

Palestine: Key tasks for the resistance and the solidarity movement

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The mass response of the Palestinian people to the Israeli settler and police provocations in Sheikh Jarrah and at the Al-Aqsa Mosque, the subsequent bombardment of Gaza and the political victory of the resistance that was able to force the Israeli government and the IDF into a ceasefire, have led to a political opening for the liberation movement.

Globally, millions took to the streets in solidarity with the Palestinian masses. In Palestine itself, the masses were roused in all parts of the country, in the West Bank, in East Jerusalem, in Israel and in Gaza, as well as in the diaspora in the Arab countries or in the West. We witnessed a united resistance on a scale that had not been seen for years, reflecting a new determination at grassroots level. Moreover, the general strike marked a new, common action by workers and small property owners. Above all, a new generation of fighting youth has entered the political arena.

The sheer scale of the mobilisations challenged existing ideas of what is possible, raising questions about the movement's future goals, strategy and tactics. In short, it posed the need for a programme of struggle. The prospect of a new vanguard emerging is especially important as it opens the possibility of overcoming the crisis of leadership that has long afflicted the entire Palestinian polity, creating the roots of a working class leadership that can link the national, democratic struggle to the socialist transformation; for one state, secular, democratic and socialist.

Whilst Hamas, and some of the other more determined forces on both right and left, have certainly increased their prestige and support, it would be wrong to see this as a stable, unshakeable political loyalty or full-scale agreement. Hamas and other forces have benefited mainly from the complete failure of the Fatah majority and the Palestine National Authority to offer any leadership against the Israeli government's strategy of expulsions and settlements. On the contrary, their own strategy of negotiations for the fantasy of a two-state solution has made them nothing more than collaborators, not only with US and EU imperialism and reactionary Arab regimes like Egypt, but with the Zionist state itself.

By comparison, the heroism of the fighters of Hamas and Islamic Jihad, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, PFLP and the more radical wing of Fatah, has of course inspired the masses and enhanced their authority. Nonetheless, they also have neither a strategy nor successful methods of struggle that can win the liberation of the Palestinian people.

The general strike was primarily a result of the pressure of the masses towards the methods of mass working class action, rallying all popular classes and layers. It marked a clear rupture with the preferred methods of both the Islamists and the secular nationalist and left nationalist/Stalinist forces. The forms of self-organisation from below, of local co-ordinations of the strike at community level, demonstrate the way

forward and the potential for a new Intifada, based on mass working class action, giving a lead to all oppressed sections of Palestine society.

Recent weeks have also revealed considerable divisions within the Zionist camp, and these are likely to increase with the change of strategy from the US and other Western powers. Netanyahu may be removed from office by an unprincipled coalition stretching from the far right to supposed leftists and this may avoid a new election in the short term, but it will not end the inner political crisis of the Israeli state.

Whilst the ceasefire is likely to hold for the next year, perhaps longer, all the fundamental problems will remain unresolved, even though the US and the EU as well regional powers like Egypt will try to increase the pressure for another round of pseudo-negotiations around a 'two state solution'. It is also quite possible that, via Egypt and some funding from imperialist or Arab states, there will be attempts to incorporate and pacify Hamas.

How far away the solution of any of the fundamental problems is, can be seen from the continued struggles in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Israel itself. There have been major clashes between Palestinians defending their homes on the streets and the police and right wing Zionist forces. The task now is to continue and generalise that mass struggle against evictions and for equal rights.

Key demands are:

- End the expulsion of Palestinians from their homes in East-Jerusalem and the West Bank by right wing settlers and mobs, aided by the police and Israeli courts.
- Tear down the apartheid wall! End the blockade of Gaza and the border controls to the West Bank. For the right of free movement for all Palestinians between all the sectors of their historic homeland, including refugees in other countries!
- Withdraw all Israeli forces from the West Bank and the border of Gaza.
- Massive aid without strings for the construction of housing, schools, hospitals, paid by the imperialist states; control of the distribution of the funds by committees of workers and peasants, small urban petit-bourgeois and middle classes in the local communities.
- Full and equal rights, including citizenship rights, for all who live in historic Palestine, scrap the racist Israeli citizenship law; abolish all laws that discriminate against Arab citizenship; right of return for all Palestinians
- Immediate and unconditional release of all Palestinian political prisoners.

These and other immediate democratic demands will not be granted by back-door negotiations between the Israeli state and the PNA, mediated by Arab regimes and imperialist powers. They need to be fought for by mass struggle.

We need mass demonstrations, protests, occupations and strike action, building on the experience and forms of self-organisation developed in the last period, in particular from the organisation of the mass political strike in May. The struggle needs to be led and organised by local committees of action and strike committees in the workplaces. Mass actions and strikes need to be protected against right wing thugs, armed settlers and Israeli forces by self-defence organisations. The security forces of the PNA need to be controlled by these committees of action and reorganised so they become part of a self-defence system under the control of the Palestinian masses, not of an apparatus under the control of their enemies.

Such councils of action need to be centralised locally and throughout the whole of Palestine in order to provide a leadership for the liberation struggle that is elected, recallable and accountable to the people. It should also convene a constituent assembly in order to overcome the democratic deficit of the PNA and to

discuss and determine the future democratic and social order of the Palestine nation.

Development has made a two state solution a complete utopia. In its own way, this is reflected in the key demands raised in the current movement, demands for equal rights in one state. These would mean the dissolution of the self-defined Jewish Israeli state itself, but not the existence of the Jewish Israeli nation. Many states have more than one nation within them. But the 'right to existence' of an Israeli Jewish state on land stolen from the Palestinian nation is not a democratic right or an expression of self-determination. There can be no democratic 'right to existence' for a racist state dependent on relentlessly depriving the Palestinians of their land and democratic rights. Therefore, the Israeli state cannot be reformed, but needs to be broken up and replaced by a secular, democratic, bi-national state.

The current political crisis of Zionism, as well as the growing social inequality within Israel itself, can also provide the grounds for cracking the ideological and social unity of Zionism. A mass uprising, a third Intifada, led by the Palestinian working class in all parts of the country, with mass action and political mass strikes, can deepen those divisions and break the Zionist bloc along class lines. This clearly means that the small, but important, anti-Zionist forces within Israel itself must fight relentlessly against Zionist unity. Supporting the right of self-determination of the Palestinian people is not only a moral and internationalist duty of the workers of the oppressing nation; it is also a prerequisite for their own liberation from their class exploitation by the Israeli capitalist class.

This raises the question how the different social and democratic demands can be realised between the nations. In order to achieve a just and peaceful bi-national state with equal rights for all, the struggle for liberation must not end with the struggle for democratic demands. The councils of action also need to address the burning social issues, securing jobs, wages, pensions and social services. They need to address the need for a programme of socially useful work, the need for working class control in the workplaces, the factories; they need to address the land question and control over the natural resources of Palestine.

In order to realise the democratic demands of the Palestinian masses and in order to drive a wedge into the Zionist camp and win over sections of the Jewish working class, a programme for liberation needs to take the key means of production into public ownership. The big financial institutions, the banks, the large companies need to be expropriated without compensation. The land needs to be nationalised and controlled by those who till it and want to continue to do so.

Just as two individuals cannot both have exclusive private ownership of anything, neither can two peoples both have exclusive ownership of a territory. The only progressive solution is common ownership, that is, the socialisation of the principal components of the economy. That is why our programme for Palestine is the permanent revolution, which will no doubt begin with the struggle for democratic rights, the Intifada, but can only finally achieve them by socialist measures.

This struggle for a socialist Palestine, for a bi-national workers' state, is itself part of the struggle for socialist revolution throughout the region, for a United Socialist States of the Middle East.

To achieve this goal, a political party of the working class is needed, which fights to give leadership to the liberation struggle on the basis of the programme of permanent revolution. To bring this about, the Palestinian workers and the Jewish anti-Zionist workers and left need to unite in a revolutionary party, which can provide a political alternative to the misleadership of reactionary Islamist, bourgeois-nationalist and petit-bourgeois guerrilla forces.

International Solidarity

Building an international solidarity movement will be key in challenging the backing of the Zionist state, a privileged semi-colony of US imperialism.

The gigantic movements in the US and Britain, as well as more radical direct action against arms companies, showed the tremendous potential for uniting the Palestinian masses in the diaspora, anti-Zionist and democratic campaigns of the Jewish community like Jewish Voice for Peace, the socialist left, trade unions, left wing parties and the movements of the oppressed like Black Lives Matter.

In countries like Germany, where the mass organisations of the working class support the oppression of the Palestine people and the policy of 'their' imperialism, we need to campaign for these organisations to break with this policy and side with the oppressed. Where trade unions and workers' parties have taken positions in solidarity with the Palestinian masses, we need to ensure that their words are followed by deeds. Clearly, the global solidarity movement needs to organise so that it can act in coordination with the resistance movement in Palestine itself. For this, we propose the following demands to be fought for in the imperialist countries:

- Refute the lie that anti-Zionism is a form of antisemitism; our anti-Zionism is antiracist, democratic and internationalist. It has nothing in common with antisemitism or right wingers who try to claim to be anti-Zionists; in the end, they play into the hands of imperialism and Zionism. Antisemitism has no place in a genuine, democratic solidarity movement with the Palestinian people
- Hands off the BDS-campaign and all other solidarity campaigns for Palestine.
- Full democratic rights for all Palestinian political organisations and associations; scrap all the so-called 'anti-terror lists' of the US, the EU or other powers
- For boycotts by working class direct action against states and companies which support the Israeli war machine. The Italian and South African unions demonstrated that this is the kind of action that can really hit the Israeli state.
- End all financial and military support for the Israeli state by the Western powers.
- Massive financial aid and assistance, without strings, for rebuilding infrastructure, health and education systems, including a vaccination programme, in Gaza and the West Bank, paid for by the imperialist powers.

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