Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib held a sign that accused Netanyahu of being "guilty of genocide," this was for show. The real position of the Democratic Party was summed up by Vice President Kamala Harris, now the Democrats' candidate for president. Harris issued a statement Thursday condemning "unpatriotic protesters" against Netanyahu and declared, after meeting with Netanyahu separately, "I will always ensure that Israel is able to defend itself."

Netanyahu began by referring to Israel's genocidal war against the people of Palestine as a "clash between barbarism and civilization." The Israeli prime minister meant to imply that he spoke on behalf of "civilization." But the vast majority of the world's population sees the more than nine-month genocide in

Gaza as the embodiment of imperialist barbarism.

After proclaiming Congress the "citadel of democracy," Netanyahu focused a substantial amount of his speech on a vicious denunciation of anti-genocide protesters for exercising their First Amendment rights.

Netanyahu condemned peaceful protests against his government by calling Americans opposed to the Gaza genocide "Iran's useful idiots." He added, "For all we know, Iran is funding the anti-Israel protests that are going on right now outside this building." The protests, he asserted, were motivated by "antisemitism."

The fact that many Jewish people have been at the forefront of the protests is an inconvenient truth that Netanyahu, in his "big lie," chose to ignore. Those protesting are not motivated by antisemitism, but by opposition to the monumental crimes that Israel is carrying out.

Netanyahu addressed Congress in the shadow of accusations filed last month by the lead prosecutor of the International Criminal Court accusing Netanyahu of "murder" and "extermination" and a ruling last week by the International Court of Justice that the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories is illegal. In response to these rulings, Netanyahu condemned international law and asserted the right not only of Israel, but the United States, to commit war crimes and crimes against humanity.

These institutions, Netanyahu asserted, were participating in a new "blood libel" against Israel.

To defend his accusations, Netanyahu resorted to staggering lies, including the claim that the civilian death toll in Gaza is "practically none."

The official death toll in Gaza since October 7 stands at over 39,000, while *The Lancet* has estimated that it could be 186,000 or more. All of Gaza is in a state of famine, according to the UN's special rapporteur on the right to food.

As significant as Netanyahu's address, however, is the fact that he was invited to deliver it. In the face of mass opposition from workers and youth in the US and throughout the world, the Democrats and Republicans invited the head of state of a government carrying out a genocide to address a joint session of Congress, one of the highest honors bestowed upon a foreign leader.

In calling for protests against Netanyahu's appearance, *World Socialist Web Site* International Editorial Board Chairman David North noted that this exposed the real relationship between Israel and the United States. Netanyahu was invited to deliver a "progress report" on "how the genocidal war being waged by his government is advancing the capitalist geopolitical, financial and corporate interests of the American ruling class in the Middle East and throughout the world."

This was evident not only in the thunderous applause from the assembled congressmen, but in the content of Netanyahu's remarks.

The second half of the address was devoted to an argument that the genocide in Gaza is a component part of a broader US-led war throughout the Middle East, focused in particular on Iran.

Declaring America "the guardian of Western civilization and the world's greatest power," Netanyahu stated, "If you remember one thing, one thing from this speech, remember this: Our enemies are your enemies, our fight is your fight, and our victory will be your victory."

He added, "Iran understands that to truly challenge America, it must first conquer the Middle East... Yet in the heart of the Middle East, standing in Iran's way, is ... the State of Israel."

In fact, the reality is reversed. American imperialism sees the "final solution to the Palestinian problem" as a first step in a war against Iran, which itself is part of the escalating war against Russia and the developing conflict with China.

Netanyahu explained that by enabling Israel to commit war crimes, crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing and genocide, US imperialism will be empowered to commit these crimes as well: "If Israel's hands are tied, America is next."

Less than three-and-a-half months before the US presidential election, the entire American political system is mired in extreme crisis. Trump, who barely

survived an assassination attempt, presides over a Republican Party that is wallowing in fascistic reaction. The president of the country, Biden, has just announced his withdrawal as the candidate for the Democratic Party, in favor of Harris.

Whatever their differences, however, the two parties stand united in support for the violent eruption of American imperialism, of which the genocide in Gaza is a component part. And they stand united in the war on the working class at home.

As Netanyahu was delivering his fascist diatribe, the *World Socialist Web Site* and the Socialist Equality Party were holding a rally outside the Capitol, which advanced a program and perspective to oppose the genocide and imperialism.

In his remarks at the rally, David North drew the necessary conclusions that must flow from Netanyahu's address, the genocide in Gaza and the support of the entire political establishment for it:

The building of an antiwar movement requires the mobilization of the working class as an international force. It requires the establishment of the political independence of the working class. And it requires a perspective that has as its aim not protesting to the capitalists, appealing to them to adopt a peaceful policy, but explaining to the working class that if they want to put an end to these horrors, if they want to secure the future, they have to conquer power.

The WSWS urges all of its readers to watch all the speeches to the rally and share them as widely as possible.



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