

<https://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article7140>



Israel/Palestine

Ethnic Cleansing Escalates in Palestine: U.S. Says “Stay Calm”

- IV Online magazine - 2021 - IV556 - May 2021 -

Publication date: Thursday 13 May 2021

Copyright © International Viewpoint - online socialist magazine - All rights reserved

HISTORY RECYCLES: THE first Palestinian Intifada began in December, 1987 when Gaza day laborers were killed in a traffic crash at an Israeli border gate. The second erupted in September 2000 after Ariel Sharon, campaigning to become Israeli Prime Minister, staged a deliberately provocative march to the Jerusalem “Temple Mount” accompanied by 1000 heavily armed police.

The origins of the current explosion are not obscure. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, fighting to hold onto power in the midst of his corruption trial and Israel's dysfunctional political gridlock, sent the army and police smashing into al-Aqsa mosque in the heart of occupied East Jerusalem, at the most sensitive time during the prayers in the closing days of Ramadan.

This provocation occurred at the same time as ultra-nationalist “Jewish Power” mobs have marched and violently attacked Arab residents, and as the mass expropriation of Palestinian homes in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood to make room for Israeli settlers (on the basis of 19th century title claims) is pending in the heavily stacked Israeli court system. Palestinians resisted in the streets of Jerusalem against escalating Israeli repression including rubber bullets, toxic pepper gas and skunk water with many hundreds wounded and arrested.

In Gaza, where the popularity of the governing Hamas movement has eroded, its forces are firing rockets toward Israeli cities. The unexpected reach of Hamas rockets boosts its prestige for the moment, while producing a massive Israeli bombing response over Gaza that has already killed dozens of children. As always, ratcheting up the military confrontation serves the Israeli state's purposes, as the military arena is where it has absolute one-sided superiority – as well as the pretext of “defending” its civilian population against the consequences of its own violence.

According to many reports, an emerging feature of the current struggle is the growing involvement of Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel in the fighting and the defense of East Jerusalem from escalating ethnic cleansing. The long term significance of this development, and whether the current moment is the beginning of a new Intifada or another downward spiral in the colonial-apartheid Israeli destruction of Palestine, will take time to determine and can't be predicted from the outside

What's somewhat clearer is the immediate response of the rotten mess known as “the international community” led as usual by the United States. In “normal” circumstances, what's happening in Palestine/Israel has ceased to be of serious imperial concern. It's been decades since the Palestinian struggle for self-determination was perceived as a revolutionary threat to great-power regional interests. The formal “normalization” of state relations between Israel and Arab Gulf regimes, in a political-military alliance against Iran, has made public what's been happening unofficially for several years already. The concern of the United States is that the present explosion may undercut this important arrangement.

Accordingly, the proclamations of the Biden administration concentrate on one point above all: “Stop the violence (on both sides, of course). De-escalate and restore calm in order to revive the peace process.”

In secondary, almost inaudible phrases Washington of course records its concerns about expulsions of Palestinian neighborhoods. Let's be clear about what this garbage really means: Israel's ethnic cleansing of Sheikh Jarrah, Silwan, the south Hebron hills and so many other places all over Palestine is not really a problem as long as it happens in relative obscurity and “quiet.” Does it really matter to imperial elites how many more bullets are fired into the long-dead corpse of the “two-state solution”? In the fantasy world of diplomacy and wonkery, the pretense that it

Ethnic Cleansing Escalates in Palestine: U.S. Says “Stay Calm”

remains relevant can persist indefinitely. The Israeli state knows that the bedrock of its “special relationship” with the United States remains intact despite temporary embarrassments.

In the real world where Palestinians are desperately fighting to hold onto their homes and their homeland, it's the global grassroots response that matters. In many U.S. cities, demonstrations and rallies are being quickly organized by Palestinian activist groups and solidarity organizations including Jewish Voice for Peace, supporting the resistance as well as commemorating the anniversary of the Nakba (Palestinian catastrophe) of the 1948 war. By all means, we urge U.S. social justice and political activists to build and join these activities. On an ongoing basis, there are sustained political and legislative campaigns to support.

One important issue right now is a bill introduced in Congress by Rep. Betty McCollum (DFL-MN), HR 2407 known as “No Way to Treat a Child,” calling for cutting of U.S. military aid to countries that imprison children. Israel is particularly notorious in this regard, including the detention of children without trial in conditions that amount to torture under international law. A listing of more than two dozen co-sponsors, along with facts and links to human rights reports, is [here](#). This initiative is particularly important at a moment when its supporters in Congress are essentially defying the Biden administration's unconditional support of Israel.

It's also critical to expand and defend the BDS (Boycott/Divestment/Sanctions) global campaign in defense of Palestinian rights. To understand why, everyone should read the explosive new Human Rights Watch April 27, 2021 report “[A Threshold Crossed: Israeli Authorities and the Crimes of Apartheid and Persecution.](#)”

We don't know how long the immediate crisis that's capturing world headlines and coverage may last, whether it might lead to a sustained new round of resistance and break through of the political gridlock on the Palestinian side, or potentially a new war and mass expulsion of Palestinians that thoughtful observers inside Israel have warned might come about. The time to speak and act is now.

David Finkel for the Solidarity National Committee

12 May 2021

Source [Solidarity](#).

PS:

If you like this article or have found it useful, please consider donating towards the work of International Viewpoint. Simply follow this link: [Donate](#) then enter an amount of your choice. One-off donations are very welcome. But regular donations by standing order are also vital to our continuing functioning. See the last paragraph of [this article](#) for our bank account details and take out a standing order. Thanks.