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European Languages

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06.01.2024

US carries out illegal murder of Iraqi militia leader in expanding Middle East war



Members of an Iraqi Shiite militant group carry the coffin of the funeral of an fighter who was killed in a U.S. airstrike Province, in Baghdad, Iraq, Thursday, Jan. 4, 2024. (AP Photo/Hadi Mizban)

The US carried out an illegal missile strike on Baghdad, Iraq, on Thursday in the latest escalation of the US-Israeli rampage throughout the Middle East.

Pentagon spokesman Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder confirmed that the US killed its target, identified as Mushtaq Jawad Kazim al-Jawari. Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces said that al-Jawari was the head of the Iranian-backed militia group Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba, and that the strike also killed an Iraqi official and wounded five people.

Iraqi officials condemned the attack, making it clear that the US has no mandate to carry out attacks inside Iraq. The strike is thus a violation of Iraqi sovereignty and an act of aggression in violation of international law.

The United States illegally invaded and occupied Iraq in 2003, and US proxy forces executed its president, Saddam Hussein, in 2006, following what Amnesty International called an “unfair trial.”

The United States maintains 2,500 troops inside Iraq, but the Iraqi government asserts that the United States does not have authorization to carry out military strikes inside the country.

Iraq’s foreign ministry issued a “strong condemnation” of what it called a “blatant attack” on Iraq’s military headquarters.

“The attack on a security formation linked to the commander-in-chief of the armed forces and subject to the authority of the state is a dangerous escalation,” read the statement, adding, “we affirm that Iraq reserves its right to take a firm stance and all measures that deter anyone who tries to harm its territory and its security forces.”

An Iraqi official called the strike a “flagrant violation of the sovereignty and security of Iraq” and “no different from a terrorist act.”

Ryder, the Pentagon spokesman, absurdly claimed that “It is important to note that the strike was taken in self-defense.”

The same day as Ryder admitted US responsibility for the attack in Iraq, the Islamic State Sunni terrorist group claimed responsibility for Wednesday’s bombing that killed 84 people in Kerman, Iran, at a memorial for Maj. Gen. Qassim Suleimani, who was killed four years ago by a US drone strike in Iraq.

These attacks set the stage for US Secretary of State Antony Blinken’s week-long trip to the Middle East, including a prominent visit to Israel.

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A State Department spokesman said Thursday that this will be Blinken's fourth trip to the Middle East in the past three months. Blinken will visit "Turkey, Greece, Jordan, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Israel, the West Bank, and Egypt."

These moves come as Israeli officials are openly advocating the ethnic cleansing of Gaza through the expulsion of the Palestinian people.

On Tuesday, Israeli National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir called for the Palestinian population to be expelled from Gaza, declaring in a Twitter post that "the migration of hundreds of thousands from Gaza will allow the residents of the enclave to return home and live in security and protect [Israel Defense Forces] soldiers."

This followed a statement on Sunday by Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, "What needs to be done in the Gaza Strip is to encourage emigration." He added, "If there are 100,000 or 200,000 Arabs in Gaza and not 2 million Arabs, the entire discussion on the day after will be totally different."

In an interview Monday on the British LBC talk show program, Israeli ambassador to the UK Tzipi Hotovely refused to deny that Israel was intent on "destroying the whole of Gaza" in an interview.

"I really want to mention that Gaza has an underground tunnel city, and in order to get to this underground tunnel city, those areas must be destroyed," she said, adding, "every school, every mosque, every second house, has access to the tunnels. And of course, ammunition."

LBC presenter Iain Dale asked, "That's an argument for destroying the whole of Gaza, every single building in it."

To this, Hotovely replied, "So, do you have another solution?"

US officials have attempted to distance themselves from the statements by Smotrich and Gvir, falsely claiming that their statements do not represent the official position of the Israeli government.

This assertion contradicts multiple public statements by Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who said in a meeting of his parliamentary faction, “Regarding voluntary immigration... This is the direction we are going in.”

In private, Netanyahu has been lobbying countries, including Egypt and the Democratic Republic of Congo, to accept the transfer of the population of Gaza onto their territory.

On Wednesday, the *Times of Israel* reported, “The ‘voluntary’ resettlement of Palestinians from Gaza is slowly becoming a key official policy of the government, with a senior official saying that Israel has held talks with several countries for their potential absorption.”

At the White House daily briefing on Thursday, White House National Security spokesperson John Kirby was asked to respond to assertions by multiple UN officials that Israel was engaging in systematic war crimes.

He was asked by a reporter, “Have you taken any action to this day to assess whether Israel is following the rules of war or not?”

To this, Kirby replied, “I am not aware of any kind of formal assessment being done by the United States government to analyze the compliance with international law by our partner Israel.”

Having made this statement, Kirby declared, “I would just tell you that we have not seen anything that would convince us that we need to take a different approach.”

This declaration follows the admission by President Joe Biden on December 12 that Israel has carried out indiscriminate bombing—by definition a violation of the laws of war, which require that efforts be taken to limit civilian casualties.

Kirby’s statement constitutes an endorsement of all of Israel’s war crimes up to this point, including the systematic bombing of densely populated areas that has killed nearly 30,000

people, the mass displacement of 1.9 million people, the deliberate mass starvation of the population of Gaza, and the deliberate targeting of housing, schools, hospitals and religious buildings.

On Thursday, Tariq Habash, a political appointee at the Department of Education, issued an open letter announcing his resignation from the Biden administration, condemning it for enabling Israel's war on the population of Gaza.

The letter declared, "Over the last three months, our government has aided in the indiscriminate violence against Palestinians in Gaza—over 22,000 civilians killed, thousands more buried under rubble, and the vast majority displaced from their homes."

It continued, "Meanwhile, the President has publicly questioned the integrity of Palestinian death counts frequently used by our own State Department, the United Nations, and numerous humanitarian non-governmental organizations. Our representatives at the United Nations have repeatedly voted against the vast majority of the international community, including vetoing resolutions calling for a ceasefire. And administration leaders have even repeated unverified claims that systematically dehumanize Palestinians."

On Thursday, the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees warned that disease is spreading throughout Gaza amid mass starvation, noting that there are more than 180,000 people in Gaza with upper respiratory infections, and over 136,000 cases of diarrhea have been reported, half of them in children under five.

On Thursday, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk said that he was "very disturbed by high-level Israeli officials' statements on plans to transfer civilians from Gaza to third countries." He added, "85 percent of people in Gaza are already internally displaced. They have the right to return to their homes. International law prohibits forcible transfer of protected persons within or deportation from occupied territory."

World Socialist 05.01.2024