

# Victory to the Palestinian Intifada!

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The Western media's propaganda, that the relentless bombing of Gaza is a defensive war in response to Hamas rockets fired into Israel, is a brazen lie. The outbreak of a third Intifada, this time including the Palestinian citizens of Israel, proves this beyond doubt. A lie too is the claim that Gazans are being given warnings. A report from Gaza makes this clear:

‘Last night they did a whole massacre in the Gaza strip. They bombed five houses, no warning whatsoever to the people inside them. So far, they have found bodies of 33 people. And we still do not know how many more we have lost because they’re still looking for more under the rubble and we’re not equipped enough to pick up people from under the rubble. They’re literally just using their own hands.’ (Left Voice; May 19, 2021).

Plainly, it is the duty of every worker, socialist, every democrat, to come to the aid of the besieged and monstrously oppressed people of Gaza by taking action to stop ‘our’ governments' support for this state inflicted terror. Those who say both sides should stop fighting simply choose not to see the difference between victim and victimizer, between those with no state to defend them and those with the most powerful and well-armed state in the Middle East. In fact, it is the Palestinian people, who have a right to defend themselves against the Israeli state. In terms of the balance of weaponry and force, it is the Palestinians who are the biblical David facing the Israeli Goliath (with the USA, Britain and the states of the EU guarding its back).

The present struggle actually began in East Jerusalem with the resistance to an attempt by Zionist settlers, with the support of Israeli courts, to expel Palestinians from their homes in the Sheikh Jarrah district of the city. This was accompanied by police attacks on worshipers in al-Aqsa mosque, including the desecration of the third holiest shrine in Islam during the holy month of Ramadan. Far right Zionists threatened a racist march through the Old City.

Only then, did Hamas, under pressure from demonstrations in Gaza in support of Jerusalem, enter the fray by firing rockets into Israel in solidarity with those fighting for Palestinians' rights in Jerusalem. Netanyahu immediately began the massive air strikes on Gaza and Israeli Defence Force troops, tanks and artillery, were massed on the border of Gaza.

These cumulative provocations were clearly related to attempts by Israel's beleaguered prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, to cobble together a coalition with extreme racist religious fundamentalist parties and to put himself once more in the role of the defender of Israel against ‘terrorism’.

Resistance to Israel has now gone beyond Hamas' rockets and the sheer endurance of the people of Gaza and developed into a mass rejection of Israel by the entire Palestinian population, including that within Israel's 1967 borders. This needs to be brought home to workers and all progressive forces in Europe and North America, the imperialist heartlands that sustain the Apartheid State. The very scale of the bogus

antisemitism accusations, churned out by a media campaign run from Israeli embassies worldwide and fully abetted by right wing and liberal media channels, indicates how terrified the Zionist regime is by the growing support for the Palestinian cause over the past decade, especially since the atrocities of the 2014 blitzkrieg on Gaza.

### A Third Intifada

Over the ten days of the bombing, a new Intifada has developed, not only on the Occupied West Bank and in East Jerusalem, but importantly among the 1.6 million Palestinians who are Israeli citizens. It was the High Follow-Up Committee for the Arab Masses in Israel that first called for a nationwide general strike on May 18 in response to the attempted pogroms and lynchings by right wing mobs in Israel as well as the bombardment of Gaza, the provocations in Sheikh Jarrah and the desecrations of Al-Aqsa Mosque.

The strike closed workshops and factories, shops and markets and huge demonstrations took place both on the West Bank and in Israel. Although they did not initiate it, the bitter rivals Fatah and Hamas backed it. Indeed, it was supported massively by virtually all Palestinian political parties, trade unions, syndicates and popular movements. It was the product, like the two previous Intifadas, of a new generation of Palestinian youth taking up the struggle of their parents and grandparents. It has momentarily united everyone into a mass Intifada which can expose to the world the fact that Israel is committing horrendous war crimes against an entire people.

Israel has launched repeated assaults on Gaza, beginning with Operation Cast Lead (2008) followed by Operation Pillar of Defence (2012) and then Operation Protective Edge (2014), During the latter, 2,300 were killed in Gaza and 18,000 of their homes were destroyed. Those who repeat Israel's self-defence excuse for collective punishment are fully complicit in its crimes against humanity.

### Biden's response

After nine days of remorseless bombardment by Israeli F16 warplanes, which have killed 212 people, including 61 children, wounded 1,500 and driven 58,000 Palestinians from their homes, President Joe Biden has finally called Benjamin Netanyahu to indicate he now favours a ceasefire. But he has not directly called for an end to Israel's bombing.

Perhaps this had something to do with the reduction to rubble of the multi-story building in Gaza City that housed the Associated Press news agency, a US based non-profit organisation. But Netanyahu rapidly brushed off the new President's mealy-mouthed ceasefire call, saying: "We will continue to operate as long as needed to restore quiet and security to all Israelis." And Benny Gantz, Israel's defence minister, touted as a moderate in the western media, boasted, "no person, area or neighbourhood in Gaza is immune".

The Israeli state and its army, as well as all major political forces, from the contending leaders Netanyahu and Gantz to the far right and even fascistic organisations, have made it crystal clear that it is they who will determine when the time is ripe for a ceasefire, that is, when they have achieved their war aims.

They can be so brazen because they know that their imperialist allies in the US, Britain and the EU will back Israel without reservation. Whatever their calls for "caution" and "measured" retaliation, there can be no doubt about their "unconditional support of Israel's right to self-defence", as the German president Steinmeier (SPD) and others have put it. This Orwellian phrase is nothing but a cynical support for the Zionist state's "right" to continued oppression of the Palestinian people, including the oppression of a new, emerging Intifada.

Despite pressure from sections of the Democrats in the US-congress and the left wing of his party, Biden's

administration has continued its support and blocked all resolutions of the UN security council. Even a lame diplomatic call on the Israeli war machine to show restraint and allow international mediation, was vetoed. In the European Union, Hungary's right wing prime minister, Victor Orban, blocked a resolution which actually supported Israel, but called on it to enter negotiations on a cease-fire. This not only demonstrated the EU's inner weakness, but also showed that real antisemites and racists like Orban, as well as European far-right parties, are close allies of the racist Zionist government of Netanyahu.

A particularly heavy responsibility falls on the progressive forces in the US that mobilised during the Trump years, to spearhead mass protest and to expose the US state's relentless support for Israeli aggression against the Palestinians. The same applies in Europe, where German and French leaders repeat the lies about resistance being terrorism and denounce support for it as antisemitism. Emanuel Macron, the French President, even banned pro-Palestinian marches, which nevertheless took place in defiance of him.

The huge marches in many countries in Western Europe and across the United States, with hundreds of thousands in the streets, are a start. They need to continue as long as the repression does. The Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement, BDS, in solidarity with Palestine, which grew massively after the 2014 pulverising of Gaza, needs to be renewed with redoubled energy. Its support from trade unions and workers' organisations needs to be turned into political and economic action to impose a workers' boycott on Israel as long as it continues to bombard Gaza and attacks strikes and protests on the West Bank, East Jerusalem and in Israel with military and police force.

Rising support for the Palestinian struggle by millions in the imperialist countries has been met by an Israeli and Zionist counter-campaign to condemn all criticism of Israel as antisemitic. This centred on getting governments, political parties and academic institutions to adopt the definition of antisemitism drawn up by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, IHRA. Together with its 'examples', this is based on the Zionist assertion that Israel is the state of all the Jews and that, therefore, to oppose Israel is, by definition, a 'new antisemitism'.

This, it is argued, is expressed in challenging the right of the state of Israel to exist, calling it a 'racist endeavour' or treating it as qualitatively different from normal 'democratic states'. New antisemitism was, it seems, a product of 'radical' Muslims and the revolutionary left. This convenient amalgam could then be used to ban pro-Palestinian activities and, at the same time, downplay the threat of the very real, far right rise of racism and antisemitism and reactionary right-wing, petit-bourgeois movements in Europe or the US.

The workers' movement and all progressive and democratic forces need to resist this slander and counter those arguments, which amount to a major ideological offensive in order to silence the voices of the oppressed. Defending the democratic rights of the Palestinian people and of anti-Zionist and anti-imperialist supporters and answering the lies of the bourgeois mainstream are an important component in building a mass solidarity movement and winning the working class, organised trade unions and supporters of working class parties. The more the Palestinian people can speak out, the stronger and more working class a movement in their solidarity becomes, the more difficult it will be for the governments in Europe and North America to support the atrocities in Palestine.

Likewise, media workers and unions could take action against outlets that pump out propaganda that supports Israel and justifies the repression. Media workers could pull the plugs until spokespersons for the Palestinians are given an equal right of reply. In all trade unions and reformist workers' parties, like the British Labour Party or the German SPD and Left Party, the left must launch a struggle against the pro-Zionist policies of their leaders. In Britain, an all-out campaign is needed to out Starmer and oblige the PLP to advocate the official pro-Palestinian positions the annual party conferences adopted under Corbyn.

Around the world, trade union federations and student movements have supported BDS. Now, more vigorous direct actions by workers and young people are needed, including direct actions like those taken in the UK by Palestine Action Activists at the Leicester factory of Elbit subsidiary UAV Tactical Systems, which produces weapons for the Apartheid state. These need to be taken up and supported by trade unions, following the examples of dockworkers in the USA, in South Africa, in Sweden and Italy, which have blocked arms shipments.

It is those actions which need to be taken up, expanded and coordinated. They will not only challenge the support of the Western imperialist powers for their most important ally in the Middle East. They will also strengthen the links and solidarity between the working class and the left in Europe and the US and the immigrant communities and a new generation of fighters, rising in a new Intifada, a new generation which needs to develop into an internationalist, socialist alternative both to Hamas and the Fatah. It is the spectre of this new internationalism, which is haunting the Zionist leaders in Israel as well as their imperialist backers in Washington and London, in Berlin and Paris. Let's make their nightmare a reality.

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