

Israel marks 70th anniversary amid war crimes and deepening social crisis

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14 May 2018

Israel today marks the 70th anniversary of the declaration establishing a Jewish state in Palestine, which coincided with the end of the British mandate established following the defeat of the Ottoman empire in World War I.

This year, the anniversary will be marked by Israeli troops shooting Palestinian demonstrators on the Gaza border and stoking up war fever against Iran.

The anniversary will be overshadowed by the formal opening of a new US embassy in Jerusalem, a violation of international law ordered by the Trump administration that has put a final nail into the coffin of the so-called “peace process” between Israel and the Palestinians and the illusion of a “two-state solution.”

It will also be the occasion for another round of bloodshed at the heavily militarized Gaza security fence, where for over six weeks thousands of Palestinians have demonstrated in what has been declared the “Great March of Return.” Over this period, some 50 demonstrators had been killed, and many thousands wounded, as the Israel Defense Forces have been given shoot-to-kill orders against unarmed protesters. On Monday, Israeli forces killed a further 37 demonstrators, and injured more than 500.

The protests are bound up with the origins of the state of Israel and their historical consequences. The demonstrators are demanding their right of return to the homes and villages from which they were expelled 70 years ago in what Palestinians refer to as the Naqba, or catastrophe. Some quarter of a million Palestinians were driven from their land through a systematic campaign of terrorism and intimidation, a gigantic act of “ethnic cleansing” designed to carve out a Jewish state based on race and religion.

The actions of Washington, both the transfer of its embassy to Jerusalem and the ripping up of the nuclear

agreement between the major world powers and Iran, have been celebrated by the right-wing Israeli government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. They have given this regime what amounts to a green light to both redouble the violent suppression of the Palestinian people and to launch military attacks in Syria that are aimed at provoking a confrontation with Iran that could spiral into a catastrophic region-wide conflagration.

Israel’s rulers are deliberately whipping up war fever as a means of directing outward the immense social tensions building up within Israeli society and diverting attention from the series of corruption scandals that have implicated the entire political establishment, from Netanyahu on down.

Given the events unfolding today, the criminal celebration by US and Israeli officials of the embassy move, and the new round of carnage on the Gaza-Israel border, there will be little attention paid to the great world historical questions bound up with Israel’s origins and development, which are inextricably tied to the fate of the working class in the 20th century and the historic crisis of revolutionary leadership.

It was to these essential historical questions that the *World Socialist Web Site* pointed in 1998 on the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the state of Israel.

“Within Israel’s birth and evolution are concentrated the great unresolved contradictions of the 20th century. Its essential origins lie in one of history’s greatest crimes against humanity, the Nazi Holocaust. The extermination of six million European Jews was, in turn, the terrible price paid for the crisis of the working class movement brought on by the Stalinist degeneration of the Soviet Union and the Communist International. Stalinism’s crimes and its domination over the workers movement prevented the working

class from putting an end to the crisis-ridden capitalist system, which found in fascism its last line of defense.

“The defeats of the working class, the crimes of Stalinism and the horrors of the Holocaust created the historical conditions for Israel’s creation and the Zionist movement’s largely successful attempt, aided both by US imperialism and Stalinism, to equate Zionism with world Jewry. It was a movement and a state founded ultimately on discouragement and despair. Stalinism’s betrayals produced disillusionment in the socialist alternative that had exercised such a powerful appeal to Jewish working people all over the world. The crimes of German fascism were presented as the ultimate proof that it was impossible to vanquish anti-Semitism in Europe or anywhere else. Zionism’s answer was to get a state and an army and beat the historical oppressors of the Jewish people at their own game.

“The tragic irony of this supposed solution is Israel’s association of the Jewish people—traditionally and historically connected with the struggle for tolerance and freedom—with the brutal suppression of another oppressed population.”

In the 20 years since the publication of the 1998 statement by the WSWS, the malignant contradictions within Israeli society have only deepened. The number of inhabitants in the illegal Zionist settlements in the territories occupied by Israel since the 1967 war—the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Syria’s Golan Heights—has risen from 160,000 to over 600,000.

While Israel withdrew its troops and settlements from the Gaza Strip, it remains an occupied territory, effectively an open-air prison over which Tel Aviv exercises direct control in terms of borders, air and maritime space, while dictating the conditions of mass unemployment and poverty in a territory whose average income is roughly equivalent to that of Congo. The IDF has launched repeated wars against the territory that have claimed the lives of thousands of civilians, while devastating essential infrastructure. This near-genocidal campaign continues to this day with the slaughter of demonstrators on the Gaza border.

Real wages have been falling steadily since 2000 in the West Bank under the nominal rule of the Palestinian Authority, which has functioned as an auxiliary police force for the Israeli occupation, while enriching a thin layer of corrupt PLO officials and businessmen.

Within Israel itself, which ranks second only to the United States as the most socially unequal member nation of the OECD, and where the poverty rate stands at 22 percent—55 percent for Israeli Palestinians and one third for the country’s children—class tensions are growing.

Israeli dock workers ended a three-day strike Sunday under a court back-to-work order after shutting down the ports of Eilat, Haifa and Ashdod. Last December saw a nationwide strike against the decision of the generic pharmaceutical giant Teva to lay off a quarter of its workforce, and municipal workers in Jerusalem staged a walkout in January, blocking access to the Knesset with garbage trucks, over threatened mass layoffs and failure to receive their wages.

Seventy years after the founding of the state of Israel, it is now clearer than ever that there is no national solution to problems confronting any section of the working class across Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories. Only the unification of Jewish and Arab workers across the region on the basis of a socialist and internationalist program can provide a way out of today’s bloody and increasingly dangerous impasse.



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