



# Israel doubles down on its atrocities in Palestine

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On May 11, an Israeli "Defence? Force sniper shot the famous Palestinian journalist Shireen Abu Akleh in the head. The event caused shock and condemnation around the world including from such pillars of the world order as the Catholic Church and the United Nations. To show their utter contempt for world public opinion, when her funeral took place in Jerusalem on the following Friday, Israeli police officers kicked and beat the mourners, including the coffin bearers, and fired stun grenades as the cortege attempted to leave St Joseph Hospital where her body had lain. The hospital's director, Jamil Koussa, said the target of police violence was the coffin itself, a fact proved by video and CCTV images of the beatings and the hospital building itself being stormed by police.

Shireen Abu Akleh, a Christian Palestinian-American, was reporting on an IDF raid underway in the Jenin refugee camp in the north of the Occupied West Bank. With around 11,000 inhabitants, living in an area of only 0.42 sq. km or 0.16 sq. miles, the camp has one of the highest rates of unemployment and poverty of the 19 West Bank camps, created by the mass ethnic cleansing that accompanied the foundation of the state of Israel. Jenin was also the scene of a brutal attack by Israeli forces during the Second Intifada in April 2002, it was her report for Al Jazeera on that event that made Shireen famous across the Arab world. She was also an example to women in the Arab and Muslim world of the role they are increasingly playing in cultural and political life and struggle.

Clearly, the Israeli authorities wish to intimidate other courageous journalists who report on their repeated atrocities. As usual, too, their police blamed the victims; asserting that they were "300 rioters". As with the journalist's death, they will "investigate themselves" and doubtless find the Palestinians themselves responsible. Doubtless, too, the Western governments, busy posing as defenders of democratic values in Ukraine, will stubbornly refuse to condemn the Israelis whilst at the same time continuing to accuse those who support the Palestinian cause, like the BDS movement, of being antisemites.

In Berlin, the German police, backed by the courts, banned the Nakba Day demonstration and any protests related to Shireen's assassination. They arrested 59 people who attempted to defy the ban. In London, the state did not attempt to stop 15,000 demonstrating but the leaders of Kier Starmer's Labour Party were notable by their absence. They are too busy expelling members of their party loyal to suspended former Leader Jeremy Corbyn for antisemitism. These include comrades from Jewish Voice for Labour, themselves accused of antisemitism. So shameless are the Labour leaders that several of them, including Starmer himself, have stated that they are proud to call themselves Zionists.

This bogus accusation rests on the assertion that defenders of Palestine "hold the state of Israel to standards greater than for any other normal democratic state" and say that Zionism "is a racist endeavour" (the words of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition, which its author renounced because it was being used to repress criticism of Israel).

Well, it is certainly true that many other capitalist states, particularly those imperialist "Great Powers" also have a record of massacres and atrocities, some on an even bigger scale than Israel's. But this is hardly a reason to pass over the Zionist settler state's crimes when they are right under your eyes. In addition, it is the Left, accused now of antisemitism, that has most vigorously condemned all these other crimes.

Another test of "antisemitism" is any reference to Israel's creation as "a racist endeavour". Yet how else would anyone describe a state built on a land from which nearly half of its original inhabitants have been repeatedly and

systematically expelled or driven into camps that are little more than prisons?

Meanwhile, settlers from all over the world, who can prove they have some sort of Jewish heritage, are encouraged to come and colonise it. Moreover this process is still underway in the remaining Palestinian parts of East Jerusalem, and the West Bank has been split into an archipelago of enclaves divided by military roads, armed settlements on hilltops, and the notorious wall.

In addition, Israel systematically denies its own Palestinian citizens equality of rights, defines the state as Jewish and demolishes any new houses they build. It is, in short, an Apartheid-style state, the only difference to the original being that it can and does have the goal of taking over the whole of Palestine, which the South African racists could not aspire to emulate.

Of course, leftists must be clear that the reason for the success of Zionism's endeavour is the role Israel has played for US imperialism since the 1940s, and still plays today, in the fragmentation, subjugation and exploitation of the Middle East. While imperialism has other allies, or rather agents, in the regions, first amongst them Saudi Arabia and the Gulf monarchies but also Egypt under its military dictator, throughout that period, Israel has been the most reliable.

Although this iniquitous system has endured for three quarters of a century it will not last forever, any more than its parents, colonialism and imperialism, will. One vital reason for this is the refusal of the Palestinians to be destroyed as a people. Shireen Abu Akleh is only the latest hero of this struggle, but she will be remembered as long as it goes on. For all these reasons it is vital that all socialists and anti-imperialists also refuse to be silenced, even by the lackeys of Western imperialism within the labour movements of Europe and North America. We have to fight for a bi-national state, a home for both Palestinians and Israelis, stretching 'from the river to the sea' and a member of a Socialist United States of the Middle East.

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