

With US support, Israel extends Gaza genocide to the West Bank

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Israel has launched a new phase of its ethnic cleansing operation in Palestine targeting the West Bank.

On Tuesday and Wednesday, hundreds of Israeli troops, along with armored vehicles and bulldozers, supported by drones and helicopters, launched the largest raid into the occupied West Bank in two decades, targeting the cities and camps of Jenin, Tubas and Tulkarem.

The city of Jenin, with a population of 39,000, has been surrounded and sealed, and Israeli forces have blocked access to hospitals throughout the West Bank. Israeli media have reported that the attack on the West Bank will last for several days, with the death toll expected to continue to rise.

Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz made clear that the goal is the ethnic cleansing of the West Bank: “We must deal with the threat just as we deal with the terrorist infrastructure in Gaza, including the temporary evacuation of Palestinian residents.”

The goal of this operation, like that of the Gaza genocide, is the killing of as many Palestinians as possible, their displacement from their homes and villages, with the aim of formally annexing the land Israel has illegally occupied since 1967. In July, the International Court of Justice ruled that the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories, including Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem, is illegal.

The Israeli assault on Gaza, now 10 months old, has created a nightmare for its population. According to the official figures, more than 40,000 people are dead, with another 10,000 presumed missing under the rubble. The official death toll includes 17,000 children.

Once the victims of Israel’s deliberate famine and promotion of disease are added, the real death toll could be 186,000 or more, according to an estimate published

in *The Lancet* medical journal last month.

The remaining population of Gaza, most of whom have been forced to flee over and over, now face Israeli evacuation orders covering 89 percent of the territory. The land onto which the population is crammed is just 41 square kilometers, with no infrastructure to supply food, running water or sanitation.

Israel has waged a concerted campaign to force international aid organizations to shut down their operations. The UN announced it was suspending food distribution this week after it was forced to evacuate its headquarters in Deir al-Balah, and its World Food Program said it had to shut down operations after one of its clearly-marked vehicles was fired on by Israeli forces Wednesday. Nine out of 10 people in Gaza are now forced to go 24 hours without food, with preventable diseases surging.

Now, this nightmare is being brought to the West Bank. Israeli attacks on the West Bank have dramatically accelerated since the return to power of the far-right regime of Benjamin Netanyahu in 2022. The Netanyahu government has enabled and encouraged settler violence against Palestinians and has accelerated the construction of illegal settlements.

There are now 517,000 settlers living in the West Bank, nearly double the total 20 years ago, and more than 200,000 in East Jerusalem.

Netanyahu has appointed Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich to control construction within the West Bank, and National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir is responsible for policing it. Both of these right-wing extremist government ministers are themselves West Bank settlers and have repeatedly called for the ethnic cleansing of Palestine.

In January, June and July 2023, Israel launched major assaults on the Jenin refugee camp in the West Bank.

The July raid, which killed 12 Palestinians, was condemned by the United Nations for including “egregious violations of international law and standards on the use of force and may constitute a war crime.”

These and other outrages preceded the October 7, 2023 attacks, of which the Netanyahu government had advance knowledge and which it facilitated by withdrawing security forces from the Gaza border. The Netanyahu regime seized the opportunity to initiate a genocide and ethnic cleansing of the Gaza Strip.

The Gaza genocide has been accompanied by an upsurge of settler attacks and raids by the Israeli military on the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Over the past 10 months, 652 Palestinians have been killed in these areas.

This massive crime is being funded, enabled and politically defended by the United States and its imperialist allies.

The assault on the West Bank comes just one month after the return of Netanyahu from an address to a joint session of the US Congress, in which he vowed to expand Israel’s war against the Palestinian population into a conflict throughout the Middle East, centrally targeting Iran.

Netanyahu received a standing ovation from Democratic and Republican members of both houses of Congress, followed by separate meetings with US President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris. After her meeting with Netanyahu, Harris declared, “I will always ensure that Israel is able to defend itself, including from Iran and Iran-backed militias, such as Hamas and Hezbollah”—an effective green light to expand the war beyond Gaza.

Earlier this month, the US approved a \$20 billion arms sale to Israel, including 50 F-15 fighter jets, Advanced Medium Range Air-to-Air Missiles, or AMRAAMs, 120 mm tank ammunition, high explosive mortars and tactical vehicles—specifically aimed at providing Israel with the resources necessary to expand the war beyond Gaza.

The US is supporting the genocide within the framework of its escalating global war against Russia and China. Israel is the linchpin of the Middle Eastern front of this global war, serving as the US’s attack dog against Iran and its allies in the region.

The expansion of the genocide to the West Bank demonstrates the utter failure of the perspective of the

organizations that have up to this point dominated mass protests. In the United States, they have sought to “pressure” President Biden and his chosen successor Kamala Harris to stop supporting Israel.

Harris, however, has completely rejected any limitations on US aid to the Netanyahu regime, declaring in her remarks at the Democratic National Convention, “I will always stand up for Israel’s right to defend itself, and I will always ensure Israel has the ability to defend itself.”

The total support of all sections of the US political establishment for Israel’s genocide against the people of Palestine flows from the drive by American capitalism to prop up its global hegemony through military means, of which the neo-colonial subjugation of the Middle East is a critical element.

At the July 24 demonstration against Netanyahu’s appearance at the US Capitol, members of the Socialist Equality Party explained that all efforts to place demands on capitalist politicians to stop the genocide were doomed to failure. With Israel’s massive assault on the West Bank, these warnings have proven correct.

The mounting global opposition to the genocide and ethnic cleansing of Palestine requires an entirely different strategy. It must be united with the struggle against all imperialist wars, including US imperialism’s war against Russia and China, and fused with the growing struggle of the working class to defend their jobs, wages and living standards. It must be organized on the basis of a socialist perspective, aimed at overthrowing the capitalist system that is the root cause of imperialist war and barbarism.



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