

# Gaza: Solidarity with the victims of war means class struggle against all exploiters!

After two years of strangling the economy of Gaza - blockading fuel and medicines, preventing exports and stopping workers from leaving Gaza to find work on the Israeli side of the border - after turning the whole of Gaza into a vast prison camp, from which desperate Palestinians have already tried to escape by breaking through the border into Egypt, Israel's military machine is subjecting this densely populated, impoverished area to all the savagery of a virtually continuous aerial bombardment. Hundreds have already been killed and the already exhausted hospitals cannot cope with the endless stream of wounded. Israel's claims that it is trying to limit civilian casualties are a sinister joke when every 'military' target is situated next to a cluster of houses; and since mosques and the Islamic university have been openly selected as targets, the distinction between civil and military has been made entirely meaningless. The results are evident: scores of civilians, many of them children, killed and maimed, even greater numbers terrified and traumatised by the non-stop raids. At the time of writing, the Israeli PM Ehud Olmert is describing this offensive as only the first stage. Tanks are waiting at the border and a full-scale land invasion has not been ruled out.

Israel's justification for this atrocity - supported by the Bush administration in the US - is that Hamas has not stopped firing rockets at Israeli civilians despite the so-called ceasefire. The same argument was used to support the invasion of southern Lebanon two years ago. And it is true that both Hizbollah and Hamas hide behind the Palestinian and Lebanese population and cynically expose them to Israeli revenge, falsely presenting the killing of a handful of Israeli civilians as an example of 'resistance' to Israel's military occupation. But Israel's response is absolutely typical of any occupying power: punish the entire population for the activity of a minority of armed fighters. They did this with the economic blockade, imposed after Hamas ousted Fatah from control of the Gaza administration; they did it in Lebanon and they are doing it today with the bombing of Gaza. It is the barbaric logic of all imperialist wars, in which civilians are used by both sides as shields and targets, and almost invariably end up dying in far greater numbers than the uniformed soldiers.

And as with all imperialist wars, the suffering inflicted on the population, the wanton destruction of houses, hospitals and schools, has no result except to prepare the ground for further rounds of destruction. Israel's proclaimed aim is to smash Hamas and open the door to a more 'moderate' Palestinian leadership in Gaza, but even former Israeli intelligence officers (at least one of the more... intelligent) can see the futility of this approach. Speaking about the economic blockade, ex-Mossad officer Yossi Alpher said *"The economic siege of Gaza has not brought any of the desired political results. It has not manipulated Palestinians into hating Hamas, but has probably been counter-productive. It is just useless collective punishment"*. This is even more true of the air raids. As Israeli historian Tom Segev put it, *"Israel has always believed that causing suffering to Palestinian civilians would make them rebel against their national leaders. This assumption has proved wrong over and over"* (both quotes from *The Guardian* 30.12.08). Hizbollah in Lebanon was strengthened by the Israeli attack in 2006; the Gaza offensive may well have the same result for Hamas. But whether strengthened or weakened it will no doubt respond with further attacks on Israeli civilians, if not through rocket attacks, then through a revival of suicide bombings.

## The 'spiral of violence' expresses the decay of capitalism

'Concerned' world leaders like the Pope or UN general secretary Ban Ki-moon often talk about how such actions as Israel's only serve to inflame national hatred and ratchet up the 'spiral of violence' in the Middle East. All this is true: the whole cycle of terrorism and state violence in Israel/Palestine brutalises the populations and the combatants on both sides and creates new generations of fanatics and 'martyrs'. But what the Vatican and the UN don't tell us is that this descent into the hell of national hatred is the product of a social system which everywhere is in profound decay. The story is not very different

in Iraq where Sunni and Shia are set at each other's throats, in the Balkans where Serbs are pitched against Albanians or Croats, in India/Pakistan where it's Hindu against Muslim or in Africa's myriad wars where violent ethnic divisions are too numerous to mention. The explosion of these conflicts across the globe is the expression of a society which has no future for mankind.

And what we are also not told very much about is the involvement of the concerned, humanitarian, democratic world powers in stirring up these conflicts, unless we hear it from the other side of an imperialist divide. The press in Britain was not silent about the support France gave to the Hutu murder gangs in Rwanda in 1994. It is less forthcoming about the role British and American secret forces have played in manipulating the Shia/Sunni divide in Iraq. In the Middle East, America's backing for Israel and Iran and Syria's backing for Hizbollah and Hamas is out in the open, but the more 'even-handed' role played by France, Germany, Russia and other powers is no less self-serving.

The conflict in the Middle East has its own specific aspects and causes, but it can only be understood in the context of a global capitalist machine that is dangerously out of control. The proliferation of wars around the planet, the uncontrollable economic crisis, and the accelerating environmental catastrophe are all evidence of this reality. But while capitalism offers us no hope of peace and prosperity, there is a source of hope in the world: the revolt of the exploited class against the brutality of the system, a revolt expressed most graphically in Europe in the last few weeks in the movements of young proletarians in Italy, France, Germany and above all Greece. These are movements which by their very nature have put forward the need for class solidarity and the overcoming of all national and ethnic divisions. Although only in their infancy, they provide an example that can eventually be followed in those areas of the planet which are most ravaged by divisions inside the exploited class. This is no utopia: already in the past few years public sector workers in Gaza have come out on strike against the non-payment of wages almost simultaneously with public sector workers in Israel striking against the effects of austerity, itself a direct product of Israel's top-heavy war economy. These movements were hardly conscious of each other, but they still show the objective community of interests among workers of both sides of an imperialist divide.

Solidarity with the suffering populations of capitalism's war zones does not mean choosing the 'lesser evil' or supporting the 'weaker' capitalist gangs like Hizbollah or Hamas against the more obviously aggressive powers like the US or Israel. Hamas has already shown itself to be a bourgeois force oppressing the Palestinian workers - especially when it condemned the public sector strikes as being against "national interests" and when, along with Fatah, it subjected the population of Gaza to a murderous faction fight for control of the region. Solidarity with those caught up in imperialist war means rejecting both warring camps and developing the class struggle against all the world's rulers and exploiters.

WR, 1/1/09.

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## ICC Public Forums

### *A new generation of proletarians in revolt across Europe*

London, Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> January, 2pm  
Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, WC1

Birmingham, Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> February, 2pm  
Friends of the Earth Warehouse, 54a Allison Street, Digbeth

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