

Israel's Murderous Assault on the People in Gaza... And the Need to Oppose These Crimes NOW

by Alan Goodman

At this writing, a brutal wave of targeted and indiscriminate killing, destruction, and terror is being rained down on the Palestinian people in Gaza by Israel—an operation the Israelis are calling “Pillar of Defense.” Health officials in Gaza say 46 people have been killed and 440 people wounded so far in the attacks. By the time you read this, that number will be larger (there have been three reported deaths on the Israeli side). This terror and brutality—overwhelmingly hitting at non-combatants in Gaza—is fully backed by the United States, with Obama insisting over and over that Israel’s murderous bombardment of essentially defenseless people in Gaza is “self defense.”

Israel’s assaults on Gaza are taking place under cover of darkness—literally. Israeli missiles and bombs have, at this writing, knocked out power in Gaza, leaving people, hospitals, homes, and emergency responders without light. What few reports from Gaza make it into mainstream media coverage portray a reporter standing in pitch dark, describing sonic booms, earth-shaking bombs, and flames erupting high into the sky. The Israeli assault has already killed elderly people, children, and many, many other people who could not possibly be considered “combatants” in any military activity originating in Gaza.

One of those killed by the Israelis was the 11-month-old son of Jihad Misharawi, a BBC journalist who lives in Gaza. An Israeli missile hit Misharawi’s home on November 14, early in the assault, killing both his son and sister-in-law. When the Israeli missile hit Misharawi’s home, there was no military activity observed in his residential neighborhood. After the Israeli missile hit Misharawi’s house, his BBC editor tweeted, “if Israel can kill a man riding on a moving motorbike (as they did last month) how did Jihad’s son get killed.” This murder of the 11-month-old child and the sister-in-law of a BBC journalist is part of a long record of Israeli (and U.S.) killings and terror against even mainstream reporters to keep the world from seeing what Israel is doing to the Palestinians.

Only a very partial picture is available of the situation in Gaza. But what emerges from postings on social media is alarming. A doctor in Gaza posted this at Facebook two days into the attack:

Dear Friends, Gaza is under extensive Israeli military attack, in less than 2 hours, 14 military attacks against different targets in different parts of Gaza Strip, 6 were killed including 2 young girls age 4 and 7, 11 were injured, the hospitals are already lacking essential emergency medications, and citizens were called for blood donation, we do not have power, iam using UBS, the first stage of this operation has been accomplished, we expect more escalation. your solidarity means a lot at this difficult times, pass the word, this aggression, should stop now.

Again, a clear picture of the terrible human cost of the attack on Gaza is not available at this writing, and all indications are that what is leaking through Israeli blackouts and U.S. media distortion is only the surface of the death and suffering the people there are being subjected to as you read this.

And as this issue of *Revolution* is posted online and goes to press, Israel is massing troops on its border with Gaza and there is talk of a ground invasion, which would further escalate the death and destruction.

The current assault on the people of Gaza comes four years after Israel’s “Operation Cast Lead” which killed 1,400 people in Gaza and destroyed schools, hospitals and housing; and after four years of a blockade that has kept building supplies and other necessities of life from reaching Gaza. On May 31, 2010, Israeli military forces stormed the *Mavi Marmara*, one of six ships attempting to bring concrete, toys, workbooks, chocolate, pasta, and substantial medical supplies to Gaza, items that Israel banned from Gaza. Israeli commandos killed nine unarmed activists on board.

U.S. Media: Turning Reality Upside Down

It is important to highlight the utterly shameful complicity of the U.S. mainstream media in justifying all this by framing it as “Israel’s response to terror,” even when their own reports reveal a different picture.

A revealing exchange took place on the Piers Morgan show on CNN. Morgan—who himself is a mouthpiece for the interests of U.S. imperialism, but may have “lost his head” for a moment after watching a report from CNN’s reporter in Gaza depicting massive destruction and terror being rained down on people—more or less blurted out: “Gaza is, to many people, one of the key problems in the region because of the terrible oppression, whatever the right phrase is for it, of the Palestinian people there. It’s an awful place for people to try and live, isn’t it?”

He was immediately “corrected” by his guest, CNN analyst Fareed Zakaria, who said: “First, one has to say, Piers, as you did, the Israelis are justified in doing something when all these rockets are being fired at them. So there’s no question that it’s justified.”

And with that “settled,” the terms of acceptable discourse were re-set, and the discussion moved on... to critiquing how successful (or not) Israel had been at advancing the interests of Israel (and by extension, its sponsor, U.S. imperialism). And in the process, utterly upside-down terms were set as the beginning and ending point for any “analysis” that was going to come across the airwaves, and how viewers were being programmed to think.

Three Basic Defining Facts

Israel’s assault on Gaza is taking place in the context of a complex and rapidly and radically shifting political situation in the region, and in the world. There is work to do to analyze how all this is playing out right now, but a basic and sweeping analysis of the current world situation, and how to act in the face of it, can be found in Bob Avakian’s talk “Why We’re in the Situation We’re in Today... And What to Do About It: A Thoroughly Rotten System and the Need for Revolution.” The audio of this talk is available at revcom.us, and again, this provides an essential foundation for contextualizing the conflicts and upheaval in today’s world.

But in order to have any sense of how Israel and the oppression of the Palestinian people fits into the big picture, it is necessary to ground one’s understanding in three basic, objective facts that define the nature and role of Israel in the world today:

1. Israel was, and is, built literally on the blood, bones, land, and homes of the Palestinian people, stolen through terrorist ethnic cleansing that constitutes a great legal and moral crime. *As such, the state of Israel is illegitimate, and no justice—for anyone—can be found within the paradigm of the Zionist state.*

The terrorist attacks by Zionist settlers were concentrated in the “Nakba” (catastrophe): systematic, planned killing, destruction of Palestinian villages, and rape of Palestinian women in 1948 that marked the birth of the state of Israel. This has been documented, even by defenders of Zionism (even as pro-Zionist historians have sought to justify these acts). Nearly the entire population of Gaza was driven out of, or is descended from, people driven from their homes in what is now Israel.

2. Israel is a product of, and plays a special role in, enforcing the global system of capitalism-imperialism. From its conception and inception, Israel has never been mainly an expression of the aspirations of Jewish people (although there has been and is a Zionist movement among Jewish people). Instead, it is fundamentally a creation of first British imperialism (one of whose representatives said that a Zionist state would be “a little loyal Jewish Ulster’ in a sea of potentially hostile Arabism.”*) Soon after its birth, Israel became a key enforcer of the interests of U.S. imperialism in containing Arab nationalism and contending with other imperialist powers (especially the Soviet Union after capitalism was restored there). Israel’s service to U.S. imperialism ranged from providing key military assistance to Apartheid South Africa to playing a key role in overseeing the genocidal massacre of 200,000 indigenous Guatemalan peasants in the 1980s. And today, Israel continues to play an indispensable role for the U.S. empire.
3. The moral foundation on which Israel’s crimes are justified—invoking the Holocaust—is utterly *immoral*. To quote from the special issue of *Revolution*—“Bastion of Enlightenment... or Enforcer for Imperialism: The Case of ISRAEL.” (*Revolution* #213, October 10, 2010):

“Let us state in no uncertain terms that the Holocaust was clearly one of the great crimes of modern history. But on a very basic moral level: how does a crime against one people (the Jews) committed by the government of another (the Germans)—no matter how horrific that crime—justify the dispossession, exile, constant humiliation and oppression, and denial of self-determination to a third (the Palestinians)? It does not and it cannot....

“To approach this question another way, the slogan ‘Never Again’ can be taken in two ways. One way is that ‘never again shall it be allowed that crimes against humanity can go on and people will be able to plead ignorance or impotence as an excuse for doing nothing to stop those crimes’; the other way is to say that ‘never again will my people be fucked over, and anything that is done to justify preventing that is allowable.’ There is a world of difference between those two moral stands.”

And Israel, built on a foundation of ethnic cleansing, enforcing imperialist exploitation and oppression, and justified with profound immorality, is upheld by the “international community,” the great powers of the world, especially the U.S., as a “bastion of enlightenment” in the Middle East.

“Two Outmodeds,” a Basic Question of Right and Wrong, and a Need to Act

The (elected) government of Gaza—a section of Palestine not directly occupied by Israel—is Hamas, which is an Islamic fundamentalist movement aligned in various (and shifting) ways

with other Islamic fundamentalist forces. And Israel’s attack on Gaza is taking place in the context of a whole set of global conflicts, including the clash between “the West” and Islamic fundamentalist forces.

Bob Avakian speaks to that conflict this way:

What we see in contention here with Jihad on the one hand and McWorld/McCrusade on the other hand, are historically outmoded strata among colonized and oppressed humanity up against historically outmoded ruling strata of the imperialist system. These two reactionary poles reinforce each other, even while opposing each other. If you side with either of these “outmodeds,” you end up strengthening both.

While this is a very important formulation and is crucial to understanding much of the dynamics driving things in the world in this period, at the same time we do have to be clear about which of these “historically outmodeds” has done the greater damage and poses the greater threat to humanity: It is the historically outmoded ruling strata of the imperialist system, and in particular the U.S. imperialists.

—*Basics* 1:28

In the world today there is a great and urgent need for not only mass resistance to both these “outmodeds” and above all the imperialist “outmoded” —but for qualitative advances and breakthroughs for the real and fundamental alternatives to both these outmodeds: revolution led by a genuinely communist vanguard aiming for the final goal of a communist world, free of every kind of outmoded, exploitative and oppressive relation and corresponding ideas. (See “On the Strategy for Revolution” by the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA for a full presentation of what is needed for there to be a revolution, and how the work of revolutionaries, along with developments in the world, can make that possible. The statement on strategy is in *Basics* and at revcom.us.)

There is a basic question of right and wrong here: Israel’s attack on the people of Gaza is essentially a mass slaughter of civilians in the service of reactionary aims, to enforce and impose an exploitive and oppressive world order. Nobody with a basic sense of justice should be silently complicit in that! And while there have been important protests around the world, and some in the U.S., there is not anywhere near enough visible political outrage in this country.

Going back to the challenge to break out of the parameters of the “two outmodeds,” the lack of visible opposition in the U.S. to these attacks would feed the whole deadly paradigm where the two alternatives people think are possible are these “two outmodeds.”

But on the positive side, the more people around the world *do* see a force in the U.S. that is cohering around a whole other way things could be, and is, opposing the crimes of “our” government, and the more that resistance is framed in the context of a movement for revolution, this can be a really important part of a whole ensemble of work to put revolution on the map here, and around the world.

* Ulster is the name the English ruling class assigned to a section of Northern Ireland, where there has historically been a section of people who identify with and have served as enforcers for English domination of Ireland, and Ulster has been a stronghold for the English domination of Ireland.