



Stop the Israeli aggression against Gaza

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Gaza is once more under attack by the Israeli Occupation Force (IOF) which, on 14 November, launched Operation Pillar of Cloud as a series of aerial attacks. Pillars of smoke have indeed risen from bombed buildings and air strikes have killed 19 Palestinians (14 of them civilians) including Ahmed Jabari, chief of Hamas's military wing. Palestinian fighters replied with Iranian Fajr-5 and Russian Grad missiles and greater numbers of home made Qassam rockets and mortars; killing three Israeli civilians. Rockets hit the outskirts of Tel Aviv ? harmlessly ? but for the first time since the 1991 Gulf War.

The same night as the aerial offensive started, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ordered a call-up of 30,000 reservists in readiness for a possible Gaza incursion. Israeli infantry battalions have been mobilised and convoys of transporters carrying tanks and armoured vehicles have been seen making their way towards the border.

The question everyone is asking is whether this foreshadows another Operation Cast Lead. That was Israel's last devastating war on Gaza? launched in 2008/2009 ? which led to the killing of 1,400 people, overwhelmingly civilians, and destroyed the tiny territory's already ramshackle infrastructure - houses, hospitals and schools. Over the past three years, despite the blockade, this has been painstakingly, though only partially, restored and no doubt presents a tempting object to the vindictive brutes that head the Apartheid settler state.

More mundane reasons are being offered for the attack; an early Israeli election (22 January 2013) called to avoid defeat over an unpopular austerity budget. Doubtless, a war in which Palestinians were the main sufferers would boost Netanyahu's chances of fooling the Israeli electorate once again. It should not be forgotten that the February 2009 election took place in the wake of Operation Cast Lead.

Another reason commentators suggest is a link to the much-touted Israeli attack on Iran. If Israel is to send its bombers to obliterate Iran's nuclear power facilities, and no doubt large parts of its military infrastructure, then it does not want even Hamas's relatively low calibre missiles hitting Tel Aviv. Doubtless, too, Netanyahu, who would have preferred Mitt Romney, is testing out Barack Obama to see how far he can go. He probably does not need to worry.

What is certain is that Israeli actions are not a response to rocket attacks. Indeed, the reverse is the case. The break down of the Hamas - IOF cease-fire, which had lasted since 2009, began with a series of Israeli killings in September and October, some 55 Palestinian deaths and 257 injuries. 209 of these casualties came as a result of Israeli Air Force missiles, 69 from live ammunition fire, and 18 from tank shells. Four of the deaths occurred as a result of the Israeli military firing artillery shells on youngsters playing soccer.

On November 5, a mentally disabled 20-year old, Ahmad al-Nabaheen, was shot when he wandered too close to the border. Then, on November 8, a 13-year-old boy playing football in front of his house was killed by fire from IOF armoured vehicles. A number of rockets were fired in retaliation; but it seems Hamas then offered Israel a truce on 12 November and Israeli media reported that interlocutors were near to arranging a long term ceasefire when the Israeli offensive was unleashed.

These facts show how Israel, far from being a haven of democracy in the Middle East, exists in a state of permanent war against its Palestinian population and attacks on its neighbours, not only expanding settlements to eat away any viable independent state on the West Bank, but launching punitive expeditions into Gaza to destroy whatever its 1.7

million inhabitants can build in their tiny enclave.

As was to be expected, the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany and other European Union countries condemned the Palestinian rocket attacks on Israel and justified Israel's murderous attacks as the "its right to defend its citizens." "There is no justification for the violence that Hamas and other terrorist organisations are employing against the people of Israel," said US State Department spokesman Mark Toner.

EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton said: "The rocket attacks by Hamas and other factions in Gaza, which began this current crisis, are totally unacceptable for any government and must stop. Israel has the right to protect its population from these kinds of attacks."

German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle said: "It is obvious that Israel has a legitimate right to defend itself and protect its own citizens against rocket attacks from the Gaza Strip."

British Foreign Secretary William Hague said: "Hamas bears principal responsibility for the current crisis. I utterly condemn rocket attacks from Gaza into southern Israel by Hamas and other armed groups."

Middle East Peace Envoy (sic!) Tony Blair, interviewed on television said: "If the rocket fire carries on out of Gaza, targeted at Israeli towns and villages, then the retaliation will increase. There are roughly a million people who take shelter every night (in Israel). There's no government where its citizens are under that pressure that isn't itself going to come under pressure to take action."

And the 1.7 million Gazans "without air raid shelters"? They don't deserve a mention by the bomber of Baghdad.

The United Nations Security Council also held an emergency session but reached no decision - undoubtedly because of the Western veto which would fall on the slightest criticism of Israel's attacks on the imprisoned and tormented population of Gaza.

Once again the "western democracies" showed to the entire Arab and Muslim world their unconditional support for their Zionist guard dog. And George Bush could seriously ask, "Why do they hate us?"

In fact, the economic and strategic interests of these imperialist powers far outweigh their prattle about human rights and democracy. Having installed and defended the settler state as a "western" wedge driven into the Arab world to divide it, exploit it and rule it; no other course of action could be expected.

In the imperialist heartlands, where rulers support anything and everything the Zionist settler state does, it is our duty as internationalists and anti-imperialists to mobilise against its brutal assault on Gaza as we did in 2008-09. We must take up the challenge again to boycott all institutions and agencies of Israel "on campuses, in industry and commerce.

Trade unions, student unions, indeed all progressive forces, must condemn the Israeli onslaught and declare their unequivocal support for Palestinian resistance. We must brush aside with contempt the argument that opposition to the state of Israel and its racist policy of ethnically cleansing the Palestinians is anti-semitism.

The real and most direct assistance, however, could come to the Palestinians from the countries where the Arab Spring has removed the dictators who supported Israel. Above all, this means Egypt. President Mohamed Morsi sending his prime minister to Gaza is a sign of the pressure from below. The revolutionary youth and masses, who sympathise with the Palestinians, should demand more than token gestures. They should demand the opening of the borders to Gaza so that food, medicines and arms can pass to the beleaguered population.

Stop the brutal assault on Gaza!

For a workers' and students' boycott of Israel and all its agencies abroad !

Victory to the Palestine liberation struggle!

Down with the Zionist Apartheid state !

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