

Israel Continues Violence Against Palestinians — But Faces New Reality

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In the fourth day of the cease-fire in Gaza, Israel continues its drive against Palestinians in the West Bank and in “green line” Israel.

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On the first day of the cease-fire Israeli settlers, backed by Israeli security forces, stormed the Al Aqsa Mosque compound in Jerusalem and attacked Palestinians there.

And on the third day, settlers again attacked Al Aqsa, backed by police, who this time used stun guns and rubber bullets. There were mass arrests.

It was just such attacks on the Mosque in April and early May that was one of the Israeli attacks on Palestinians in Jerusalem that led to the war against Gaza.

The new attacks on Al Aqsa were a deliberate demonstration by Israel that the cease fire did not apply to its continuing drive to ethnically cleanse Jerusalem of Palestinians.

These attacks are meant to discourage Muslim Palestinians from attending the Mosque.

The *New York Times* reports that in recent years a far right Jewish group, Torah Nucleus, has organized settlers to take over homes of Palestinians in “green line” Israel in cities that have mixed Palestinian-Jewish populations.

The *Times* article said, “For decades, hard-line Israeli nationalists have sought to shift the demographics of the occupied West Bank by building Jewish settlements, undermining the prospect of a two-state solution

“With far less attention and fanfare, the Torah Nucleus movement set out with an ideological mission to alter the balance of Israeli cities” in favor of Jews.

Since the cease fire in Gaza, Torah Nucleus is again trying to send Jewish families who fled these cities in the face of the Palestinian uprising back into them.

The *Times* leaves out that the settler movement in both the West Bank and “green line” Israel is organized by the Israeli government, which has not only “undermined” the “two-state” solution, but making it clear that Israel never supported it.

What is called the “far right” is Israel’s shock troops.

Another immediate spark of the recent war was the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah in Jerusalem.

A resident of Sheikh Jarrah, Mohammad El-Kurd, a poet and activist was interviewed on Democracy Now.

"There's two things to be said about Sheikh Jarrah," he said. One "is that it is a microcosm of the Israeli reality, Israeli settle colonialism in Palestine at large."

The other is the present situation. Referring to the fact that an Israeli settler has been occupying part of his house for over a decade, he said, "It is absurd for people to hear that there's a settler from Long Island that's squatting in my house And this is the situation in the entire neighborhood.

"You have settler organizations, that are registered in the United States, that are working with Israeli authorities to fabricate documents to ["legally"] throw out Palestinians [from Sheikh Jarrah]....

"What's happening in Sheikh Jarrah is not just in Sheikh Jarrah," he said, but also in other neighborhoods in Jerusalem. "It's happening in Silwan, where more than 800 Palestinians are about to be made homeless....

"It's happening in the South Hebron Hills. It's happening in Issawiya, where the Israeli authorities are are building "national parks" as colonial borders, to prevent natural community growth in Palestinian communities....

"Sheikh Jarrah has been under an illegal blockade for the past three weeks. No Palestinians, not even medics, not even journalists, are allowed into the neighborhood, except people who live there.

"And even those of us who live there are still harassed and questioned and shoved around Meanwhile Israeli settlers can just walk in, no questions asked. And often, if not most of the time, they are armed with their rifles and pistols."

Situation in Gaza

President Biden is trying to claim the role of peacemaker. It's true that he ordered Netanyahu to accept a cease fire in the Israeli war against Gaza and its people, but only after he supported eleven days of massive bombing and artillery barrages.

This was enough for Israel to succeed in destroying residential buildings and homes, killing 248 Palestinian civilians — 66 children — and wounding over 1,700, destroying medical facilities, assassinating doctors, and destroying infrastructure including water, sewerage facilities, roads and much more.

The result is that the situation of Palestinians trapped in Gaza is even more desperate. The Palestinians were already suffering under the air, sea and land blockade imposed by Israel, which the Egyptian dictatorships of Mubarak and Sisi also enforced at the border with Egypt.

Israel and Egypt imposed the blockade when Hamas deposed the Palestinian Authority in Gaza in 2007. To punish the Palestinians in the Strip for supporting Hamas, Israel launched the 2008 devastating war.

Biden has also raised the idea that the U.S. could provide funds to help rebuild Gaza. He makes only one precondition — that the Hamas resistance must be disarmed, which isn't going to happen.

What prompted Biden to give the order to Netanyahu to cease for now the further destruction of Gaza? One factor was the massive world condemnation of Israel's war expressed in large demonstrations. Even the governments of U.S. allies on the UN Security Council called for a cease fire, leaving the U.S. once again isolated on the issue.

There were big demonstrations in the U.S., also, and even significant opposition from within the Democratic Party. The most left Democrats, such as Rashida Tlaib and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez openly denounced Israel as an "apartheid state."

Senator Bernie Sanders, while historically a supporter of Israel, called for the U.S. to stop financially supporting the rightist Netanyahu government.

Some more establishment Democrats also raised concerns.

New Reality in Israel

The big demonstrations in many countries were spurred by new understanding of Israel as an oppressor and apartheid country and its brutality in Gaza, but also by the new response by Palestinians.

This time Palestinians rose up from all parts of Israel, from Gaza to the West Bank and "green line" Israel. There were mass mobilizations not only against the war and in solidarity with Gaza, but Israeli oppression everywhere. These were militant actions that fought back against settler and other far right violence as well as Israeli army violence aimed at suppressing the uprising.

These were led by a new generation that united in action. This unity was explicit in the one-day strike by Palestinians throughout Israel. The Palestinian diaspora was also galvanized.

The new stage of Palestinian resistance caught the Israeli government by surprise. It also shocked the U.S.

This is a new force that Israel and the United States must reckon with. Israel is attempting to continue business as usual, but will be met with new resistance. The U.S.'s unconditional backing of Israel as its main base in the Middle East will be challenged, including in the U.S.

An opinion piece in the *New York Times* by Yousef Munayyer, a writer and scholar at the Arab Center in Washington, D.C. noted that "With this movement, Palestinians have shown Israel that they cannot be ignored.

"For years, Israelis have made peace with the notion that they can manage, however brutally, their relationship with Palestinians instead of resolving it.

"This has been aided by walling off the ugliness of their rule: Gaza, caged and besieged might as well have been on another planet; Israelis could drive through the West Bank practically uninterrupted by the sight of Palestinians; Palestinian citizens of Israel have largely been relegated to neglected, concentrated areas....

"But as Palestinians took to the streets in recent weeks, defiantly raising their national flags and chanting against subjugation, Israelis woke to the realization that for Palestinians, the divisions

between Gazans, residents of the West Bank and Palestinian citizens of Israel do not exist.

“Palestine is not ‘over there’ but is everywhere around them....

“[Palestinians] have reasserted that they are Palestinians, with one flag and one struggle. That is precisely why, in the weeks and months to come, Palestinians should not be forced back to a paradigm that divides them with calls for a two-state solution.”

An editorial in the *New York Times* said “Many young Palestinians say their parents’ dream of of an independent state has morphed into a struggle for civil rights within the borders of land that Israel has controlled since 1967.”

The *Times* hopes that this struggle will lead Israel’s government to “grapple with what a one-state reality would really mean, which might motivate them to get back to the bargaining table to establish a Palestinian state.”

Vain hope to somehow keep the U.S.’s beachhead in the Middle East alive.

The real hopeful outcome would lead to a single, democratic and secular state with equal rights for all, which the struggle for civil rights would culminate in.

Barry Sheppard
