

Behind the Gaza Massacre

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The horror in Gaza is not some kind of accident or unexpected disaster. It is a result of events and decisions years in the making. It cannot be understood apart from years of United States policy in the Middle East. And it is most definitely not an act of “legitimate Israeli defense against unprovoked Hamas rockets.”

The bombing of Gaza is the massacre of a civilian population. Homes in refugee camps, hospitals, a university and its dormitories with students sleeping inside, vital infrastructure – all have been hit by Israel’s “precision bombs.” Targets destroyed in the name of “destroying terrorist structures” include police stations and recruits, who are ordinary people not military personnel. Journalists are barred from entering Gaza, so direct accounts of the carnage come mostly from Palestinian bloggers or desperate United Nation relief officials.

The military operation has clearly been planned for months. All during this time, Israel has tightened the blockade of Gaza, with complete United States government approval – cutting off essential medicines including insulin, reducing critical food supplies to barely above starvation level – fully realizing that the Hamas authorities in Gaza would eventually respond with rockets at southern Israeli towns. That was exactly the pretext that Israel’s government wanted.

Horror in Gaza

Several hundred Gaza residents, including noncombatant women and children, have been killed and thousands wounded. Even before this onslaught, however, they have been dying from lack of medicines blocked by the Israeli siege. A recent solidarity delegation to Gaza, traveling by boat in defiance of the blockade, was asked by their Palestinian hosts to bring thousands of children’s hearing aids – because children in Gaza have catastrophic hearing loss from Israeli noise bombs as well as jets’ routine sonic booms.

The Israeli assault is intended to break the back of the Hamas government in Gaza, but it will fail in this, as the Palestinians of Gaza will rally behind Hamas in their solidarity against attack. Therefore, the massacre of Gaza’s people can be expected to continue until international outrage forces it to stop. That outrage is quite rightly directed as much at the American government as it is at Israel. The Bush administration, with its proclamation that the elected Hamas Palestinian government “are nothing but thugs,” is giving open full support to this crime against humanity.

Palestinians and their supporters are sickened by the complicity of Arab governments, particularly Egypt, in the Israeli-U.S. attempt to destroy the leadership that was chosen through a free election in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The European Union, which extends special trading privileges to Israel, has also done nothing to stop the Israeli blockade of Gaza and now the slaughter

of its population. The pressure to force the bombing to end must come from below, from the Global Justice movement and from the outrage of people throughout the Middle East and the world.

Demonstration in Atlanta

Much of the world is awaiting with great hope the arrival of the Barack Obama presidency. Mr. Obama was elected, let us remember, with great majority support both from Jewish and Arab Americans, and his victory was greeted with elation in the Arab world and Israel alike. Tragically, his statements before the election, and his silence now, offer little reason to expect the Obama White House to change U.S. policies which are leading Israel, as well as the United States and the Middle East, toward mutual destruction.

What needs to change? The fiasco known as the “peace process” since the early 1990s has produced no peace, because it was always built on two false assumptions. The first was that Israel would keep the promises it made to halt settlement construction in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and allow a viable Palestinian state to emerge. No Israeli government ever intended to do so. The second assumption was that the Palestinian population would quietly surrender in the face of overwhelming firepower to whatever terms the United States and Israel would dictate. They haven’t surrendered, and they won’t now.

The Arab American community and supporters of the Palestinian people poured out in Dearborn, Michigan on December 30, lining the sidewalk on Warren Avenue for a full half mile. At least two thousand people participated in this protest against Israel’s murderous bombing of the population of Gaza, so many that a memorial service for the Palestinian martyrs planned for the evening had to be postponed as the crowd overflowed the hall. Another mobilization will occur at Dearborn City Hall on Friday, January 2.

Under this “peace process,” the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the siege of Gaza have created a reality worse than existed in South Africa. The world must stand up against this to force the change that is necessary if there is to be peace for the Palestinian and Israeli peoples. The growing international efforts for boycott and sanctions deserve full support, to end the Israeli occupation and force the slaughter in Gaza to stop. The only other possible outcomes, all too clearly foreshadowed by what we must call the Israeli-U.S. massacre in Gaza, are new forms of apartheid and ultimately genocide too horrible to contemplate.

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