

Israel prepares region-wide escalation of war across Middle East with American imperialism's support

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The Middle East is teetering on the brink of all-out war following Israel's aggressive response to the killing of 12 children in a missile strike Saturday in the occupied Golan Heights. Israel is set to launch an attack on southern Lebanon, described by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as "harsh," in the coming hours or days, targeting the Iranian-backed Hezbollah militia.

Netanyahu's blood-soaked genocidal regime, which has slaughtered an estimated 186,000 Palestinians in the past nine months, asserts that Saturday's deaths were caused by an Iranian-made rocket fired by Hezbollah, while the Lebanese group has blamed a falling Israeli air defence missile for the incident. Whatever the case may be, two things are already clear. The far-right Israeli regime has long been searching for a pretext to escalate the war in Gaza to its northern front. And it enjoys the full support of American imperialism for this reckless course, which threatens to plunge the entire region into a bloodbath.

During his address to a joint session of Congress last week, Netanyahu made no secret about his intentions to his enthusiastic bipartisan audience.

... when Israel fights Hamas, we're fighting Iran. When we fight Hezbollah, we're fighting Iran. When we fight the Houthis, we're fighting Iran. And when we fight Iran, we're fighting the most radical and murderous enemy of the United States of America...

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.

Netanyahu also held talks with President Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris to secure US approval for an expansion of the war at the appropriate time. Both declared

their unconditional support for Israel in a region-wide conflict with Iran. Harris began her statement to the media following her meeting with the Israeli Prime Minister by echoing Netanyahu's address: "So, I just had a frank and constructive meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu. I told him that I will always ensure that Israel is able to defend itself, including from Iran and Iran-backed militias, such as Hamas and Hezbollah."

American imperialism and its Israeli attack dog are recklessly escalating war in a region that is already seething with tensions. Responding to the Netanyahu government's bellicose statements, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan threatened to "enter" Israel Sunday. "Just like we entered Karabakh, just like we entered Libya, we can do similar to them," he said, referring to Turkey's interventions to support Azerbaijan in its conflict with Armenia and into the Libyan civil war. Erdogan and the Turkish ruling class fear that a war in Lebanon would inevitably destabilise neighbouring Syria, which has been riven by a US-instigated civil war for over a decade. In addition to Iranian forces backing Syria's Assad regime, Turkey continues to patronise Islamist militias in the north to combat Kurdish forces on its southern border.

In April, Iran launched its first direct attack on Israel in retaliation for Israel's provocative bombing of the Iranian consulate in Damascus, which killed seven Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps members. Israel was able to intercept most of the drones and missiles fired with support from the US and regional allies, including Jordan.

The only explanation that can account for the readiness of the Biden administration and Netanyahu to unleash a major military operation in Lebanon under these conditions is that they both want an all-out war. Washington fully endorsed Israel's genocide against the Palestinians in Gaza from the outset last October because Biden, Harris and Co. considered it as a key component of their preparations for a regional war targeting Iran.

They dispatched two aircraft carrier strike groups with up to 15,000 personnel and dozens of warplanes to the region. They have supplied 14,000 2,000-pound bombs to the murderous Israel Defence Forces, helping them lay waste to Gaza's hospitals, schools, universities, and other critical infrastructure. As horrific as these crimes are, they are only a down payment for the devastation US imperialism is prepared to inflict on the entire Middle East to retain its domination over the energy-rich region.

In a statement published on 9 October 2023, just two days after Israel launched its bloody onslaught, the International Committee of the Fourth International warned:

The imperialist leaders and their media echo chambers are opposing not "terrorism" but mass opposition to occupation and the terror inflicted daily by Israel. And they will do so up to and including supporting genocide against the Palestinians and extending this to a regional war against Iran, Syria and Lebanon.

American imperialism's determination to wage war across the Middle East is rooted in its precipitous economic decline, which has compelled it to engage in over three decades of uninterrupted war. It seized on the Stalinist dissolution of the Soviet Union to attempt to offset its relative loss of economic hegemony by deploying its unmatched military force in a series of catastrophic conflicts, beginning with the first Gulf War in Iraq, and continuing through Serbia, Afghanistan, the second Iraq war, Libya and the ongoing civil war in Syria. These wars have killed millions across the Middle East, North Africa, and Central Asia and forced millions more to flee their homes.

These wars failed to achieve their intended outcome. The United States' economic crisis has continued to deepen, with ballooning levels of debt and social inequality linked to the massive expenditures to fund global military adventures and the enrichment of the billionaires. The American ruling class has resorted to ever more openly dictatorial forms of rule to impose its agenda of imperialist war on an overwhelmingly hostile population. Driven by the same intractable crisis of world capitalism, the other imperialist powers in Europe and Japan have armed themselves to the teeth to pursue their own interests in a new redivision of the world which they plan to accomplish by means of world war.

The Middle East is one front for US imperialism in this global conflagration. The others include Ukraine and Eastern Europe, where the US-NATO axis is waging war against

Russia with the aim of subjugating the country to the status of a semi-colony and seizing its natural resources, and the Asia-Pacific, where Washington and its regional allies are setting the stage for war with China to prevent its emergence as Washington's main economic and geopolitical competitor. This is why Netanyahu's speech defending genocide and advocating war throughout the Middle East won such a rapturous response from the representatives of the American ruling class.

While Netanyahu presented his plan for war with Iran to Congress, the only viable way for the working class in the US and throughout the world to stop it was advanced by the Socialist Equality Party at a nearby rally. The same capitalist contradictions that are propelling the imperialists toward world war are radicalising millions of workers internationally and driving them into struggles with revolutionary implications. The rally gave conscious expression to this process, being organised on the following principles:

- The essential cause of war lies in the capitalist nation-state system, the global financial interests of the giant corporations, and the relentless drive of the American ruling class for world hegemony.
- The struggle against war requires the mobilization of the immense power of the American working class and its political independence from the Democrats and Republicans, the ruling class parties of imperialist war.
- The movement against genocide and war must be international, uniting workers globally based on their common class interests.

The latest developments in the Middle East underscore once again the enormous urgency of the fight to build a global anti-war movement led by the working class on these principles. We urge all of those who agree to take the decision today to join and build the socialist opposition to imperialist war.



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