

Solidarity with the victims of war

The atrocity in Gaza

As the dust settles, the extent of the atrocities which the Israeli state has committed against the population of the Gaza strip has become clear. Thousands are dead, killed in the savage bombing of one of the most densely populated places on earth. Israel has used banned white phosphorous munitions in civilian areas, shelled aid convoys, schools, shelters and mosques full of people. It has destroyed aid stockpiles with white phosphorous shells. Over 90,000 people have been displaced. Gaza's economy and infrastructure, already devastated by the blockade, have been destroyed. With the ceasefire in place, the continued blockade will mean further war against the civilian population by other means.

A two state solution?

As the bombs rained down every party and group put forward their vision for 'fixing' the problem and their vision of the future for Palestinians. But understanding what we can't do is the first step to understanding what we can. We have to be clear about the ways we can stop such atrocities happening.

A 'two state solution' based on 1949 or 1967 borders isn't going to come about except through a massive change in the global balance of power. This will inevitably lead to more conflicts elsewhere. Two states with borders as they currently stand would create a Palestine as dominated by Israel as the territories are now. Even if the 'one state solution' became a reality, the Palestinian working class would remain an underclass of cheap labourers. It would be like the end of Apartheid in South Africa. The colour of those in charge changed but left the vast population in the same dreadful state of poverty and hopelessness as before.

It is also true that we cannot call on 'our' state to rein in Israel. Firstly, the state will not concede anything to us unless the working class – the vast majority of us who can only live off our ability to work for others – is in a confident enough position to force those concessions through collective action. Secondly, it is madness to expect Britain to impose 'civilised' behaviour on an ally such as Israel. Britain has taken part in the occupation in Iraq which has resulted in the deaths of 1,033,000 people. The only state which has any ability to rein in Israel is the US. The US will only do this when Israel's actions threaten its national interest. Moral outrage will not win out over dominating the region.

Solidarity with working class struggles

We must stand in firmly in solidarity with the victims of state warfare. The terrorised population of Gaza did not heed Hamas' call to resist through 'martyrdom', or to undertake suicide attacks. They fled en masse. They showed no willingness to carry out a 'resistance' on behalf of their masters which would have meant certain death. Whilst Palestinians fled the onslaught, demonstrations were held in Israel by those refusing to serve the war machine. These refusals to heed the call of the state or the ruling party to fight deserve our support and solidarity.

We cannot support Hamas, or any of the other factions in Gaza or the West Bank against Israel, however 'critically'. Hamas' record of repressing the attempts of workers to improve their living conditions is well known. They have escorted striking teachers back to work at gunpoint, and have closed down medical facilities where staff attempted to strike. Both Hamas and Fatah have made kidnapping and assassination attempts on the same trade unionists. Hamas execute those forced by necessity into sex work, and persecute gays and lesbians. They offer as little to ordinary Palestinians as their rivals in secular nationalist groups, such as Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, who attacked the Palestine Workers Radio for stoking internal conflicts. Real internationalism means recognising that the rulers and ruled within a 'nation' have nothing in common. In this case, this means supporting the efforts of ordinary Palestinians to improve their conditions. We support them against either Israel, as in the struggles organised by village committees in the West Bank, or against the 'resistance' movements which police the population.

Our solidarity must be with the victims of war. These are overwhelmingly Palestinian but also workers, Jewish, Arab and others, killed by mortars and rockets in Israel. This cannot be because of their race, nationality, or religion, but because they are living, thinking, feeling and struggling human beings. And we must stand against all those who would sacrifice them to their own ends. Ultimately the only solution to endless global conflict and war is for working class people, the dispossessed majority who must sell their time and energy to those who own and control society, to struggle in our interests collectively, against their exploitation, and against divisions such as gender and race. This means struggle against the capitalist system which creates endemic war and which must exploit us to survive. From this we can set about taking control of our own lives, and putting an end to a world of warring states and states-in-waiting which has produced atrocities such as those in Gaza.