

SocialistAppeal

Stop Israel's massacre in Gaza! Defend the Palestinian people! No solution on capitalist basis!



THE BLOODY events in Gaza have shaken public opinion across the entire world. The brutal assault by the Israeli army on the population of Gaza has resulted in the death of more than 600 men, women and children. Gaza is being systematically reduced to a smoking ruin.

After more than a week of bombardment against Gaza from air, sea and ground, the Israeli army has now moved to split Gaza into two, while ground troops have entered the country to crush any resistance. Some 3,000 Palestinians have been injured in the fighting. Gaza City has been surrounded by tanks and troops since the start of the Israeli invasion. Recently, Israeli artillery shelled a UN-run girls' school in the Jabalya refugee camp north of Gaza City, killing at least 33 and injuring at least 55. This episode reflects the true horror of events in Gaza, sealed off from the outside world.

This unbridled violence displayed by the Israeli army in Gaza is another chapter of the blood-soaked history of Palestine. Despite the claims by the Israeli government, no distinction is made between combatants and non-

combatants. Most of the victims are innocent civilians. Hospitals are overcrowded and lack the basic medicines. Humanitarian aid is blocked by Israel's war machine, adding to the misery of the Palestinians.

Israel's Military Might

Although Israel was first to substantially breach the cease-fire agreed with Hamas in June, they have used the excuse of rockets being fired into southern Israel as the pretext to launch an invasion of Gaza. The firing of rockets into Israel was no challenge to Israel's military might and served only to push the majority of Israel's population into the hands of the government. The so-called resistance struggle by Hamas was a farce, used as propaganda to "show" their continued struggle to defeat Israel. It had no effect whatsoever.

So why did the Israelis launch their attack on Gaza? Officially they claim that it was to stop Hamas firing rockets on Israel. However, the real reason is to do with the politics of the Middle East.

With the election of Barak Obama in the White House and his promise to

withdraw American troops over the next few years, fears have been growing in Tel Aviv that concessions will be made over their heads. US imperialism will need to make a deal of some kind with the other regional powers, Iran and Syria, if any kind of stability is to be guaranteed in Iraq.

As the *Financial Times* explained: "Questions are also raised over whether Mr Obama will deal with the Israel-Palestine conflict as a problem in isolation or integrate it more broadly with US diplomacy on Iran, Syria, Hizbollah and Iraq."

"You cannot treat Israel-Palestine in isolation any more," said David Rothkopf, a former national security adviser in the Clinton Administration. "Everything is interconnected."

This "interconnection" has sent alarm bells ringing within the Israeli ruling class. Before any concessions are made to the Iranians and Syrians, who can rein in Hamas and Hizbollah, the Israelis want to stamp their power on the region. The paper language of diplomats is always subordinate to the weightier arguments of bombs and brute force. Bush, reflecting the previous policy of US imperialism, has rushed to support Israel while Obama has remained dead silent.

Israel was established through the driving out of the Palestinian population from their land. It was a scandal that sowed the seeds of wars and conflicts in the region for more than 60 years. Israel, which was an artificial state, became the client state of western imperialism, especially the United States. It was seen by the imperialists as a bulwark against the Arab revolution and received - as today - huge economic and military support from the West. Israel became a military superpower within the region. Following the war of 1967, after the defeat of the Arab states, Israel seized and occupied

the West Bank and Gaza, further inflaming the situation.

Palestinian State

This has ridden roughshod over the national rights of the Palestinians, who aspire to their own independent Palestinian state. But how shall such a state be realised? The whole strategy of the PLO since the 1960s has ended in complete failure. On the one hand it launched an impotent "armed struggle", which had no effect on Israel, and at the same time made deals with the reactionary Arab states while pleading with the imperialists. They were utterly incapable of waging a serious war of liberation against Israel because, by signing the Oslo agreement, they in effect abdicated the fight for real Palestinian self-determination.

As soon as the abortion of a Palestinian Authority was established, the PLO bureaucrats plundered the state funds and turned themselves into corrupt millionaires. It was this spectacle that turned the people of Gaza towards Hamas. However, Hamas's methods are no better. The rockets of the Izzedine al-Qassam Brigades are simply pinpricks against Israel. These small-scale attacks and suicide bombings can never really undermine the Zionist regime in Israel. They simply play into the hands of the Israeli ruling class, who use these acts of individual terrorism to frighten the Israeli people into supporting the Zionists.

It must be made clear, however, in spite of recent media hype, that the Palestinians are the victims in this scenario. They have been subject to humiliation, their lands robbed and occupied. They face the terror of the Israeli state. They now want to crush the people of

Gaza. Ironically, these actions will serve to strengthen Hamas as the "defender of the Palestinians", while Abbas, the stooge of the imperialists in the West Bank, is becoming more and more unpopular.

The pro-western ruling elites of the Arab states are no friends of the Palestinians either. Egypt has sealed the border with Gaza. It was no accident that Mubarak warmly hosted Livni, Israel's foreign minister, in Cairo just before the launch of the offensive.

The Israelis have no intention of re-occupying Gaza, which would leave it administering a hostile population of 1.5m. They simply want to destroy the infrastructure and crush the spirit of the Palestinians. The Israeli government also have an eye on the general election in February and want to capitalise on this war-hysteria.

However, they were defeated in Lebanon and they cannot afford to be seen as being defeated in Gaza, whatever the outcome. The flurry of EU diplomatic activity will come to nothing. There is talk of some "trusted presence" at the border with Egypt, but there will be few volunteers to commit troops to this region. Whatever the eventual agreement, the Palestinians will be the losers.

This present bloody mess could continue, with ebbs and flows, for years to come. The Israelis have taken advantage of the situation to make further inroads into the West Bank with an increasing number of settlements. Whatever "concessions" are made, there can never be a viable independent Palestinian state on the present capitalist basis. Trotsky warned that the establishment of the state of Israel in Palestine would be a cruel trap for the Jews. This prediction has shown to be

correct.

Marxists were opposed to the creation of Israel in 1948. But now it is not possible to turn back the clock. The Israeli people have the right to exist just like anyone else. But they have no right to conquer and oppress other peoples, as they are doing today. This will only lead to continual conflict, wars and bloodshed.

The immediate object is to force the Israelis to withdraw from Gaza - and the West Bank. We stand for the right of self-determination for the people of Palestine. This can only be achieved by the overthrow of the monstrous regimes of the reactionary Arab states as well as the reactionary regime of Israeli imperialism. Conditions will prepare the way for a revolutionary wave in the coming period.

Socialist Federation

Only the united struggle of the workers of Israel, Palestine, Egypt and elsewhere can offer a way forward. The only solution to the problems of the masses within the Middle East is through the establishment of a Socialist Federation. Only such a federation could give full autonomy to Jews and Arabs, Druzes and Copts, Armenians and Kurds, and solve the national question once and for all. Each people would have the right to live in peace. Refugees would have the right to return. The region would be developed on the basis of a socialist plan of production that would abolish unemployment and poverty. On that basis, the old national, sectarian, and religious hatreds would gradually become a thing of the past. Only a fundamental change in the class relations in the region - leading to the abolition of landlordism and capitalism - can offer a way out. □

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