

Israel's Tabeen school massacre and the normalisation of war crimes

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In one of the worst single atrocities of Israel's genocidal war in Gaza, three Israeli missiles struck a building in the Tabeen school in Gaza City early Saturday. Up to 100 Palestinians were slaughtered in the attack, although the death toll will continue to rise as rescue workers pick through the rubble.

This latest act of mass murder, although perpetrated by Israeli soldiers, was funded, armed and justified by Israel's imperialist backers, including the US, the UK and Germany.

The Tabeen school, which was sheltering around 6,000 displaced people, was turned into a scene of carnage, with a video cited by the *Guardian* showing the "horrific loss of life, with body parts, rubble and destroyed furniture scattered across blood-soaked mattresses." Medical staff are still trying to identify victims from body parts and grotesquely disfigured corpses.

A rescue worker, Abu Anas, told the Associated Press that missiles fell without warning. "There were people praying, there were people washing and there were people upstairs sleeping, including children, women and old people."

Many of the injured, including children, had severe burns to much of their body, according to Tayseer al-Tanna, a surgeon at Al-Ahli Hospital in Gaza City. Doctors had almost no painkillers to give their patients, he said, and did not have enough time to fully sterilise the already overused equipment between operations.

Hospital Director Fadel Naem told the Associated Press:

The situation at the hospital is catastrophic, with a severe shortage of medical supplies and resources due to the horrific Israeli massacre,

which has resulted in numerous amputations and severe burns.

The massacre of men, women and children at the Tabeen school is not an isolated incident, but part of a deliberate pattern of genocide. Most of Gaza has been reduced to rubble, nearly 40,000 people have been slaughtered, and virtually the entire population of 2.3 million has been turned into refugees, lacking food, clean water and decent shelter. Many have been forced to move multiple times.

Scenes of mass murder like that seen at the Tabeen school play out day after day, week after week. Mass murder and war crimes in pursuit of imperialist war aims are being normalised.

At least 10 schools have been struck since the beginning of July, including four in a period of just four days. Most of the hospitals in Gaza have been attacked. Those that continue to operate are overwhelmed by casualties and starved of essential medical equipment and medicines. The death toll includes aid workers, medical professionals and journalists.

Israeli war criminals justify their crimes with the same absurd ritual—the school/refugee centre was harbouring Hamas militants. Israel's chief military spokesman Daniel Hagari declared that "no women and children" were present in the building hit by missiles. The school, he claimed, was a Hamas command centre, and the strike killed 20 militants. Of course, not a shred of evidence is provided.

These lies come from a fascistic regime that justifies the gang rape of a Palestinian prisoner held at one of its torture centres. A video leaked last month of the rape of a male detainee at the Sde Teiman detention facility in the Negev desert resulted in the arrest of 10

guards—soldiers belonging to Force 100. The attack was so brutal that the prisoner reportedly was unable to walk and had to be hospitalised.

The response of top government ministers was to hail the soldiers and demand an investigation into how the video was leaked. National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, who is responsible for the prison system, declared that it was “shameful” for Israel to arrest “our best heroes.”

Defending rape and torture, Hanoach Milwidsky, a member of Benjamin Netanyahu’s ruling Likud party, declared that for Hamas militants, “everything is legitimate to do! Everything!”

The response of Washington conforms to a familiar charade—empty expressions of concern followed by iron-clad defence of Israel’s so-called “right to self-defence”—a green light to continue the genocide. After the carnage at the Tabeen school, Vice President Kamala Harris bemoaned the fact that “far too many civilians” had been killed. Nevertheless, she said, “Israel has a right to go after the terrorists that are Hamas,” then added another empty call for a ceasefire.

In reality, the Biden administration backs the Zionist regime to the hilt, providing the weapons, finance and political support for the genocide in Gaza. At least one of the three missiles that struck the school was an American-made Mk-84 missile.

The crocodile tears in Washington over the latest atrocity cannot hide the fact that when Netanyahu addressed the US Congress last month he was given bipartisan support not only for the barbarism in Gaza, but for a wider war in the Middle East.

Following Netanyahu’s visit to Washington, the Israeli regime carried out two high profile assassinations aimed at provoking conflict with Iran—the murder of top Hezbollah military commander Fuad Shukr in Beirut, and, hours later, Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran. The refrain from Harris and Biden about the need for renewed negotiations and a ceasefire in Gaza is farcical given their defence of the killing of the top Hamas negotiator.

The slaughter in Gaza is a warning of what Israel, with the full backing of the US and all its allies, has in store for the wider Middle East. US imperialism is using Israel as its chief attack dog in provoking a regional war, above all targeting Iran, which Washington regards as the main obstacle to achieving

unchallenged domination.

The crimes of the Israeli regime follow the crimes of US imperialism in its illegal wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria and Libya, which have laid waste to entire countries, normalised torture, and resulted in more than a million deaths. The slaughter of civilians was similarly justified in those wars by claims that “terrorists” were to blame for using the population as “human shields.”

Having failed to gain ascendancy through three decades of war, the US, facing profound economic and political crises, is preparing a global conflict in which war in the Middle East against Iran is one front. The US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine is being intensified, while preparations for armed conflict against China, regarded by Washington as the chief threat to its global hegemony, proceed apace.

The threat confronting humanity is a nuclear holocaust that would replicate the Israeli devastation of Gaza on a vast scale. The genocide in Gaza, let alone the dangers of global conflict, cannot be halted by appeals to the very criminals who are responsible for the slaughter. What must be built is a unified anti-war movement of the international working class, including Israeli and Arab workers, based on a socialist perspective to put an end to the capitalist system that is the root cause of war.



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