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Mike Head

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Netanyahu declares all-out war at UN, then Israel slaughters hundreds in Beirut

Clearly confident of continued total backing by the US and the other imperialist powers, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu used an address to the United Nations General Assembly to effectively proclaim an all-out war across the Middle East against Iran.



Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu addresses the 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly, Friday, September 27, 2024. [AP Photo/Richard Drew]

Making a further mockery of supposed ceasefire proposals by the Biden-Harris administration and its allies, Netanyahu declared that Israel was fighting an existential “seven-front war” against Iran and its proxies and would fight until “total victory” in Gaza and Lebanon.

“There is no place in Iran that the long arm of Israel cannot reach. And that is true for the entire Middle East,” he threatened.

Barely an hour after Netanyahu finished speaking, his regime demonstrated the genocidal content of that vow. Huge explosions ripped through heavily-populated southern Beirut, reducing at least six residential apartment buildings to rubble, and killing hundreds of civilians.

In an operation for which Netanyahu personally gave the final go ahead while in New York, the Israel air force launched massive US-supplied laser-guided bunker bombs in an attempt to assassinate Hezbollah's leader, Hassan Nasrallah, and terrorise the entire population of Lebanon.

Netanyahu's office said he would fly home immediately, breaking a usual rule against travel on the Jewish Sabbath. It released a photo of the prime minister ordering the strike, apparently from a landline in a makeshift command centre in New York.

As of last night, such bombings were continuing across Beirut's southern suburbs, home to nearly a million people, and in the Bekaa Valley in eastern Lebanon. This is creating a level of destruction and human devastation similar to that already inflicted on the people of Gaza over the past year.

The full death toll from the Beirut bombardments remains unknown, but the Israel military itself, cited by *Haaretz*, estimated that 300 people had been killed in the initial demolition of the apartment blocks.

"Six buildings with residents were literally blown to dust and these buildings had civilians in them," reported Hala Jaber, a Beirut-based journalist who lives not far from the blast site. "The rescue workers are finding it very difficult to find bodies at the moment."

Al Jazeera reported: "They are trying to retrieve bodies. We spoke to people on the ground, witnesses who said they had seen children's bodies that had been taken out by emergency services and transferred to various hospitals."

The use of the latest generation 5,000-pound (2,200kg) bunker buster GBU-72 missiles, developed for the US Air Force in 2001, again shows that the source of this barbarism is not confined to the Zionist regime in Israel, but has its roots in Washington. Earlier versions of these bombs were used by the US in Iraq in 1991 and 2003, and by Israel in Gaza in 2021.

The resulting death toll adds to the more than 700 people killed by Israel throughout Lebanon and the many more maimed this week, on top of the mass casualties caused by indiscriminate pager attacks across the country two weeks ago.

Combined with Netanyahu's war-mongering speech, the further savage escalation of Israel's Washington-backed war underscores the agenda that has always been behind it: the triggering

of a wider conflagration to establish unchallenged hegemony by the US and its partners over the entire strategic and resource-rich region.

Netanyahu specifically named the Israeli-occupied West Bank of Palestine, as well as Lebanon, Gaza, Iraq, Syria, Yemen and Iran as the “fronts” of Israel’s war. Emboldened by the billions of dollars of weaponry supplied by the Biden-Harris administration, he called for all “responsible governments” to join Israel’s war against Iran.

As he had done previously at the UN, the Israeli leader brazenly held up maps depicting the entire Middle East as a “cursed” zone. He said it had to be cleansed of Iranian influence in order to establish a supposed “blessed” region of peace and prosperity, possibly in partnership with the despotic Saudi regime. His maps also showed Gaza and the West Bank as parts of Israel.

After a few government leaders earlier spoke at the UN General Assembly appealing for a ceasefire or “de-escalation,” and some delegations walked out on his speech, Netanyahu accused the UN of being a “swamp of antisemitic bile,” with “an automatic majority willing to demonise the Jewish state for anything.”

Turning reality totally upside down, he accused Hamas of seeking a Nazi-style holocaust last October 7, regurgitating lies about mass rapes, beheadings and babies being burned alive. This is while Israel is escalating its year-long assault on Gaza, where it has murdered more than 40,000 people and displaced almost the entire population, and the West Bank, where it has killed hundreds in 12 months.

Knowing that he enjoys US and allied immunity and protection for these mounting crimes against humanity, Netanyahu denounced the International Criminal Court for even considering issuing arrest warrants against him and Israel’s Defence Minister Yoav Gallant.

This drive for an all-out war underlines the fraud of Wednesday’s ostensible joint call by the US, France and other allies for an “immediate” 21-day ceasefire in Lebanon. That pretence provided a cover for the onslaught that they undoubtedly knew was in the final stages of preparation.

Once again, the Biden-Harris administration denied any advance knowledge of the latest atrocities, even while making clear its unwavering support for Israel. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Israel’s objective in Lebanon was “an important and legitimate one.” He added: “Israel has the right to defend itself against terrorism,” although “the way it does so matters.” The latter phrase is a thin veneer for continuing to pour weapons into Israel’s arsenal.

In fact, Washington swiftly moved to further bolster its forces in the region, thus displaying its readiness for a wider war. President Joe Biden directed the Pentagon to “assess and adjust as necessary US force posture” in the Middle East to “ensure force protection, and support the full range of US objectives,” the White House said.

Already, about 40,000 US troops are deployed throughout the Middle East, including in Iraq and Syria. The USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier is in the region, and the USS Harry S. Truman is underway to the area.

Until now, Iran and Hezbollah have been determined to avoid a total war with Israel, despite intensifying provocations. Iran’s embassy in Lebanon described the attack on Beirut as a “dangerous game-changing escalation.”

The Iranian Foreign Ministry said the “brutal terrorist air strike on several residential buildings in Beirut” showed that “the ceasefire call issued by the United States and some Western countries is a blatant trick aimed at winning time for the Zionist regime to continue its crimes against the Palestinian and Lebanese peoples.”

The Israeli regime, which features fascistic far-right cabinet ministers, is determined to intensify its assault, knowing it will inflict widespread civilian deaths. Israel Defence Forces (IDF) spokesman Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari said the ongoing missile hits on residential buildings “could potentially cause them to collapse.”

As it has done throughout Gaza, the Israeli military cynically justifies its attacks on civilian targets, in blatant breach of international law, by claiming that Hamas and Hezbollah conduct military activities under such buildings. On that basis, the entire populations of Gaza and southern and eastern Lebanon are designated targets.

The Israeli army has already signalled plans to invade Lebanon, as it did most recently in 2006, killing more than 1,100 people and displacing one million residents. The IDF has so far mobilised two reserve brigades, the 6th and 228th, “for combat as part of the northern campaign.”

Israel’s attacks are continuing in Gaza as well. An Israeli bombardment of the Al-Faluja school-turned-shelter in the Jabalia refugee camp in north Gaza killed 15 people on Thursday. In the occupied West Bank, the Palestinian news agency Wafa yesterday reported more Israeli raids also. These included storming the town of al-Khader, south of Bethlehem, opening fire at residents in Idhna, west of Hebron, and attacking a march against illegal Jewish settlements in the town of Beita, south of Nablus.

The escalation in Lebanon confirms the warnings made by the WSWS that Israel and its imperialist backers have seized upon the October 7 attacks to not only conduct a genocide in Gaza but to seek to totally dominate the Middle East by provoking a region-wide war.

For US imperialism this conflict in the cockpit of the Eurasian landmass is one front in a global offensive against Russia and China, aimed at securing US hegemony worldwide, even at the risk of a nuclear war.

Mike Head@MikeHeadWSWS