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Israel's military deliberately brings Palestinian conflict to boiling point

The provocative and criminal actions of the security forces are bringing the Israeli/Palestinian conflict to fever pitch, with analysts predicting a new Palestinian intifada, or uprising.

In the last days, security forces have killed at least four Palestinians they allege have killed Israeli citizens, without even attempting to arrest, formally charge them and bring them before the courts.



A Palestinian walks by a building hit by an Israeli airstrike in Gaza City, Tuesday, May 18, 2021. Since the fighting began last week, the Israeli military has launched hundreds of

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airstrikes it says are targeting Hamas' militant infrastructure, while Palestinian militants have fired thousands of rockets into Israel. (AP Photo/Hatem Moussa)

These now routine executions carried out during mass raid operations that terrorise the local population dispense with all the norms of bourgeois justice, including innocent till proven guilty. They are upheld by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's far-right coalition, all factions of the Zionist political elite—secular and religious—and Israel's judicial system, including the Supreme Court.

On Thursday morning, 200 soldiers, including undercover units, raided the old city of Nablus, in the northern West Bank, shooting and killing Muath Masri, Ibrahim Jabr and Hasan Qatnani and wounding four others. The three men were members of the Qassam Brigades, the armed wing of Hamas the Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated group that controls the besieged enclave of Gaza. It was just one of Israel's near-daily assassination raids in the West Bank.

A military spokesperson claimed that two of the men had carried out the shooting attack in the Jordan Valley on April 7 that killed an Israeli-British woman and two of her daughters who lived in a nearby settlement—one of around 200 settlements built on Palestinian land illegal under international laws—but were silent about the third and the two that were wounded. The Qassam Brigades said that the shooting of the three women was in retaliation for Israeli assaults on worshippers at the al-Aqsa mosque in occupied East Jerusalem during Ramadan.

According to the Palestine Red Crescent Society, some 166 people were injured during Wednesday's raid, mostly from tear gas inhalation, while four people were hit by live fire. The intensity of the raid and the fierce clashes with Palestinian fighters forced schools to suspend classes.

Also on Wednesday, Israel fired missiles on Gaza, killing 58-year-old Hashil Mubarak and injuring five others in Gaza City, belying Tel Aviv's claim that the 16 targets were militia military sites. The Israeli attack followed rocket fire from Gaza that injured three foreign nationals in the southern town of Sderot. Gaza's rockets came in response to the death Tuesday of 44-year-old Palestinian prisoner Khader Adnan, who had been on hunger strike for 86 days in protest against his detention in an Israeli jail.



People passing by a Khader Adnan stencil on a wall by Manara square, Ramallah, 23 Feb. 2012

Adnan, from the West Bank village of Arraba near Jenin, was well-known for his defiance of the Israeli authorities, having spent about eight years in detention, mostly without charge or trial. He had gone on hunger strikes on six occasions—25 days in 2004, 66 days in 2011 and 2012, 55 days in 2015, 58 days in 2018 and 25 days in 2021—to obtain his release.

Such orders for detention without charge or trial, typically issued for six-month periods, can be renewed indefinitely, while attorneys are not allowed to see the evidence against them. The number of Palestinians now being held without charge or trial has soared to more than 1,000, the highest since the second intifada, according to the Israeli advocacy group HaMoked.

This time, an Israeli military court charged Adnan with “terror-related offences,” accusing him of being a senior member of a proscribed organization, Palestinian Islamic Jihad. Despite a near 100 percent conviction rate for Palestinians in Israel’s military courts, Adnan had had no trial.

He died after being denied medical treatment or visits from his family, while a military appeals court refused his release just days before his death. The prison authorities lyingly claimed he had refused medical treatment.

Adnan’s death prompted widespread anger in the West Bank, with several towns and cities declaring general strikes. He is the first Palestinian to die during a hunger strike in almost 40 years, bringing to 237 the number of Palestinian prisoners who have died in Israeli custody since 1967.

Israel has thus far refused to hand over his body to his family for burial—along with the bodies of hundreds of Palestinians who either died in prison or were killed during security incidents, a policy nodded through by the Supreme Court in 2019.

Last month, Al-Haq and Addameer, two leading Palestinian human rights organizations, provided evidence to the UN Human Rights Council's Special Rapporteur about Israel's torturous, cruel and degrading treatment of Palestinian prisoners and efforts to hide these crimes. They said that medical staff in Israeli prisons give the go ahead to interrogate Palestinian detainees, ignoring the evidence of torture on their bodies. They highlighted the Israeli government's "limitations on medical treatment" that had caused the deaths of prisoners over the years.

Israel's fascistic minister of national security, Itamar Ben-Gvir, has stepped up the brutal treatment of Palestinian prisoners, limiting the time they can use the showers; serving them stale and frozen bread; conducting frequent raids and searches of cells and increasing the use of solitary confinement. A Bill is currently going through parliament that would allow the execution of Palestinians who kill Israelis.

On Thursday, in a separate incident, soldiers shot and killed a young woman, 26-year-old Iman Ziyad Odeh, claiming she had stabbed a soldier, who was slightly wounded in the incident, in the town of Huwara, near Nablus. In February, Huwara was the scene of a pogrom-like rampage by hundreds of Israeli settlers after two Israelis were shot dead as they drove through the town.

It is not just the armed forces and police that act as judges and executioners. Israeli civilians living in the settlements in the occupied West Bank do too—and with impunity. The UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs recorded at least 2,955 settler attacks, in which at least 22 Palestinians were killed, and at least 1,258 others injured, between 2010 and 2019, with just seven percent of settler attacks leading to criminal charges and only 3 percent of investigations leading to a conviction, according to Yesh Din, an Israeli human rights organisation.

In the four months of this year, the Israeli army has killed at least 102 Palestinians, 20 of them children, while settlers have killed five Palestinians. At least 19 Israelis, one Ukrainian and one Italian have been killed over the same period.

None of this is enough for Israel fascistic leaders. The Jewish Power leader Ben Gvir branded the military's response "feeble" and ordered his far-right Otzma Yehudit faction to boycott the Knesset votes on Wednesday in protest at "the weak response in Gaza." Other right-wing leaders criticized the government saying, "We will pay for weak policy."

Netanyahu echoed these sentiments, praising the military for “settling the score” in Nablus, making clear that the aim was to not to arrest the Palestinians but kill them. “Our message to those who harm us and those trying to harm us is that it may take a day, a week or a month, but be sure that we’ll settle the score with you,” he said. “It doesn’t matter where you try to hide, we’ll find you. Whoever harms us forfeits his life.”

Opposition National Unity party leader Benny Gantz denounced Netanyahu for his weak leadership, while boasting about the previous “government of change” when he headed the defence ministry in relation to the Palestinians and Gaza. His remarks underscore that the self-proclaimed leaders of the social protests opposing Netanyahu’s judicial coup have no essential differences with Israel’s far right government.

The Palestinians in Israel and the occupied territories remain under savage military repression and brazen vigilante and settler violence—all upheld by Israel’s Supreme Court. It is impossible to defend democratic rights for Jewish Israelis at the same time as defending military dictatorship in the West Bank and Gaza.

The main task is to overcome the reactionary Zionist leadership of the protest movement and fight to unite Arab and Jewish workers in a common struggle to defend jobs, living standards and democratic rights, including the national rights of the Palestinian people. This can only be done based on the programme and perspective of international socialism.
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