

Israel invades Gaza again; Palestinian resistance continues

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The Israeli Army invaded the Gaza Strip on Nov. 4 with tanks, helicopters and jet aircraft. The attack was an explicit violation of a five-month Egyptian-mediated truce between Israel and the Palestinian resistance groupings in Gaza. The elected Hamas government there had agreed to the cease-fire.

Nov. 4 was Election Day in the United States. Global attention was riveted on the deep enthusiasm here for the first African-American president and how the vote reflected a break with the reactionary policies of the Bush administration. The surprise Israeli attack went almost unnoted in the corporate media.

According to reports in the Palestinian media, Israeli soldiers and tanks accompanied by military helicopters firing flares and missiles invaded an area east of Deir al-Balah, in the central Gaza Strip, while Israeli jets shelled an area east of Kahn Yunis in the southern part of Gaza. The next day Israeli tanks moved into Beit Hanoun in the northern part of Gaza.

Seven Palestinian fighters from the Al Qassam Brigades, the armed wing of Hamas, were killed attempting to repel the incursion. There were many injuries. At Deir al-Balah four Palestinian women were abducted, including one who was wounded.

Every piece of Israeli military equipment used in the attack was made possible by the billions of dollars in aid provided to the Zionist regime by Washington over the last 60 years.

When Palestinian forces defended themselves against the three-pronged Israeli invasion, Israel claimed it was the Palestinians who violated the cease-fire. It cut off fuel shipments to the Gaza City power plant.

Gaza residents are now experiencing sporadic blackouts. Cutting fuel affects not only electricity for lights and refrigeration of food and medicines but also, most seriously, it curtails pumping of water for drinking and sanitation.

Abu Obaida, a spokesperson for the Al Qassam Brigades of Hamas, speculated that the Israeli invasion might be part of a plan to foil the internal Palestinian dialogue scheduled for Cairo, Egypt, on Nov. 9. The meeting for an opening dialogue on reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas forces did not take place.

Israel's use of collective punishment

Three years ago, determined Palestinian resistance forced Israeli forces to withdraw from the densely populated and impoverished Gaza Strip. However, Israel continues to control all

access by land, sea and air.

Farm produce and even essential medicines, electronic parts, repairs for sanitation and sewage are all blockaded. With all access to and from Gaza closed, Palestinian workers cannot travel to find work.

The result is huge increases in unemployment, poverty and malnutrition. Commerce is shut down.

Israeli gunboats routinely attack small Palestinian fishing boats with water cannon and machine-gun fire.

Two years ago the Palestinians overwhelmingly elected a government with a majority from Hamas—a Muslim force seen as more intransigent toward Israeli occupation. Both the United States and the European Union then imposed sanctions and withdrew aid.

In a further effort to break the resistance, Israel has confiscated hundreds of millions of dollars in taxes from Palestinians that, according to previous agreements, it is obliged to pass on.

The 1.5 million Palestinians in Gaza now live in a blockaded and surrounded ghetto. But the determined population has shown incredibly creative and heroic resilience.

Tunnels have been dug from southern Gaza into Egypt to smuggle in the most essential supplies. Israel claimed that the purpose of its recent brutal offensive was to destroy the Palestinian tunnels. The tunnels can vary in length from 100 yards to half a mile. In the past three years hundreds of tunnels have been destroyed.

After each Israeli attack, the work begins again.

Breaking the siege of Gaza

Concerned about the dire conditions in Gaza and inspired by the heroic mass resistance, solidarity activists internationally have developed more serious challenges to the siege.

The SS Dignity arrived in Gaza harbor four days after the latest Israeli attack. The small ship, organized by the Free Gaza movement, brought parliamentarians from Britain, Italy and Switzerland, Arab leaders, human-rights activists and journalists. It was the fourth ship to get through in the last three months.

The solidarity delegation will visit some of the hardest-hit areas in the Gaza Strip, particularly the camps and hospitals. The ship also brought 1 metric ton of medicines, mostly pain killers and aspirin. These basic, inexpensive medicines are in desperately short supply and unavailable in local pharmacies.

Solidarity demonstrations around the world, including one organized by the Al-Awda Palestine Right to Return Coalition in New York on Nov. 7, have demanded that Israel lift the siege of Gaza. Demands have also been raised against the complicity of the Egyptian government, which has bowed to U.S. and Israeli pressure and helps to enforce the blockade at the Rafah crossing.

Israel attacks in the West Bank

In the same week, Israeli attacks escalated throughout the West Bank.

Israeli forces carried out 33 military incursions into Palestinian towns and villages and kidnapped 21 civilians, including two children.

In just the past year, Israel has abducted 2,111 Palestinian civilians.

Six Palestinians, including two children, were wounded by Israeli gunfire in al-Far'a refugee camp, south of Tubas. Three were wounded in the village of Dura, southwest of Hebron.

Another four Palestinians, including a child, and an international human-rights defender were wounded when Israeli troops attacked a peaceful, unarmed demonstration protesting the construction of the apartheid wall west of Ramallah.

Some 217 miles of the 450-mile wall have been completed, further isolating the Palestinian population into small ghettos. To build the wall and a network of walled Jewish-only roads, along with more than 630 roadblocks and checkpoints, Israel has dispossessed small farmers, plowing under and destroying thousands of acres of cropland.

Farmers can't get to their land, children can't get to school and workers can't leave their surrounded enclaves. Sick children, pregnant women and seniors have died at checkpoints after being blocked from reaching hospitals, even in emergencies. Free movement and all normal economic activity are impossible.

Increasingly, international and Israeli human-rights defenders are joining Palestinian demonstrations challenging this criminal policy.

In occupied East Jerusalem, Israel continues to expropriate and drive out the Palestinian residents. In the first week of November, the Israeli army bulldozed two homes and a wedding hall in Jerusalem. As Palestinians and supporters defied the bulldozers, 21 residents were wounded and many more were arrested.

Today massive Jewish-only settlements bisect the West Bank. Israeli demolitions, land seizures, settlement expansion, assassinations, armed incursions, segregated road-building and continued construction of the separation wall are all continuing.

Despite more than 15 years of talks and negotiations sponsored and supported by U.S. administrations, both Republican and Democratic, none of the issues of occupation have been addressed.

Ever since the 1993 Oslo Accords, despite every Israeli promise to recognize a Palestinian state and every agreement to cease new settlements, construction has continued. It is the endless and guaranteed stream of U.S. funding that enables the Israeli government to continue and expand its occupation of Palestinian lands.

Rahm Emanuel, a virulent Zionist, has just been appointed White House chief of staff in the upcoming U.S. administration. This is just another reason why international support and solidarity for Palestinian demands, including the right of all Palestinians to return to their expropriated homes, is more important than ever.

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