

Palestine: Whither Israel's War on Gaza?

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It now seems probable that, by the end of this year 2023, the Zionist state will change the course of the war that it launched against the Gaza Strip and move to a new phase. The preliminary first phase of intense, insanely murderous bombing in the immediate aftermath of Operation "Al-Aqsa Flood" was followed by a second phase of ground invasion that targeted the north of the Gaza Strip, and a third phase in which the invasion moved to the southern part, focusing on Khan Yunis. Rafah has been relatively spared, so that it could serve as a refuge for the Gazan population until the Zionist leaders decide, in light of the situation on the ground and at the international level, which fate they should seek to impose on the severely afflicted territory. It was clear early on indeed that the current invasion would be determined by "what the Israeli army can achieve before a combination of losses in personnel and international pressure forces it [to stop](#)."

The preliminary bombing phase lasted three weeks. This was firstly due to the surprise that befell the Israeli military command. It was not prepared for an invasion war such as the one that the Zionist government decided to launch in response to "Al-Aqsa Flood" and hence needed time to prepare and plan for the current aggression. The second reason is that, like most rich countries' armies, Israel's armed forces have become cowardly (what well-known Israeli-American military analyst Edward Luttwak called "post-heroic"), especially when facing resistance from combatants willing to die. Israel's occupation forces therefore seek to fight wars with the lowest possible human cost among their ranks, through a very extensive use of remote warfare.

When it comes to invading urban areas, as is the case in Gaza, the consequence of this last consideration is hugely intensive destruction and a tremendous cost in civilian lives among the local population. This is indeed why the current aggression has taken on such a genocidal proportion with about twenty thousand Palestinians killed until now, the vast majority of whom are civilians, in addition to several thousand missing under the rubble. For its part, the Israeli army lost only about 125 soldiers, according to its sources. Even if the number of Israeli losses were to substantially exceed the current official number, especially since the number of wounded is quite greater than the number of dead and they include many with serious injuries, the same applies to wounded Palestinians, not to mention the number of indirect victims of the invasion and the deadly siege that accompanies it. The ongoing war hence remains a record case in the history of wars in terms of the disproportion of deaths incurred by both sides. To some extent, it resembles the unilateral use of a weapon of mass destruction on a populated area.

The Zionist army was able to seize control of most of the northern half of the Gaza Strip after destroying most of its buildings, displacing most of its people, and killing a terrifying percentage of them. It is now focusing its efforts on tightening its control over the southern half – its northern and eastern sections in particular. This happens while the worldwide protest provoked by the impressive extent of killing and destruction committed by the Zionist army is escalating, whereas the sympathy for the Israelis that followed "Al-Aqsa Flood" is gradually weakening, despite propaganda efforts

deployed to revive it. This has led to an escalation of international pressure on the Zionist government calling on it to refrain from further large-scale killing and destruction. The pressure has now been joined by the only government whose position Israel cannot afford to ignore, that of the United States, its partner in the war on Gaza without whose military and political support a war of such intensity over such a period of time would not have been possible.

The occupying forces will therefore be forced to halt the invasion and heavy bombardment a few days from now and move to a fourth phase during which they will strive to tighten control over the invaded territory, that is most of the Gaza Strip, through a “lower-intensity war” aimed at eradicating all remaining resistance in those areas and destroying the network of tunnels that lies beneath them. Israel knows that the US and other Western governments will continue to support such a fourth phase of “lower-intensity war” since they have proclaimed support from the start to the goal of eradicating “Hamas,” likened to ISIS since “Al-Aqsa Flood.” As for the longer-term goal, on which depends the nature of the fifth phase to follow, it will in turn be determined by the extent of success of the Zionist army in tightening its control over the seized areas and Israel’s ability to continue implementing the “Second Nakba” by preventing the return of a large portion of the Palestinian population to these areas – lest they turn anew into hotbeds of resistance exhausting the occupation army.

From the Israeli point of view, the prospects now range between the far-right Zionist scenario, which calls for the annexation of the Gaza Strip with the development of settler colonialism there, and the scenario imposed by the balance of power on the leadership of the Zionist state, which may be likened to a repetition in the Gaza Strip of the situation prevailing in the West Bank. Israel’s occupation army would thus control a large strategic security belt within the Gaza Strip along the strip’s borders, similar to its control over the Jordan Valley, and maintain other buffer sites between populated areas that would provide an opportunity for the establishment of a settlement movement similar to that existing in “Area C” in the West Bank. Nominal rule over the rest of the Gaza Strip would be given to a Palestinian leadership whose identity is still disputed between the Israeli government, on the one hand, and Washington and its allies on the other.

Indeed, the Biden administration wishes to hand over power in the Gaza Strip back to the Ramallah-based “Palestinian Authority” after “revitalizing” it, as called for by the US President (how this would be done is still unclear to everyone, including Biden himself and his administration). On the other hand, Netanyahu and his allies of the Zionist far right refuse the establishment of a single authority ruling over the West Bank and the Gaza Strip so as not to be pressured into giving way to the declaration of a “Palestinian state.” This is despite the fact that a state established under such circumstances could be no more in reality than a statelet deprived of sovereignty in basic matters and therefore, in essence, nothing but a continuation of the occupation.

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