

More on the war between Israel and Hamas

The war unleashed on 7 October 2023 by the Hamas-state of the Gaza strip against the Israeli civilian population, involving a number of atrocities of unprecedented cruelty, raises various questions. These cannot be avoided on the simple pretext of condemning “on principle” every war between bourgeois states. This is why, following our previous positions on the subject¹, we need to add some supplementary points.

1. This war was not wanted by the respective populations. The violence of Hamas towards unarmed people, including some involved in humanitarian support to the inhabitants of the Gaza Strip imprisoned by the Israeli state, and others gathered for a music festival, was aimed at digging an even deeper ditch between the two populations, victims of the confrontation between the two states, the Hamas-state of the Gaza Strip and the state of Israel. This infamous action is in line with the world view of the Islamists for whom every Jew is an enemy and, by extension, every Israeli is an occupier of the soil reserved, in their statements, for the “Muslim nation”. Designating the civilians which they kidnapped as “prisoners of war” shows that they really serve as human shields and objects of sordid commerce. As a reactionary religious organisation, Hamas does not want the liberation of the Palestinians and is ready to sacrifice their lives, without any scruples², to install a theocracy across the whole region in the image of the state which it created in the Gaza Strip by a coup against Fatah³. It is a state where individual freedoms, whether it’s sexual freedom, religious freedom, freedom of movement, cultural freedom etc., are denied and political freedoms are systematically denigrated. It is a state founded on racketeering, commerce and subsidies from the capitalists of the region as well as diversion of the financial support provided to the Palestinians of the Gaza Strip by the advanced countries⁴. Some 80% of the inhabitants of Gaza live on the meagre handouts that Hamas distributes in return for submitting to its regime of tax collectors. This reactionary and fascist organisation has no legitimacy as a representative of the worthy Palestinian resistance against the segregation and colonisation which the state of Israel is responsible for. On the contrary, Hamas adds another strong dose of oppression for the Palestinians under its thumb.
2. Israel decided to reply to Hamas’s vile assault with a war against the Palestinians of the Gaza Strip. This choice, and it was a choice, is dictated by the desire to set up new barriers be-

¹ See at the end of this text.

² According to Ismaël Haniyeh, head of Hamas’s political branch: “*The blood of the women, children and elderly [...] we are the ones who need this blood, so it awakens within us the revolutionary spirit*”: <https://www.memri.org/reports/hamas-leader-ismael-haniyeh-we-need-blood-women-children-and-elderly-gaza-%E2%80%93-so-it-awakens>

³ See: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Gaza_\(2007\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Gaza_(2007))

⁴ In 2022, Palestine received \$550 million in international aid (<https://fts.unocha.org/countries/171/flows/2022>), the budget of the Gaza Strip is slightly more than \$3 billion, on average over the years 2012-2022 (<https://apnews.com/article/business-middle-east-israel-foreign-aid-gaza-strip-611b2b90c3a211f21185d59f4fae6a90>) and the official budget of Hamas is \$300 million: <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/hamas-cash-to-crypto-global-finance-maze-israels-sights-2023-10-16/>

tween the two populations concerned. Making every Palestinian into a potential enemy serves to restore a national unity seriously shaken by the grave political crisis that the country has been in for several years and which has ended up in the large-scale democratic movement against putting the Supreme Court under the control of the government. Today this movement has opted, in its public expression, for an unconditional support of the military operation against the city of Gaza, by an aerial and naval bombardment which destroys entire neighbourhoods, leading above all to death and injury for numerous civilians. And we must not forget either that, according to the first estimates of the International Labour Organization “*a minimum of 61% of employment has been lost in Gaza, equivalent to 182,000 jobs. The conflict in Gaza is also having spillover effects in the West Bank, where initial estimates suggest that around 24 per cent of employment has also been lost, equivalent to 208,000 jobs. In total [Gaza + West Bank], as of 31 October 2023, around 390,000 jobs have been lost, and these estimates are projected to only worsen if military operations in Gaza intensify*”⁵

3. The explanation given by the high command of the Israeli army is the need to spare the lives of Israeli soldiers, and it is certain that flattening the city makes invasion easier. It is patently obvious that an exclusively ground-based operation would have caused more losses among the invaders and, probably, a lot less among the Gaza civilians. Nevertheless, the supposed military rationality does not hide the political wish to divide even more the Palestinian and Israeli populations. It is a wish accompanied by a state-led campaign which presents all Palestinians as “legitimate military targets” or as inevitable collateral damage. This policy dehumanises the Palestinians so as to allow Israel to employ whatever barbarism against them that it likes. At the same time, lynchings and attempts to murder Arab civilians are increasing in Israel and the West Bank, notably by armed settlers, the fascist front line of the Tel-Aviv government. The logic of every capitalist war is to define the enemy on the basis of their passport, of their origins by ethnicity, religion, language or whatever. Contrary to what we might read and hear here and there, the Israeli state is strengthened by this war, despite the polemics thrown around by Benjamin Netanyahu’s government and its loyal opposition. The result benefits Hamas too, which can present Israel as a solid bloc hostile to all Palestinians. The military strategy chosen by Tel-Aviv, just like the armed anti-Palestinian actions of the Israeli settlers in the West Bank, therefore reinforces Hamas which feeds on the deep-seated resentment of the inhabitants of Gaza subjected to bombing and indiscriminate killing.
4. During the war, Palestinian resistance is at its lowest point. Hamas’s political hijack is succeeding. The identification of resistance with a reactionary faith-exclusive group advances inside the heads of the Palestinians who want to pursue their just struggle against colonialism and segregation. Armed Palestinian resistance against Israeli troops and settlers is perfectly justified and, such as it is, merits the critical support of revolutionaries. This resistance has for a long time had to face three significant enemies, Israel is the obvious one, and its two other internal enemies, Hamas and the PLO administration, a champion at corruption and parasitism. The resistance began to lose its political strength with the transformation of the mass armed struggle against the army of occupation into an anti-Semitism more or less

⁵ See: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_901136.pdf

avowed. The group Black September⁶, coming out of Fatah, had opened the way with its violent actions targeting non-combatant Israelis when it took Israeli athletes hostage in September 1972. Its major political defeat coincided with the signing of the Camp David Accords in September 1978⁷. These accords opened the way to the “two state solution”. This supposed solution to the “Palestinian question” definitively confined the Palestinians to something like *Bantustans* (Gaza and the West Bank) controlled by the PLO with or without all or part of Hamas – some of its leaders were not hostile to this result. At the same time, it cut the ground from under the feet of any perspective of political unification of proletarians on both sides against their respective bourgeoisies. The new version of the Palestinian state thus created would be a copy of what already existed in Gaza and the West Bank. That is to say... The idea of the Two States, formalised by the Oslo Accords, in 1993 and 1995⁸, is today supported by numerous Arab states, Turkey, Russia, China and Iran along with all the Western countries. On the other hand, the proposition of a bourgeois democratic secular state, where Palestinians and Israelis live with the same rights, is no longer the order of the day and factions who defend it have become marginal. Yet, there was a time when organisations like the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), an influential Marxist-Leninist organisation susceptible to Maoism, integrated into the PLO, pronounced in its constitution, in 1968, the formation of a “*people's democratic Palestine, where Arabs and Jews would live without discrimination, a state without classes and national oppression*”⁹. Revolutionaries can hardly adhere to this old-fashioned policy because our only perspective remains that of political unification of the dispossessed of the region, against all the states in place or in formation, with a view to proletarian revolution. Nevertheless, if this project of one state had been concretised it would have constituted an objective base more favourable to the political unification of the proletariat in the region. It went another way, and we can see the backward steps taken by the Palestinian resistance since the end of the 1960s.

5. What is to be done in the present circumstances? First of all, it has to be understood, with all the consequences involved, that this war is not in the interests of the proletarians of the two conflicting camps. Therefore, first and foremost it is necessary to fight against the bombardments from both sides. Certainly, Israeli missiles are a thousand times more effective than the rudimentary ones of Hamas or Hezbollah. But both target civilians. Consequently, it is necessary to demand that the bombardments stop. Unarmed populations must also be allowed to flee the field of battle. This has to happen in conditions completely different from those prevailing now. NGOs must be able to bring thousands of aid trucks into the Gaza strip, the strict minimum at this stage. Refugee camps equipped with all necessary infrastructures must be set up as fast as possible and placed under the exclusive control of NGOs. Hospitals must be able to function normally, with water, electricity and fuel at their disposal. Finally, very important, the Rafah passage to Egypt must be fully open for the Palestinians who want to leave Gaza. By its refusal to open it to fleeing Palestinians, the Cairo regime is complicit with Israel in imprisoning the Gazans. Once these vital basic demands are satisfied, which is still far from being the case, then the belligerents can settle their accounts however

⁶ See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_September_Organization

⁷ See: <https://www.britannica.com/event/Camp-David-Accords>

⁸ See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oslo_Accords

⁹ See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democratic_Front_for_the_Liberation_of_Palestine

they like. This plan for the immediate defence of the civilian population is prevented, by force of arms, by Hamas, which has taken all the Palestinians in Gaza hostage and uses them as human shields, exactly in the same way as the Israelis and migrant workers that they kidnapped on 7 October. This plan is also opposed by Israel which has chosen to hit as hard as possible, with some elements in its government betting on an anti-Hamas uprising by the Palestinians subjected to an exceptionally harsh siege. In any case, and independently of the tactical objectives pursued by one or other fraction of the government or opposition, the state of Israel is determined to make *all* Palestinians pay a high price. Among the enemies of both Palestinians and Israelis, we have to include the pro-Palestinian “left” of the advanced countries of capital. While pacifists call for peace now, forgetting that the blood spilt on both sides cannot be washed away by an act of unconditional common will, the pro-Palestinians turn more and more towards open anti-Semitism, describing the 7 October pogrom as an act of resistance, although some of them claim that this action was sullied by “war crimes”. In this way, including when they make this falsely humanitarian “fine distinction”, they contribute to hiding the fact that Hamas consider every Jew as an enemy to be driven out of Palestine or, at best, reduced to the present condition of the Palestinians. This is why, particularly today, revolutionaries have no other choice but to hammer home the point that the only realistic perspective which represents the interests of proletarians in the region is that of class war against all the states existing there.

Brussels, Paris, Prague, 8 November 2023

If you have not seen our previous positions on Palestine, you might want to consult:

“*Palestine: two states against the proletariat*”, Letter n°5, November 2002¹⁰.

“*Dernières nouvelles de Palestine*”, Letter n°8, March 2003¹¹ (not available in English)

“*Israeli invasion of Gaza: a new episode of warmongering electoralism*”, Letter n°29, March 2009¹².

“*The massacres in Israel and Gaza accelerate the course towards a global armed conflict that only class war can prevent*”, bulletin n°26, October 2023¹³.

¹⁰ See: <https://mouvement-communiste.com/documents/MC/Letters/LTMCO205vEN.pdf>

¹¹ See: <https://mouvement-communiste.com/documents/MC/Letters/LTMC0308.pdf>

¹² See: <https://mouvement-communiste.com/documents/MC/Letters/LTMC0929EN.pdf>

¹³ See: <https://mouvement-communiste.com/documents/MC/Leaflets/BLT2310ENvF.pdf>