Israel escalates Middle East-wide war with bombing of Beirut

Jordan Shilton
20 September 2024

Israel's savage bombardment of the southern suburbs of Beirut Friday, killing at least 14 people and injuring 66, marks a major escalation of war across the Middle East. The aggressive move, which could only have been taken with the full backing of the United States and other imperialist powers, demonstrates that the Gaza genocide is developing into a region-wide war targeting Iran with catastrophic consequences for millions of people.

Speaking like the fascist thug he is, Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu released a brief statement following the deadly bombardment, asserting, "Our goals are clear, and our actions speak for themselves." Indeed, Netanyahu and his blood-drenched regime, having claimed the lives of upwards of 200,000 Palestinians in Gaza in less than a year, is now plunging the entire Middle East into a barbaric bloodbath–one in which all restrictions on the waging of war, including the indiscriminate killing of civilians, have been cast aside. Israel's ambassador to the United Nations, Danny Danon, underlined this point when he told Friday's Security Council meeting that Israel would do "whatever it takes" and use "any means" in the war against Hezbollah.

The Israel Defense Forces carried out a targeted assassination of Hezbollah senior commander Ibrahim Aqil, who was attending a meeting with commanders of the organisation's elite Radwan Force. While Aqil and several commanders were reported killed, the air strike also slaughtered several civilians, including children. It followed two days of terrorist attacks by Israel across Lebanon on Tuesday and Wednesday, when pagers and other electronic devices were detonated, killing dozens and maiming thousands of civilians. As these attacks were ongoing, the Israeli cabinet agreed to add to its war aims the "return" of some 60,000 residents from the north to their homes, a useful pretext for waging a long-planned war on Lebanon.

Silence has largely reigned in the imperialist capitals of North America and Europe following Israel's criminal acts of terror against Lebanese civilians. US deputy envoy to the UN, Robert Wood, defended Israel's terror at the Security Council Friday, declaring, "Israel has a right to defend itself against Hezbollah's attacks."

Humanitarian organisations have felt compelled to characterise in unusually sharp language Israel's attacks as war crimes. UN Human Rights Commissioner Volker Türk told the same UN Security Council meeting that he was "appalled" by the attacks, which he said "represent a new development in warfare, where communication tools become weapons, simultaneously exploding across marketplaces, on street corners, and in homes as daily life unfolds."

American imperialism and its European allies do not only consider such brutal methods as permissible, but necessary in their pursuit of their geostrategic and economic interests through world war. These are the same governments that have incited, provided arms for, and funded the bloody war against Russia in Ukraine for over two years, which has claimed the lives of at least 500,000 Ukrainians and tens of thousands of Russians. They have supplied an uninterrupted flow of high-powered weaponry over the past 11 months, including 2,000-pound bombs, to turn Gaza into a wasteland and exterminate its population. As they endorse the killing and dismemberment of civilian men, women, and children across Lebanon, the imperialist powers are also preparing to grant Ukraine authorisation to launch long-range missiles deep into Russia, further fuelling a conflict spiral that leads inevitably to a nuclear exchange, unless stopped by the working class.

Describing the barbarism of the great powers during World War I, Rosa Luxemburg wrote,

> Violated, dishonoured, wading in blood,

© World Socialist Web Site

> dripping filth – there stands bourgeois society. This is it (in reality). Not all spick and span and moral, with pretence to culture, philosophy, ethics, order, peace and the rule of law – but the ravening beast, the witch's sabbath of anarchy, a plague to culture and humanity.

Luxemburg's description applies no less forcefully to the imperialist powers of today because they are being driven to seek the redivision of the world in their interests by the same capitalist contradictions that plunged humanity into two world wars in the 20th century. The division of the world into nation states under conditions of an unprecedented global integration of economic life, and the concentration of the productive forces of society in a few private hands amid the socialisation of the productive process linking billions of workers from every corner of the globe create the crisis of world capitalism. The only viable answer to this crisis for the ruling classes of the imperialist powers is a third world war to secure their share of the booty at the expense of their rivals.

The Middle East is one of the key fronts in this conflict, which includes the war on Russia in Ukraine and preparations for war with China in the Asia-Pacific. Washington and its Israeli attack dog have been quite open about their plans. When Netanyahu delivered his speech defending the Gaza genocide to a joint session of Congress on July 24, he received bipartisan standing ovations for his pledges to wage a region-wide war alongside the US against Iran and its allied forces in Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq. Vice President and Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris subsequently met with the Israeli Prime Minister and promised US support for the Zionist regime against Tehran and all of its allies, including Hamas and Hezbollah. American imperialism hopes through this war to consolidate its unchallenged dominance over the energy-rich region at the expense of its rivals, above all China and Russia.

The same capitalist contradictions that propel the ruling class towards world war are impelling the working class in every country into mass struggles with revolutionary implications. In the same week as the Israeli regime escalates war in the Middle East with the backing of its imperialist paymasters, 33,000 machinists are striking at Boeing, one of America's most important military contractors. Over 10,000 autoworkers and supporters from the metal, manufacturing, and transport sectors demonstrated in Brussels, the capital of Belgium, against the planned shutdown of an Audi car plant.

These developments underscore that the international working class is the only social force capable of leading a struggle against the unfolding war across the Middle East and a rapidly escalating third world war. But to do so, its economic struggles must be expanded and transformed into a political fight against capitalism, the root cause of war. As *World Socialist Web Site* international editorial board chairman David North explained at the 24 July demonstration against the Gaza genocide:

> 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 fight to arm the working class with the socialist and internationalist perspective necessary to conduct this struggle is being led by the International Committee of the Fourth International. The urgent task for all of those ready to oppose war throughout the Middle East and beyond is to join and build it.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site