

Stand with the Palestinian people! Oppose the Israeli devastation of Gaza!

The small but densely-populated Gaza Strip is being pulverized by thousands of bombs. Neighborhoods and infrastructure are being destroyed. Thousands are dead. No one in Gaza is safe, no matter what type of building they are in--residences, hospitals, or refugee camps, and even 15 UN aid workers have been murdered. Meanwhile there is a blockade against water, food, fuel and electricity getting to Gaza, which puts people into an extremely desperate condition. Only a tiny trickle of aid is finally being let in after two weeks of bombardment. A horrible catastrophe is taking place in Gaza, threatening to eclipse the numerous previous Israeli attacks.

The bombing displaced an eighth of the population of Gaza in a few days, but the Israeli military has gone further and demanded that everyone north of Wadi Gaza, or about 1.1 million people, half the population, should immediately leave what's left of their homes in northern Gaza and evacuate to the equally-blockaded and attacked south. This suggests that the Israeli government may be considering a permanent displacement of the population.

The fighting isn't just in Gaza, but clashes are also taking place in the West Bank. Even before October 7, over 200 Palestinians were killed earlier this year by armed extremist Jewish settlers in the West Bank and Israeli soldiers. It has now gotten worse. The current increase in fighting began on October 7, when the armed wing of Hamas, the al-Qassam Brigades, attacked across the fortified border wall into Israel in "Operation Al-Aqsa Flood". It successfully attacked a number of Israeli military bases, but also made a point of attacking civilian areas, taking hostages, and slaughtering a number of civilians, including 260 people at a music festival. Hamas and Islamic Jihad have also fired thousands of rockets indiscriminately throughout Israel. Thus the civilian carnage was an integral part of the plan; this atrocity says a lot about the nature of the leadership of Hamas. It does not justify the barbaric Israeli devastation of Gaza, or discredit Palestinian resistance as a whole, and the Israeli revenge is far more extensive than anything Hamas ever did. Nevertheless it is both a crime against its victims, and a betrayal of the Palestinian liberation struggle.

The result of the Nakba and the resulting apartheid regime

This fighting is but one of a series of wars that

have taken place ever since the state of Israel was established. The problem is that the Israel has been an apartheid state, based on the expulsion of the majority of Arabs (the Nakba) when it was founded in 1948, and preserved by being a Jewish theocracy, a state of Jewish supremacy. Following the 1967 war, Israel also controlled the Occupied Territories, including the West Bank and Gaza. Within Israel's official borders, 20% of the population is Palestinians, but they are not allowed equal rights, while Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza are subject to horrendous conditions by the Israeli government which dreams of expelling the Palestinians from all the occupied territories.

Just before the present fighting, an activist of an Arab-Jewish organization active in the occupied territories, David Shulman, wrote an article entitled "Heading Toward a Second Nakba" (1). It pointed out that "Over the past several years the human rights situation in the occupied territories has continually worsened, under the present extreme-right government in Israel, state violence against Palestinians has escalated dramatically. In the first half of this year alone, at least thirty-four Palestinian children were killed by Israeli fire."

Shulman describes how all the Palestinians were forced to leave the village of Ein Samiya, as well as a number of other villages. He describes this as "the Gazafication of what is left of the Palestinian West Bank. ... In effect, the second Nakba is already underway." Israel is already being, in effect, expanded with a new expulsion of Palestinians.

In effect, the war against the Palestinians has been going on for year after year. The US government has helped supply and finance this war, and now Biden has sent two aircraft carriers to the region to back up Israel, as well as sending weapons to the Israeli army. He did not send aircraft carriers, or even a condolence card, when Ein Samiya was emptied of Palestinians.

The result of fundamentalist influence in the liberation movement

Hamas's slaughter of civilians in the al-Aqsa Flood is also not an accident. It is because Hamas is part of a fundamentalist trend which fights in this way. For years the Palestinian movement was led by groups with a secular program, but the rise of Hamas meant that Islamic fundamentalism was gaining influence. It

takes part in the just resistance to Israeli oppression, but, both in its goals and its methods, it also represents a danger to the liberation movement.

Hamas doesn't seek a democratic state, but an Islamic state. It has been limited in how far it could implement this in Gaza because the masses wouldn't accept it.

As for its military methods, the massacres of the Al-Aqsa Flood were not an accident, nor the result of a few undisciplined fighters. They were planned by experienced leaders, who didn't launch the operation in order to hold more territory; that would have been unrealistic. Instead the aim was to take hostages and show how much damage Hamas could do. This wasn't something new. Hamas has always fired rockets to hit targets indiscriminately in Israel, as well as sought hostages.

Hamas has not killed anywhere near as many people as the Israeli government has. But the massacres were still a crime against working people, and a sign of what the fundamentalist trend might do on a larger scale if it had more power. And as well, Hamas's actions damage the Palestinian movement in a way that Israeli raids alone cannot. Hamas's actions drive a wedge between the Palestinian cause and the mass of working people around the world. They also hold back Palestinians from dealing with the political crisis among them, which has existed ever since the Oslo Agreements of 1993.

All this doesn't negate that Israeli apartheid is the vicious oppressor of the Palestinians, and the just struggle of the Palestinian people deserves the utmost support. But Hamas's actions can't be ignored without harming the interests of the working people, Palestinian, Jewish, or others.

The situation facing the solidarity movement

The savage Israeli attacks on Gaza have shocked many people, and there has been demonstrations not just in Arab countries, but in many others. These have taken place in a difficult atmosphere. In a number of countries, there have also been a number of anti-semitic attacks, as well as a rise of Islamophobia and anti-Arab attacks. All this makes the situation complicated, especially for masses of people who aren't familiar with the situation facing the Palestinians.

As well, the supporters of Israeli apartheid have sought for years to present support for the Palestinian people as anti-semitism, and they have been passing laws against peaceful methods of solidarity such as boycotts of Israel. In the US, since October 7 there is a new surge of efforts to suppress all expressions of support, whether from Arabs or Jews or others, for the Palestinian people. (2) This is a reflection of what

exists in Israel itself, where there is fierce suppression of any expression of sympathy for Gaza from Israeli Arabs. (3)

But this vilification campaign can't be effectively fought by poo-h-pooing Hamas's atrocities. Instead it is important that vigorous support for the Palestinian cause goes hand-in-hand with opposing the path set forward by Hamas. This isn't for the sake of a futile attempt to placate imperialism, but for the sake of building the unity of working people everywhere for the Palestinian cause. The solidarity movement will not be stopped by either vilification or repression!

Not a penny, not a dime, for Israeli war crimes!
No to Israeli apartheid!
No to the devastation of Gaza!
Stand with the Palestinian people!

(Excerpted from the full article, available at www.comunistvoice.org/DSWV-231022.html.)

Notes

(1) David Shulman, "**Heading Toward a Second Nakba**", *The New York Review of Books*, October 19, 2023.

(Despite the October 19th date, the issue actually appeared before the October 7 outbreak of the Gaza war.)

(2) Chris McGreal "**Pro-Palestinian views face suppression in US amid Israel-Hamas war/Conference have been abruptly cancelled, media appearances suppressed and demands made to fire critics of Israeli policies**", October 21, 2023, *The Guardian*. Also see Robert Tait, "**Hundreds arrested as US Jews protest against Israel's Gaza assault/Protesters in Washington demand ceasefire, marking rift in community as anti-Defamation League condemns demonstration**", October 19, 2023, *The Guardian*.

(3) Yumna Patel, "**In 'witch hunt,' Palestinians with Israeli citizenship, Jerusalem IDs, face harassment, persecution amid Gaza war**", October 21, 2023, *Mondoweiss*. It writes that "In the wake of the Hamas attack on October 7th, Palestinian Citizens of Israel and residents of occupied Jerusalem are being targeted over their social media activity. Any expressions of Palestinian identity, or support for Gaza, is getting people fired from their jobs, expelled from universities, arrested, and doxxed online by right-wing Israeli groups." <

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