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## *As it gives Israel green light for genocide, US prepares war against Iran*



This image shows two US aircraft carrier strike groups on patrol in the South China Sea in 2020. [AP Photo]

Amid a genocide against the people of Gaza by the Israeli military, the United States is threatening to unleash a war throughout the Middle East targeting Iran.

Over the weekend, bombs continued to rain down on Gaza, killing hundreds of people each day. A population of two million is being systematically murdered through starvation and thirst, while one million people in Northern Gaza are being forced on a death march in advance of an imminent ground invasion.

This genocide has the full support of the Biden administration, which has given Israel a blank check to carry out war crimes. Operationally, Israel's actions are being overseen by the United States. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin visited Israel last week, and Blinken is scheduled to return this week.

Israel's war on Gaza has been accompanied by a massive expansion of the US military presence in the region, led by the deployment of two aircraft carriers and their associated battle groups. The dispatch of an armada of over a dozen warships to the Middle East is not simply to threaten Hamas, which has no navy. The United States is preparing for a much broader conflict in the Middle East, including war with Iran.

The US is using the present crisis to put into effect long-standing plans for a war with Iran, as the Middle Eastern front of the US war with Russia and war plans against China. On Saturday, Austin announced that the US would double its military assets deployed in the Middle East, sending a second carrier strike group, led by the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower, to the region.

Austin said the strike group "includes the guided-missile cruiser USS Philippine Sea, guided-missile destroyers USS Gravely and USS Mason, and Carrier Air Wing 3, with nine aircraft squadrons." The Eisenhower will join the USS Gerald R. Ford carrier strike group, which has already been deployed to the region. Austin noted, "The Ford CSG includes the USS Normandy, USS Thomas Hudner, USS Ramage, USS Carney, and USS Roosevelt." Earlier in the week, the US Air Force announced deployment to the region of squadrons of F-15, F-16 and A-10 fighter aircraft.



A map of Israel, the Palestinian Territories in green and Israeli occupied Golan Heights [AP Photo]

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Each nuclear-powered carrier strike group has a total personnel of up to 8,000 sailors, airmen and Marines, meaning that over 15,000 troops have been deployed to the Middle East in the span of just over one week, alongside dozens of other aircraft and thousands of support personnel.

These plans could not have been put into practice at the drop of a hat. There are indications that the Netanyahu government and US intelligence agencies had some degree of advance knowledge of an attack from Hamas, though they were shocked by the scale of the rebellion. In any case, the Israeli regime had planned for an all-out war against the Palestinians, in part to deflect from its escalating internal social and political crisis.

The United States, for its part, has used the crisis to put into effect its own plans for escalation against Iran.

US officials have made clear that the aircraft carriers are targeting Iran. On Friday, US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said, “There is a risk of an escalation of this conflict, the opening of a second front in the north, and, of course, of Iran’s involvement... It’s why the president moved so rapidly and decisively to get an aircraft carrier into the Eastern Mediterranean, to get aircraft into the Gulf, because he wants to send a very clear message of deterrence.”

In an editorial Sunday night, the *Wall Street Journal* wrote, “The Ayatollahs in Tehran need to understand that more than their terrorist proxies are at risk. They need to know that their nuclear sites and oil fields are also on the target list.” Echoing these points, Senator Lindsay Graham raised the prospect of a declaration of war against Iran, which he said he had discussed with the White House.

“I’ll introduce a resolution in the United States Senate to allow military action by the United States, in conjunction with Israel, to knock Iran out of the oil business,” he said. “Iran, if you escalate this war, we’re coming for you.”

In an interview on 60 Minutes, Biden seemed to imply support for opening a second front in the war and attacking Lebanon’s Hezbollah political party. “Going in and taking out the extremists, Hezbollah is up north but Hamas down South, is a necessary requirement,” Biden said, adding, “Iran constantly supports Hamas and Hezbollah.”

In this context, there is the possibility that the US will stage some sort of provocation to justify a war against Iran. Significantly, National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said he would not rule out deploying US troops in combat in the present crisis, ostensibly to save hostages held by Hamas. The deployment of US troops on the ground

would not be about saving hostages, whose lives are of no significance to American imperialism, but at directly involving the US military in a developing conflict with Iran.

The United States has planned for a war against Iran for decades. In January 2002, following the September 11, 2001 terror attacks, then-President George W. Bush called Iran part of an “Axis of Evil” that included Iraq, which the United States invaded and occupied the next year. Inside the White House, Bush administration officials were fond of the saying, “Boys go to Baghdad, but real men go to Tehran.”

The US conflict with Iran was massively intensified under the Trump administration. Following the 2018 US withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal, Iran shot down a US drone over the Strait of Hormuz in June 2019. That month, then-President Donald Trump ordered a series of airstrikes on Iranian targets, which he called off at the last minute while the planes were already in the air.

In January 2020, the US murdered Qasem Soleimani, the commander of Iran’s Quds Force and a major figure in the Iranian military establishment.

The development of a full-scale war in the Middle East is a continuation of the same policies that have led to the protracted and escalating US-NATO war against Russia over Ukraine. The US instigated the conflict with the aim of militarily defeating Russia and orchestrating a regime-change operation. The war against Russia is seen as preparatory to a military conflict with China.

The free rein given to Israel to commit mass murder against the population of Gaza, and the intensifying US war plans against Iran, must be seen in the context of the eruption of what is, in effect, the initial stages of a third world war.

The war plans of US imperialism are being disrupted by a growing movement of the working class, which is intersecting with a global movement against imperialist war. Over the weekend, millions of people marched in the Middle East, Europe and the United States in opposition to Israel’s genocide in Gaza.

The massive escalation of war will be paid for through an escalation of the assault on the working class, which has already sparked a growing strike wave in the US and all the major capitalist countries.

The eruption of popular opposition to Israeli genocide must be connected to the developing class struggle over inequality and exploitation. This requires the building of a socialist leadership in the working class, fusing the fight against war with opposition to the capitalist profit system.

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