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Despite loss of life & destruction, Gaza resists, hits Israel hard

A cease-fire between Israel and Hamas began May 21. It followed 11 days of the U.S.-armed and backed Israeli Air Force's vicious airstrikes on occupied Gaza. The bombs and rockets massacred more than 250 Palestinians, including over 60 children. Some 2,000 people were injured out of a population of 2 million in Gaza.



Ramallah, in the West Bank, May 18.

According to the Palestine General Federation of Trade Unions, the Israeli raids destroyed over 700 residential buildings, including 76 high rises and over 20 media outlets in three buildings, including the famous building that housed the offices of Al-Jazeera and the Associated Press.

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Until the cease-fire began, the Hamas liberation group, the political representative of Gazans, fired rockets made out of both detonated and undetonated Israeli missiles into Israel, including Tel Aviv, and reportedly killed 12 people.

Israeli airstrikes targeted the already understaffed and underfunded Gaza health facilities, including the only clinic serving exclusively those infected with coronavirus. As the bombing forced so many Gaza residents into underground bunkers, community centers and small enclosed spaces, the virus has undoubtedly spread. Only 2% or 40,000 Gazans had been vaccinated before May 11.

Israeli border patrol prohibited food and humanitarian aid from coming into Gaza during the bombing. This included medical supplies like masks and vaccines.

According to the International Red Cross, the bombings cut water supplies in Gaza by 40%, and an estimated 700,000 Gazans are still affected by power cuts. Gazans thus suffered, not only from the air strikes, but from ongoing disease, lack of water and power, and hunger.

What happened to Gaza was another racist, genocidal act on the part of the racist, settler-colonial regime of Israel. Still, according to many sources including Palestinians, others in the Arab world and bourgeois sources, this latest assault, with all its mass destruction and loss of life, turned into a political victory for Gaza and a political and moral defeat for Israel.

That all the weapons at the disposal of the most powerful garrison state in the “Middle East” — geographically part of West Asia — failed to defeat the Hamas-led people’s resistance sets back western imperialism. This is indeed a stunning development.

General strike was ‘significant’

On May 18, Palestinians held a historic, unprecedented general strike not only in the Occupied Territories of Gaza and the West Bank, but throughout the 1967 boundaries of Israel. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinian workers, students, business people and supporters refused to work, go to school or open their businesses. They protested the Israeli government and military’s heinous assaults on Gaza.

Also, over a dozen Palestinian demonstrators in the West Bank and Ramallah were shot to death by the Israelis during the 11-day siege.

Mustafa Barghouti, an independent politician, characterized the strike as a “a very significant day,” saying that “It reflects how Palestinians now have a unified struggle against the same system of apartheid.” (New York Times, May 18)

It is no coincidence that this powerful show of shutting down a major artery of the Israeli economy by these low-waged, oppressed workers played an important role in speeding up this latest cease-fire. There were more Palestinian calls for a one-state solution, as opposed to a two-state solution that allows the Israeli repressive state to remain intact.

Black Lives Matter and U.S. shift in opinion

During the 11 days, Biden publicly called for a cease-fire, while at the same time saying “Israel had the right to defend itself,” just as every U.S. president has before him. Meanwhile the U.S. population, especially the younger generation, showed they sided more and more with the Palestinians and considered them an oppressed, occupied people — which they are and have been for more than 73 years. When Biden visited an auto plant in Dearborn, Mich., home of many people of Arab descent, the workers there protested his support for Israel.

Prominent entertainers like Rihanna, Rage Against the Machine and actors Seth Rogen, Mark Ruffalo, Susan Sarandon and Viola Davis condemned Israeli aggression on social media.

This shift of views was also reflected within Congress. Progressive Democrats like Rep. Cori Bush from Missouri and Rep. Rashida Tlaib, a Palestinian American from Michigan who represents the largest Arab population in the U.S., have openly criticized Israel’s assault on Gaza.

Cori Bush was a prominent organizer of the Black Lives Matter struggle in Ferguson, Mo., following the brutal murder of 18-year-old Michael Brown by a white police officer in August 2014. This killing sparked a month-long uprising, not only in Ferguson but throughout the United States. During that time Palestinians in the Occupied Territories demonstrated solidarity with the Black community of Ferguson.

In a statement to the May 22 Washington Post, Rep. Bush said, “As we march in defense of Black lives, we are not just saying that Black people in this country should be able to live full and joyous lives. We’re saying that our own government is funding a brutal and militarized disposition toward our very existence — from Ferguson to Palestine.”

Melina Abdullah, co-founder of the Los Angeles chapter of Black Lives Matter, said in the same article, “We understand that the liberation of Black people in the United States is tied to the liberation of Black people all over the world and tied to the liberation of oppressed people all over the world. Being in solidarity with the Palestinian people is something that’s been part of our work as Black Lives Matter for almost as long as we’ve been an organization.”

The Black Lives Matter struggle, which has called for defunding and even for abolishing the police, has become even more international in scope following the police lynching of George Floyd in May 2020. This development has helped raise consciousness and solidarity with other oppressed peoples like the Palestinians.

Whether they are brutalized and occupied by the National Fraternal Order of Police or the Israeli armed forces, the oppressor is the same imperialist system.

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