

workers power

National March
for Palestine

30.03.24

Organise workers action to stop the genocide in Gaza

The famine caused by Israel's blockade on Gaza has reached such proportions that Israel's allies have been forced to acknowledge the catastrophe.

The Israeli army has killed more than 30,000 people since October and virtually the entire population of Gaza have become internally displaced refugees within what the EU foreign policy chief Josep Borell has called an 'open air graveyard'.

More than half a million people are now directly threatened by starvation, according to the UN. The situation is worst in the north of Gaza, under the direct control of the IDF. With children most at risk, premature babies are already starting to die from malnutrition. Lack of water and sanitation are accelerating the impact of disease on people weakened by hunger.

Even before the war, half of Gaza's 2.3 million inhabitants were dependent on food aid.

Vast quantities of aid are waiting on the Israeli and Egyptian sides of the border. But of the 500 lorries of food per day needed, only a fraction are permitted to enter by Israel—a daily average of just 83 in February. Several aid convoys have been attacked by Israeli forces, with dozens of Palestinians killed.

Humanitarian phrases

Israeli government ministers agitate openly of the expulsion of the Palestinian population. After five months of war, the right-wing extremist wing feels that its goal—the ethnic cleansing of Gaza—is close at hand.

Israel's allies are increasingly aware that its shameless trampling of international law, which stipulates the obligation of an occupying power to provide civilians with food and shelter, could cause the war's fragile façade of 'self-defence' to collapse completely.

The West, which solemnly invokes its respect for 'international law' when it is violated by its rivals, like Putin, recognises that its 'unconditional support' for Israel risks its 'democratic' credentials being exposed as a

hypocritical fraud.

That is what explains the sudden outburst of humanitarian concern by Israel's key allies, who have called with varying degrees of force for 'humanitarian pauses', for the border crossings to be opened, and even, in the case of Chuck Schumer, denounced Netanyahu as 'an obstacle to peace'.

But these appeals to for Israel to consider the impact of its actions on its credibility—let alone that of its allies—are just empty phrases.

Confident that the United States, UK, and EU states will continue to provide Israel with unconditional military, economic and diplomatic support, Netanyahu has been able to reject out of hand his allies' appeals to permit the entry of aid across Israel's land borders, to agree a 'humanitarian ceasefire', and to abandon his planned assault on Rafah.

He has based his calculation on two factors: first, that Israel's role as the indispensable outpost of the western imperialist order in the Middle East means they will not abandon it for the sake of the Palestinians. Secondly, and crucially, that this will remain the case for so

long as the Arab dictatorships confine themselves to symbolic protests, and the global solidarity movement is not powerful enough to force the United States to bring its Zionist gendarme to heel.

Cynical manoeuvre

Caught between their unconditional support for Israel and the charge that they are abetting the starvation of tens of thousands of people, the western leaders have conjured up a way of having their cake and eating it. Israel will be permitted to continue its siege in defiance of international law—and the west will organise food deliveries by air and sea to shield Israel from international condemnation.

The USA, France and Jordan began military airdrops of food over the war zone in early March, joined by other states including Germany in recent days. On 16 March, the first seaborne shipment was unloaded via a make-shift jetty. Israel's destruction of the territory's entire port infrastructure means it is impossible to deliver meaningful quantities of aid by sea. The planned construction of a 'floating harbour' will not change this.

While sufficient aid is waiting at every land crossing, for distribution by aid agencies with the necessary logistical capabilities, these methods can only deliver a fraction of the necessary aid, and cannot ensure it goes to those most in need. This pseudo-aid campaign is nothing more than a placebo designed to assuage popular outrage—a humanitarian cover for Israel's genocidal starvation campaign.

We do not need such pseudo-aid. Instead, the impending famine and Israel's genocidal attack must be stopped now.

● Stop the genocidal attack! Withdrawal of all IDF forces!

● Open the borders to Gaza! Aid deliveries immediately. Release all funds to the UN refugee relief organisation UNWRA.

The implementation of these immediate demands, which are themselves still far from bringing a lasting and just peace, would at least be a step towards stopping the mass starvation of civilians and the ethnic cleansing of Gaza.

Working class action

But this now requires a serious escalation of the solidarity movement. In the Arab states the working class and popular masses must demand the breaking of all relations with Israel. The Egyptian working class has the greatest power to immediately shift the balance of forces by closing the Suez canal, one of the principal arteries of profit fuelling the imperialist system.

The western trade union movement which has committed itself to the cause of Palestinian solidarity must now move from words to action. In those trade unions, which continue to support the Western policy of 'unconditional solidarity' with Israel, all internationalist,

class-struggle forces must fight together and in an organised manner for a break with this social-chauvinist policy.

The working class in the countries that supply Israel with arms and diplomatic protection has a special duty to act. This is not just Israel's war. It is a colonial war that is also being waged with the participation of several Western imperialist powers. An Israeli victory also strengthens the position of Western imperialism and thus its ruling classes. Therefore, the Palestinian struggle is also in the interest of the entire international working class.

We must redouble our efforts to fight for internationalist actions of the working class to end the war and accelerate the overthrow of the entire imperialist-backed order in the Middle East, with the aim of dismantling the Zionist state, establishing a binational democratic, secular and socialist state in all of Palestine as part of a socialist revolution in the Middle East.

WE NEED A WORKERS' BOYCOTT

Cut the supply chains, stop the factories and boats, end the funding!

PALESTINIAN TRADE unions have issued a call for solidarity from the international labour movement, calling on workers to refuse to build or transport weapons to Israel, to break links with companies complicit in the occupation, and pressure their governments to end military trade and funding to Israel.

Israel carries out the colonisation of Palestine and the collective punishment of those who resist under the cover of unconditional military, financial and diplomatic support from the western powers.

Faced with the UK's complicity with Israel's genocidal assault on Gaza, it is the duty of the British labour movement to act on the appeal for solidarity from our Palestinian sisters and brothers.

This takes on even more importance faced with the Labour party leadership's attempt to silence internal criticism of its pro-Zionist policy and ban public expressions of solidarity with Palestine.

A first step has been taken by young trade unionists who blockaded a subsidiary of Israeli arms company Elbit in Kent on Thursday morning. Elbit has been the target

of a long running campaign by direct action group Palestine Action in Leicester, Bristol and elsewhere.

The value of UK military exports to Israel is low compared to other countries. But the UK hosts an arms industry of world importance, providing access to skilled workers, a chain of production, and research, exchange and collaboration with Israel's two most important security partners, the US and UK. This gives the UK importance to the Israeli war machine well beyond the monetary value of exports.

All Israel-UK trade contributes to supporting or legitimising Israel's occupation. But Israel is now a developed capitalist country, exporting pharmaceuticals, luxury goods and industrial products. Consumer boycotts are ineffective because they can't really dent the bosses' pockets, and, more importantly, they limit solidarity to the sphere of individual acts of conscience, instead of opening the road of struggle for workers' control in the workplace.

What we need is a campaign of workers' sanctions to boycott the production, transport and sale of all trade with the Apartheid state. Transport, logistics and distribution workers and their unions have the power to exercise supervision and control over goods bound for and from Israel. No worker should have to take responsibility for propping up an Israeli economy based on the expropriation, exploitation and plunder of the Palestinians.

The anti-union laws make such 'secondary action' illegal. They are designed to prevent workers taking effective solidarity action, not just within Britain, but internationally. But mass action can render the laws unenforceable. Trade union leaders should support all unofficial action and call on the TUC to back workers' sanctions against the apartheid state. At a minimum, Labour affiliated unions should speak out and demand Keir Starmer retract his shameful support for Israel's genocidal war. If he doesn't, unions should withhold funds and support.

The fight for effective solidarity with Palestine shows how workers can make the idea that 'their struggle is our struggle' reality, not just a slogan. Effective action means defying an unjust law, but it also means breaking with the trade union leaders who, when the time comes for action not words, put legality, and loyalty to capitalism and the British state before international solidarity. To fight for workers' control over production and transport means fighting for workers' control over our unions.

