

Israel's War in Gaza Enters 80th Day

The Israeli war in the Gaza Strip enters its 80th day. The famous Israeli Merkava tank, which recently underwent full modernization, is exploding in the face of Hamas RPG rounds called "Al Yaseen," which translates from the Arabic "اليسين," as the intense urban fighting within narrow alleyways, small thoroughfares, or single lane roads calls into question the assumption that radio controlled, mechanized, modern armor may escort infantry troops in densely packed cities. Multiple reports, for instance, indicate that Hamas' ability to exploit its rocket propelled grenades (*henceforth* RPGs) has resulted in a significant loss of Israeli armor.

In a report published by the Lebanese television channel, ArabyTV, the reporter reports that the IDF has lost more than 46 units of Israeli military armor. These losses appear to amount to more than 10% of the IDF's invasion force, a significant amount. Despite the obvious political bias ArabyTV maintains for Hamas, ArabyTV's news reports published on YouTube appear to provide documented evidence of the urban warfare battles the IDF is waging against Hamas.

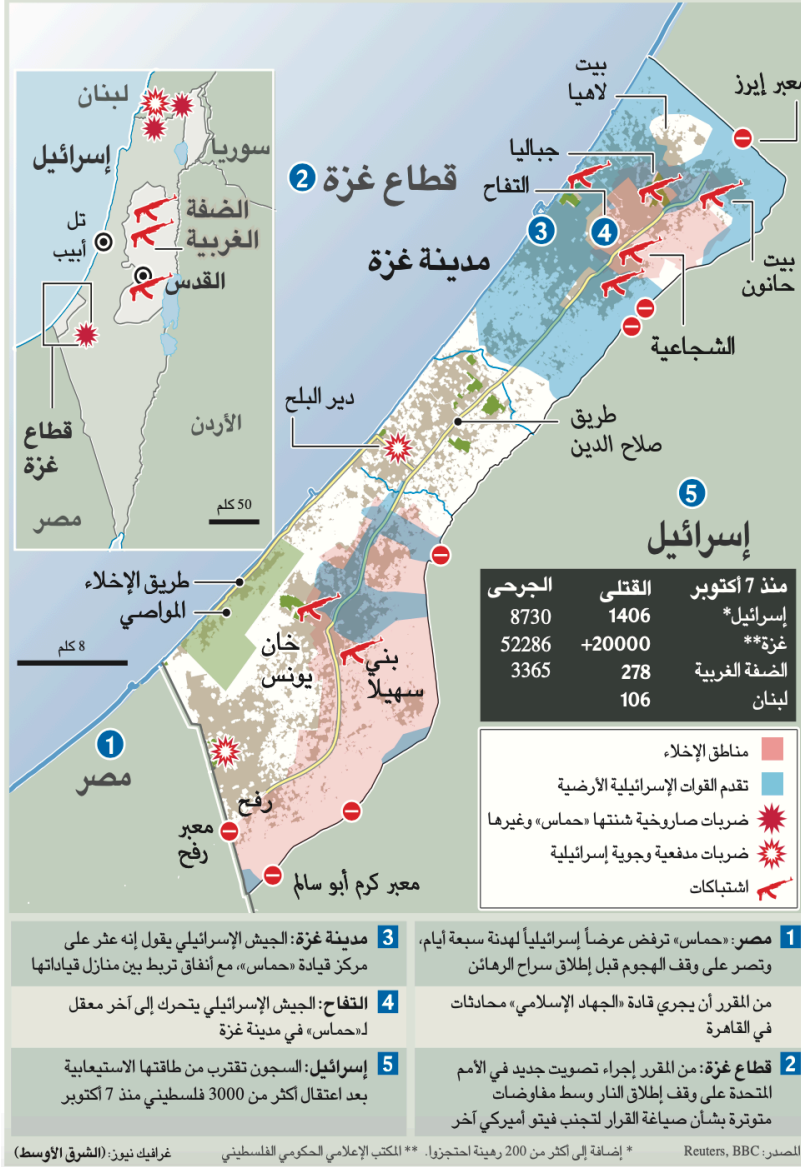
The reporter reports that Israel has lost more than 136 soldiers. 136 soldiers is a significant amount. Many videos of the videos published on ArabyTV's YouTube channel purportedly display the reactions of Israeli soldiers to the loss of their fellow comrades-in-arms. It is generally uncharacteristic of the Israeli soldier to display emotion, especially on camera. It is not that Israeli soldiers are emotionless.

It is that the Israeli "sabra" mentality is constituted in such a way as to internalize loss ahead of a reflection towards a premeditated response. The Israeli "sabra" mentality, which was on full display in the previous operations, especially in 2014, executed revenge on Gilad Shalit's captives in a ruthless display of power. The fact that the Israelis, who appear in these videos, are visibly upset is an indication of the war's devastating impact. The current war has impacted Israelis in a way that no previous eruption of violence has.

The October 7th attack on Israeli civilians is a heinous, unjustified, terrorist attack that members of the working class should condemn in the strongest terms. Hamas itself is a terrorist organization. Hamas, which leverages as much as possible from the legendary, decades old Israeli siege of the Gaza Strip for its own political purposes, takes advantage of the most backward characteristics of Gaza workers.

الحرب الإسرائيلية على غزة

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Many of the workers in Gaza, for instance, are illiterate, ignorant of history, or disorientated, above all, for lack of a political perspective. Hamas' defense of citizens within the Gaza Strip, however, is a legitimate exception to the terrorist organization's activities outside of the Gaza Strip. Hamas' defense of citizens within the Gaza Strip, which consists of Hamas arming citizens with RPGs, is stalling the much larger, better equipped, more logistically sound Israeli Defense Force's progress, namely, in Khan Younis, a city south of Gaza city.

On December 26th, 2023, the *Wall Street Journal* published an article entitled “Egypt Offers New Gaza Peace Plan.” It stated that Israel is still “in the process of establishing operational control over [Khan Younis’s] main routes,” even though Israel entered the city at the beginning of its expansion of the war into a territorial invasion of the Gaza Strip, the second phase of its multi-prong operation.

The fact that Israel has not succeeded in establishing “operational control” over the lines of communication, above or below ground, in the city, which is considered to be the primary, key, strategic stronghold for Hamas, is an indication of the degree of challenge Hamas continues to present to the Israeli Defense Forces in an area already well under siege. It would seem that after no less than a few days Israel’s military would have been in a position to declare its control over the roads leading in or out of the city. The fact that it has not indicates the lack of control the IDF has over Khan Younis, if not the Gaza Strip.

Egypt’s recently proposed “peace” plan, “a copy of which was reviewed by the *Wall Street Journal*” but not published in its aforementioned article, mentions “comprehensive” terms but the terms are hardly comprehensive. Indeed, the Egyptian “peace” plan, however, falls short.

The plan, the “most comprehensive to be proposed to the two parties in the 11 week-old Gaza” war, includes a call for “the release of Israeli hostages” such as “children, women, and elderly in need of urgent medical attention, in exchange for the release of around 140 Palestinian prisoners” in its first phase. In the “second and third phases, Israel and Hamas would negotiate the release of female Israeli soldiers, followed by male Israeli soldiers in return for large numbers of Palestinian prisoners.” It is clear from nothing more than a cursory view, the “peace” plan comprehends nothing more than a sudden arrangement for the exchange of captives or prisoners than any attempt at all for a resolution of the war, let alone the conflict itself.

The Israeli war in Gaza is not a war that Israel can win anymore than it is a war that Hamas militants can win. These two peoples have been fighting each other since Israel’s founding in 1948; both of these people know their neighbors extremely well, speaking both languages, and live in close proximity. The two sides know how to exploit each other’s weaknesses to certain and devastating advantage, as is clear both from October 7th and the current Israeli 2023 invasion of the Gaza Strip.

This is not an ordinary conflict like the one in Ukraine (where Russia's defense of its eastern border contains more than three centuries of conflict from a battle with Charles XII in 1709 in Pultowa to Napoleon's invasion of Moscow in 1812). Nonetheless, the Israeli war, like all wars, is a reflection of a breakdown in a historical process, the likes of which are almost completely indifferent to religion, language, or territory.

It is often the case, for instance, the Hamas unilaterally declares any withdrawal of Israel's IDF from any aspect of the Gaza Strip a "retreat." The "day after," as current terminology defines the war's end, most certainly entails an Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. Despite whatever tactical, operational, or strategic goals either side may attempt to espouse for victory celebration in the immediate aftermath of the war, the Israeli war in Gaza is rooted, however, in a dimension far beyond the unique psychological and geographical propensities of the two warring parties.

The reality is far more complex. It is a direct result of the recurrent breakdown of a historical process arising from a profound shift in the global standing of the United States. The power the United States wielded for holding the two warring parties at bay with various policies of appeasement has given way. The policy of appeasement with political, military, or 'humanitarian' aid, visas for international travel, study or leisure, or bilateral negotiations for the establishment of a "two-state solution," exploited by both sides at the behest of the United States for an untold number of motives altogether ulterior to its actual implementation, is no longer able to contain the enormous pressure the increasingly rapid descent of American power in the Middle East continues to accrue, as the wars in the Gaza Strip continue to recur.

In addition, the United States, for instance, could not contain Benjamin Netanyahu, whose ideology the Socialist Equality Party erroneously labels "fascistic" in the complete absence of any details on a mass movement of the Israeli petite-bourgeoisie. The United States could neither constrain his far right ideology nor his response to the crisis of American imperialism in the wider Middle East.

Within Israel the masses of Israeli workers, who fought to no avail against Benjamin Netanyahu's undoubtedly far right consolidation of control over the country[1], are, for instance, no constituency for a mass movement of the Israeli petite-bourgeoisie; these workers are opposed to Netanyahu, despite whatever temporary support he may enjoy as a result of the haphazard war. Of Netanyahu's coming to power, the *Journal* noted: "Netanyahu regained power late last year,

[establishing] what is widely viewed as the most right-wing, ultranationalist and religiously conservative government in Israel's history.”[1]

Netanyahu's refusal, for instance, to fund the Palestinian Administration is a clear example of Israel's conscious decision to defy the dictates of Washington's requirements for the maintenance of its power in Israel. The Palestinian Administration, whose entire bureaucracy is dependent upon Israel for its functionality, has not received a single Israeli “shekel” since Netanyahu openly refused to release the income the PA collects nominally in taxes from its residents in the West Bank.

Netanyahu's refusal is despite the concessions he promised to guarantee. In September a “senior Biden administration official said Biden and Netanyahu had a constructive discussion over compromises that would be required by Israel to the Palestinians as part of any Saudi deal.” In the article quoted above from the *Journal*, Netanyahu is said to have “set normalization with Saudi Arabia as one of his chief reasons for returning to office, alongside presenting Iran from producing nuclear weapons.”[1]

No less so could the United States overcome the enormous pressure from Hamas, whose ideology of terror is to be viewed with disdain equal to that of Netanyahu's far right attempt at consolidation of executive control (which is his goal), to respond to Israel's continued attacks, most especially, in the West Bank. Neither of these political parties and ideologies offer a political perspective for the working masses in the Middle East any more than the United States itself can keep either party at bay.

There is, however, a more serious consequence for what is at stake in the Israeli invasion of the Gaza Strip. The United States, which worked tirelessly prior to the outbreak of hostilities to facilitate the growth of Israel's bilateral relations with Saudi Arabia, is constrained most of all by concerns about the viability of its own currency. Saudi Arabia announced at the beginning of the year its willingness to settle transactions for oil in the Chinese Yuan, undermining the role of America's petrodollar.

In an article published by the news monitoring agency, תיק דבקה, on March 7th, 2022, the author, who died in 2023, mentioned how the Saudi Crowned Prince Mohammed ben Salman (i.e., MbS) refused to answer a desperate call from the Biden administration over the rising price of oil (which began to approach \$134 a barrel at the time). The author mentions how MbS received an offer from the

Chinese President Xi Jinping to settle oil contracts with China in the Chinese Yuan in exchange for a catalogue of Chinese weaponry MbS could receive at will.

In a sign of the seriousness of these allegations, the number of non-dollar contracts for settling transactions for commodities such as oil are on the rise. In a recent article published by the *Wall Street Journal* entitled “The Dominant Dollar Faces Competition in the Oil Market,” the newspaper reported how no less than “[twelve] major commodities contracts settled in non dollar currencies in 2023, compared with seven in 2022.” In the period from 2015 to 2021 there were only two contracts settled in a currency other than the dollar. This is, indeed, a sharp rise in comparison to the period immediately following Israel’s 60 day war in the Gaza Strip in 2014.

It points to a shift in the global standing of the United States throughout the Middle East, most especially in the territories of the former Ottoman Empire. Israel and Saudi Arabia figured prominently into to the Ottoman Empire’s 1638 borders. These countries, which to a certain extent have benefited from America’s geopolitical standing after WWII, have strayed as American power has. The original deal struck by Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1945 with the King Abdulaziz Ibn bin Saud, for instance, no longer holds sway in many negotiations, including but limited to oil.

With the dollar’s central role in commodities, especially for oil, facing economically differentiating challenges from the Chinese Yuan, the Indian Rupee, the dirham from the United Arab Emirates, or the Russian Ruble, the United States is no longer able to wield the power it once enjoyed in the Middle East to ensure peace.

It is within the context of the decline of the American petrodollar that United States has been unable to advance its plan for the unification of Saudi Arabia with Israel, for which peace with the Palestinians is a necessary precondition. Should the United States fail to require Saudi Arabia to settle its oil contracts in petrodollars for lack of peace in Israel, Saudi Arabia’s adoption of the Chinese Yuan could further degrade America’s geopolitical standing not just in Middle East but for Israel.

[1] - [Biden-Netanyahu Meeting Focuses on Israel-Saudi Ties, *WSJ*, September 21st, 2023]