

Why a new war on Gaza?

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Global Research, November 20, 2012

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Once again Israël attacks Gaza, and the international media relays the images of desolation. But the outrage provoked by these daily horrors must not prevent us from analysing the situation and understanding its aims.

On the 14th November 2012, Israeli armed forces launched operation “*Pillar of Cloud*” against the administrative and military installations of Hamas in the Gaza Strip. On the first day of the attack, they assassinated Ahmed Jaabari, the number 2 of the armed branch of the Palestinian organisation. They also destroyed the underground launch-pads of their surface-to-surface *Fajr 5* missiles.



“*Pillar of Cloud*” quickly expanded, as Israeli aviation multiplied its bombing raids. The Israeli military command proceeded with the call-up of 30,000 reserve troops, and rapidly increased that number to 75,000 men, at the risk of destabilizing the economy. In this way, Israel has given itself the capacity to invade the Gaza Strip with ground troops.

This situation calls for several explanations.

Why now?

Tel-Aviv is taking the initiative in the midst of the partial power vacuum reigning in Washington. We are awaiting the nomination of new Secretaries for State and Defense. The new nominations may be ambassador Susan Rice and Senator John Kerry. However, a bitter struggle is currently being played out in the Press in an attempt to disqualify Ms. Rice. In any event, the position of the exiting Secretaries of State and Defense are weakened, and

their successors have not yet been named.

In identical fashion, Tel Aviv had taken a similar initiative with the operation "*Cast Lead*" during the period of transition between Presidents Bush Jr. and Obama. Certain commentators are also evoking the proximity of the Israeli legislative elections, and suggest that Benjamin Netanyahu and Avigdor Lieberman are attempting to polish their image as hard-line hawks.

This is improbable, since in fact, they are launching this attack without being sure of the result in advance. In 2008-2009, the failure of "*Cast Lead*" was fatal for Ehud Olmert's government.

What's the aim?

Traditionally, Israeli armed forces adapt their war objectives to the occasions that arise.

At the least, the aim is to weaken the Palestinian Resistance by destroying infrastructures and administrations in the Gaza Strip, just as they do at more or less regular intervals. However, the weakening of Hamas will automatically profit Fatah in the West Bank – and Fatah will not miss the opportunity to push a little harder in its demand for the recognition of a Palestinian state by the United Nations.

At most, "*Pillar of Cloud*" might open the way for an old Zionist plan – the proclamation of Jordan as a Palestinian state, the transfer of the population of Gaza (perhaps also that of the West Bank) into Jordan, and the annexion of the territories thus evacuated. In this case, the military operation must not target all Hamas leaders indiscriminately, but only those who oppose the former political head of the organisation, Khaled Mechaal, since he is slated to become the first President of a Palestinian State in Jordan.

Is this attack linked to the disturbances in Jordan?

The war in Syria has strangled the Jordanian economy. The Kingdom has rapidly fallen into debt. On the 13th November (in other words, the day before the start of "*Pillar of Cloud*") the government announced energy price rises as high as 11 % for public transport, and 53 % for domestic gas. This announcement fed a movement of protest which has been smouldering since the beginning of the year. Immediately after the announcement, about half of Jordan's 120,000 public school teachers went on strike.

On Friday 16th, more than 10,000 people demonstrated in the heart of Amman, shouting – "*Liberty comes from God!*", "*Abdallah, your time is over!*", "*The people demand the fall of the regime!*". The procession started from the Husseini mosque, and was supervised by the Muslim Brotherhood.

The Muslim Brotherhood, who have concluded an agreement with the US State Department and the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, are already in power in Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, and Gaza. Apart from this, they control the new Syrian National Coalition. Their ambition is to govern Jordan with or without King Abdallah II.

The best-known member of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood is Khaled Mechaal, the ex-chief of the political branch of Hamas. Mechaal lived in exile from 2001 to 2012 in Damascus, under the protection of the Syrian state. In February 2012, he suddenly accused Bashar al-Assad's government of repressing his own people, and chose to move to

Qatar, where Emir Hamad al-Thani showed him great generosity.

Is there a link to the unrest in Syria?

Last June, a peace agreement was concluded in Geneva by the major powers. This was immediately sabotaged by a US faction, which organised leaks to the Press concerning Western implication in the events, thus forcing the resignation of mediator Kofi Annan. This same faction then twice attempted to end the situation militarily, by organising two massive attacks on Damascus, on the 18th July and the 26th September. When these attacks failed, the Obama administration returned to the initial agreement and resolved to implement it after the Presidential elections and the change of Cabinet.

The agreement calls for the deployment of a United Nations Peace Force, mainly composed of contingents from the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (SCTO). This force would be tasked with separating the belligerents and arresting the foreign jihadists present in Syria. By allowing Russia to re-enter the Middle East, Washington hopes to relieve itself of the burden of Israel's security. Russia would protect the Zionist state from attack, and would also prevent it from attacking anyone else. The US military retreat from the Middle East would then be able to continue, and Washington would once again enjoy the freedom of action it has lost due to its permanent privileged relationship with Tel-Aviv.

From this perspective, the partisans of Israeli expansionism have to act in Gaza, and perhaps also in Jordan, before the Russian deployment.

What are the first conclusions that can be drawn from the current war?

The war has tested Israeli anti-air defences. The Zionist state has invested several hundred million dollars in the creation of the "Iron Dome", a system capable of intercepting rockets and missiles fired from Gaza or Southern Lebanon.

This system did not seem to function correctly when Hezbollah sent a drone to fly over the Dimona nuclear reactor, or when it tested its surface-to-surface *Fajr-5* missiles.

During the first three days of "Pillar of Cloud", Hamas and the Islamic Jihad retaliated to Israeli bombardements with salvos of rockets and missiles. The "Iron Dome" managed to intercept 210 of the 800 shots fired. However, this statistic doesn't mean very much - the system only seems capable of intercepting fairly primitive rockets, like the Qassam, and does not seem to be adapted to any more sophisticated form of armament.

Translation Pete Kimberley      

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