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Palestine -- Latest Developments

Israel Steps Up Slaughter of Palestinians in Rafah

On February 9, the office of the Israeli Prime Minister said: "It is impossible to achieve the goal of the war without eliminating Hamas, and by leaving four Hamas battalions in Rafah. On the contrary, it is clear that intense activity in Rafah requires that civilians evacuate the areas of combat." "Therefore," the statement continued, "Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has ordered the IDF [Israel Defense Force] and the security establishment to submit to the Cabinet a combined plan for evacuating the population and destroying the battalions."



Rafah from the air, February 8, 2024

In a February 11 call, U.S. President Joe Biden told Netanyahu that Israel should not launch a military operation in Rafah "without a credible and executable plan for ensuring the safety of and support for the more than one million people sheltering there." No evacuation plans from the IDF have been forthcoming as of February 12, while Israeli attacks on Rafah have been escalating.



In overnight Israeli attacks from the air and sea on the evening of February 11-12, at least 67 Palestinians were killed, the Gaza Health Ministry reported. Starting overnight February 8-9, Israel had stepped up air strikes in Rafah, that night hitting two residential buildings near the Kuwaiti Hospital, with estimates of 14 people killed in the bombing.

As of the afternoon of February 12, at least 28,340 people have been killed by Israel's genocidal war on Gaza, including more than 12,500 children and 8,300 women. More than 67,984 have been wounded, including 8,663 children and 6,327 women. More than 7,000 people are missing.

The UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) informed on February 10 that "Increased airstrikes in Rafah have heightened fears which would further hamper overstretched humanitarian operations. Nearly 1.5 million people are in Rafah, six times the population in comparison with before 7 October [2023]."

Catherine Russell, head of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) stated, "We need Gaza's last remaining hospitals, shelters, markets and water systems to stay functional." She said, "Without them, hunger and disease will skyrocket, taking more child lives."

"Intense fighting in/around Khan Yunis (southwest of Gaza) over the last three weeks is causing loss of life and damage to civilian infrastructure, including UNRWA's largest shelter in the southern area, the Khan Yunis Training Centre (KYTC). This is forcing thousands of Palestinians to flee further south towards Rafah, which is severely overcrowded, with reports of Israeli Forces' strikes in Rafah on 7 February. The Director of UNRWA Affairs in Gaza expressed concern at the prospect of an Israel military offensive in Rafah which could result in hundreds of thousands of people fleeing the fighting and warned that the agency 'will not be able to effectively or safely run operations from a city under assault from the Israeli army.'"

On February 9, U.S. National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby claimed that, "Any major military operation in Rafah at this time, under these circumstances, with more than a million -- probably more like a million and a half -- Palestinians who are seeking refuge and have been seeking refuge in Rafah without due consideration for their safety would be a disaster, and we would not support it." The Biden administration also warned Israel not to wage such a campaign during Ramadan which takes place from March 20 to April 8 this year. This is seen as telling Israel to hurry up.

Biden even issued a special memo on February 9 which declares the U.S. must maintain an "appropriate understanding of foreign partners' adherence to international law," including, as applicable, international human rights law and international humanitarian law. It calls for "credible and reliable written assurances" from the foreign country receiving U.S. military aid "that it will use it in accordance with international humanitarian law and, as applicable, other international law." The memo also states, "If the credibility or reliability of assurances given by the recipient country has been called into question, the Secretary of State or the Secretary of Defense shall report to the president within 45 days of such assessment and outline appropriate next steps to be taken to assess and remediate the situation." Yet Biden continues to push Congress for \$14 billion more in immediate funding for Israel.



Situation in West Bank

Israeli Security Forces (ISF) continue attacks in the West Bank, with homes being searched and people being detained or killed. For example, from February 6-7, more than a dozen operations took place. In one incident, UNRWA informs that the "ISF surrounded a Palestinian house in Al Damaj quarter in Nur Shams refugee camp, targeted it with missiles, set it on fire, demolished parts of it, killing three Palestinians and injured two Palestinians with live ammunition, including a woman. UNRWA services were severely affected."

As of February 12, at least 390 people in the West Bank, including more than 102 children, have been killed by Israel, while more than 4,450 have been injured.

In related news, on February 12, Francesca Albanese, UN Special Rapporteur on the occupied Palestinian territories (the Gaza Strip and the West Bank) was banned from entering Israel in retaliation for her comments on the events of October 7, 2023. In a February 10 tweet she said, "The victims of 7/10 were not killed because of their Judaism but in response to Israel's oppression. France & the international community did nothing to prevent it." Her comment was a response to a remark by French President Emmanuel Macron who portrayed Operation Al-Aqsa Flood as "the largest anti-Semitic massacre of our century." Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz and Interior Minister Moshe Arbel in a joint statement said that "If the UN wants to return to being a relevant body, its leaders must publicly disavow the anti-Semitic words of the special envoy -- and fire her immediately."



Palestinian Red Crescent organizes a march with the participation of officers and ambulances in the city of Hebron, February 11, 2024, to denounce crimes in Gaza.

Israel Continues to Block Delivery of Humanitarian Aid



Israel bombs truck delivering humanitarian aid, February 5, 2024

On February 8, Philippe Lazzarini, Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) said: "The last time UNRWA was allowed to deliver food north or Wadi Gaza was on 23 January." "Since the beginning of the year, half of our aid mission requests to the north were denied," he said. "At least 300,000 people living in the area depend on our assistance for their survival," Lazzarini said.

Hamas Response to "Paris Ceasefire Proposal" and Israel's Rejection

On February 7, the resistance organization Hamas formally gave its response to the General Framework for a Comprehensive Agreement among the Parties, i.e. the Paris initiative. The proposal was brokered by Egypt and Qatar and sent to Hamas on February 2. News reports state that it calls for a two-month ceasefire to allow for the release of some 100 Israelis held captive by the Palestinian resistance, in exchange for an unspecified number of the over 9,000 Palestinian prisoners held by Israel; an increase of humanitarian aid into Gaza and exchange of captured Israeli soldiers and bodies of Israelis killed in Gaza. The following day, on February 2, Hamas announced that the Palestinian resistance organizations were discussing the proposal. "Our stance towards any deal is based on one priority, which is halting the aggression on the entire Palestine and the blockade of Gaza, as well as rebuilding Gaza and the swap deal."

Arabic news outlet *Al Mayadeen* subsequently elaborated on the unified position of the Palestinian resistance movements who did not find a number of elements of the Paris proposal satisfactory. Most importantly, there was no clause confirming a ceasefire after the truce ends and no regional or international guarantees that the Israeli occupation would not resume hostilities once Israelis held in captive by the resistance forces were released. Also it offered no guarantees that Israel would withdraw from Gaza; no measures for reconstruction, temporary housing, rebuilding of hospitals, schools and other infrastructure in Gaza. Citing resistance sources close to the situation, *Al Mayadeen* reported: "The Resistance cannot hand over its trump card, the military captives, without a guaranteed ceasefire, a withdrawal of the Israeli occupation forces, and an agreement on reconstruction and lifting the siege."

The February 7 response from Hamas came as a fully elaborated counterproposal which states: "This agreement aims to stop the mutual military operations between the parties, achieve complete and lasting calm, exchange prisoners between the two sides, end the blockade on Gaza, reconstruction, return of residents and displaced persons to their homes, and provide shelter and relief requirements for all residents in all areas of the Gaza Strip, according to the following stages: ..." It goes on to set out three stages of implementation.

First Stage (45 Days), referred to as the humanitarian phase. The text sets out six specific actions to be taken during this initial phase, including:

- 1) A temporary cessation of military operations, cessation of aerial reconnaissance and redeployment of Israeli forces away from populated areas in the entire Gaza Strip;
- 2) the release of Israeli detainees from among women and children (under the age of 19, not conscripted), the elderly and the sick, in exchange for a number of Palestinian prisoners;
- 3) entry of necessary and sufficient quantities for the population's needs (to be determined) of humanitarian aid and fuel daily, allowing appropriate quantities of humanitarian aid to reach all areas in the Gaza;
- 4) reconstruction of hospitals across the Strip and introducing what is necessary for establishing population camps/tents for sheltering the population, and resumption of all

humanitarian services provided to the population by the United Nations and its agencies;

5) beginning of (indirect) negotiations regarding the requirements necessary for restoring complete calm; and

6) that agreement on the measures of the first phase being integral "with the agreement on details of the second and third stages during the implementation of the first stage."

Second Stage (45 Days). "The completion of (indirect) negotiations regarding the requirements necessary for the continued cessation of mutual military operations and return to a state of complete calm must be announced before implementing the second stage." It would see the release of all detainees (civilian and conscripts), withdrawal of Israeli forces outside the borders of all Gaza Strip areas, the start of construction of housing and infrastructure destroyed throughout Gaza Strip and the complete end of the siege on the Gaza Strip.

Third Stage (45 Days). "This stage aims at exchanging the bodies and remains of the deceased between the two sides after identification, and continuation of humanitarian measures from the first and second stages, according to what will be agreed upon in the first and second stages."

The agreement calls for "Stopping the incursions and aggression by Israeli settlers on Al-Aqsa Mosque and returning the situation in Al-Aqsa Mosque to what it was before 2002"; "opening of all crossings with the Gaza Strip, resumption of trade, and allowing the freedom of movement of individuals and goods without obstacles"; "Ensuring all wounded men, women, and children are allowed to receive treatment abroad without restrictions," among others.

The text designates that "Egypt and Qatar will lead efforts with all necessary parties to manage and supervise the guarantee [for] the implementation, including: providing sufficient heavy equipment for clean up, the requirements of the Ministry of Health, the reconstructing of hospitals and bakeries, establishing camps for residents, introducing no less than 60,000 temporary homes (such that 15,000 homes enter the Gaza Strip each week), 200,000 shelter tents (at rate of 50,000 tents per week), rebuilding infrastructure in all areas, rehabilitating electricity, telecommunications and water works and development of a reconstruction plan to be realized within no more than three years."

It calls for resumption of all humanitarian services provided to the population by the UN and its agencies, especially the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees; resupplying the Gaza Strip with fuel necessary to operate power generation stations in all parts of the Gaza Strip, the occupation's commitment to supply Gaza with its electricity and water needs and ongoing negotiations "regarding the requirements necessary for the continued cessation of mutual military operations and return to a state of complete and mutual calm."

Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu immediately dismissed the written proposals submitted by Hamas. He reiterated his claim about "the inevitability of achieving a crushing victory" over the resistance of the Palestinian people. "After Hamas is destroyed Gaza will be demilitarized and there is only one force that can ensure Israel's security. That means Israel will operate in Gaza wherever and however long is needed to ensure terrorism does not lift its head again," he added.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stated he has ordered troops to "prepare to operate" in Rafah, which at that time was the last major town in the Gaza Strip Israeli ground troops had yet to enter.

Following a U.S. State Department statement on February 8, that the U.S. would not support Israel sending ground troops into Rafah without a plan to evacuate civilians, Netanyahu said he ordered the military to prepare such a plan.

It is estimated as many as 1.5 million Palestinians have taken refuge in the town and surrounding area after fleeing Israeli bombardment elsewhere in Gaza.

Mass Demonstrations in Major Centres Throughout Middle East

In downtown Ramallah in the West Bank, Palestinians demonstrated in Al-Manara Square against the ongoing Israeli war on the Gaza Strip.

A large demonstration was also held in Baghdad, Iraq, in protest against the Israeli crimes in the Gaza Strip.

Jordanians demonstrated in the Jordan Valley complex area along the Jordan-Israel border to protest the ongoing Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip. The protesters called for the inauguration of a land aid bridge to the Gaza Strip, the cancellation of the Jordanian-Israeli peace agreement, the closure of the Israeli embassy in Amman, supporting Palestinian resistance and stopping the transfer of goods to Israel.

In the Yemeni capital Sana'a, a massive demonstration was held in Al-Sabeen Square in support of the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip. Similar rallies were also organized in the Yemeni cities of Ma'rib and Taiz.

Opposition to Canada's Stepped Up Military Aid to Israel

After weeks of questions from independent media outlet *The Maple* and human rights advocates, Global Affairs Canada admitted that it has authorized new permits for unspecified military exports to Israel since October 7, 2023. In a statement sent to *The Maple* at the end of January, Global Affairs described the goods as "non-lethal equipment." An arms monitoring expert told *The Maple* that that term does not have a fixed legal definition, meaning that the exports could include items that are being used by Israel in its brutal genocide on Gaza. *The Maple* reported on February 10 that "The Trudeau government authorized at least \$28.5 million of new permits for military exports to Israel during the first two months of the state's brutal war on Gaza, data supplied [...] by Global Affairs Canada (GAC) shows." The amount of arms exported in these two months alone exceeds the \$26 million of military exports to Israel in 2021, at that time the highest amount in 30 years.

The release of figures from GAC follows the January 26 ruling of the International Court of Justice ordering provisional measures to prevent acts of genocide in Gaza, that apply not only to Israel but all those countries who are signatories to the Genocide Convention, including Canada. Since the ruling, various organizations have called on the Trudeau Liberal government to uphold its obligations under international law.

For example, on January 26, the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) issued a statement following the ICJ ruling calling on the Canadian government to take all steps necessary to ensure Israel's compliance with the ICJ decision and to impose an arms embargo on Israel. CUPE also repeated its call for an immediate ceasefire.

Countries Suspend Arms Exports to Israel

Spain has suspended all arms sales and exports to Israel, citing Israel's ongoing war on the Gaza Strip and the crimes against Palestinians that the occupation is committing.

The local government of the Walloon region in Belgium has temporarily suspended two

ammunition export licenses to Israel, Christophe Collignon, a minister in the Walloon parliament said. "The January 26 order of the International Court of Justice, the main judicial organ of the United Nations, as well as the unacceptable deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, led the Minister-President to suspend the valid licenses temporarily." The suspension comes just days after Israel bombed a Belgian development agency building in Gaza City on January 31, following Belgium's refusal to pull its funding from UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees.

Growing Opposition in United States to Zionist War Crimes



Minneapolis City Council passed ceasefire resolution on February 8, 2024

On February 8, many thousands of high school and college students across the U.S. walked out in support of Palestine, demanding an end to U.S. aid and divestment from monopolies supporting the Israeli genocide. Many students faced lockdowns and a heavy police presence, such as William Claude Reavis, Amos Alonzo Stagg and Carl Sandburg high schools in the Chicago area. Students and unions have also played a main role in getting at least 49 cities in the United States to ratify resolutions calling for a ceasefire in Gaza, including Atlanta, Chicago, Detroit, Minneapolis, San Francisco, Long Beach, Seattle and most recently Minneapolis. Many resolutions also demand immediate food, water, medicines and fuel for Gaza, an end to the siege and an end to U.S. aid to Israel.

Minneapolis City Council passed its resolution on February 8 for a second time. A crowd of people supporting the resolution chanted "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free" after councillors voted to override the mayor's veto of their resolution that was initially passed on January 25. It calls on Minnesota's state and federal delegations, as well as the Biden administration, to "Advance a full, immediate and permanent ceasefire" in the Gaza Strip, provide humanitarian aid and to "Support an end to U.S. military funding to the State of Israel and an end to U.S. tax dollars contributing to humanitarian catastrophe and loss of life." It also calls for the release of all Israeli hostages being held captive by Hamas and the release of "thousands of Palestinians held indefinitely without cause and trial in Israeli military prisons."

On January 31, Chicago City Council voted 24-23 in favour of a ceasefire resolution with the mayor breaking a tie vote to pass the resolution. This occurred despite efforts to block resistance using postponement of the vote. People and unions city-wide responded with more organizing, persistent demonstrations, packing city hall and lining up to speak in favour of the resolution. The broad demand for a ceasefire was such that the mayor went from opposing the resolution to voting in favour.

The Service Employees International Union (SEIU), one of the largest unions with close to two million members, on January 22, called for an immediate ceasefire and "the delivery of life-saving food, water, medicine and other resources to the people of Gaza." A resolution calling for a ceasefire, restoring rights and providing humanitarian aid and an end to the siege promoted by the United Auto Workers (UAW), the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America (UE) and the American Postal Workers Union (APWU) now has more than 4,590 local unions supporting it and the numbers are steadily growing.

The organization Feds United for Peace, representing employees from 27 U.S. government agencies and departments, held a hunger strike on February 1 to protest the Biden administration's support for Israel using starvation as a weapon. They called it a "day of fasting for Gaza" to draw attention to the ongoing war.

U.S. anti-war organization Veterans for Peace issued a statement on February 6 rejecting the outright racist and warmongering logic of the Biden administration that the death of three U.S. soldiers at the Al Tanf U.S. military base, in Syria, was a "red line" that had been crossed and legitimized lethal U.S. bombardment on Syria and Iraq. The Al Tanf base is illegally based in Syria, whose government considers its presence an act of aggression and has called for the unconditional withdrawal of foreign forces from its territory.



Veterans for Peace wrote: "Not the 30,000 Palestinians slaughtered in Gaza. That was no red line for the United States, whose wars in Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan caused the deaths of millions [...] But killing U.S. soldiers THAT is a red line. So now 'We have no choice now but to drop some bombs on you.'" Veterans for Peace offered its condolences to the families in a statement titled, "Tragic Deaths of U.S. Troops Must NOT Be Exploited as Justification for Striking Iran."

Veterans For Peace rebuked politicians who are pushing for war with Iran: "This would be the worst possible development and could lead to the deaths of millions. If Nikki Haley and Lindsay Graham are hungry for war, they can deploy themselves to U.S. bases in Iraq and Syria, or on-board U.S. Navy ships that are sitting ducks in the Red Sea." Veterans For Peace has over 100 chapters in the U.S., many of which are active in ongoing protests against the continuing slaughter of Palestinian men, women and children in Gaza. The 39-year-old organization includes veterans from World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War and more recent U.S. wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere.

In Related News

U.S. Attacks Against Iraq Increase

The U.S. military continues to violate Iraq's sovereignty by carrying out a drone strike against the eastern section of the Iraqi capital Baghdad, killing three people, including a senior commander of Iraq's Kata'ib Hezbollah resistance group. Reuters news agency said the attack targeted a vehicle

belonging to Iraq's Hashd al-Sha'abi or Popular Mobilization Units, an umbrella anti-terror group, of which Kata'ib Hezbollah is a member. Kata'ib Hezbollah roundly denounced the U.S. airstrikes, stating that the attacks emanate from the U.S. administration's criminal mindset and its craving for more bloodshed and they are a grave violation of Iraq's sovereignty.

The Office of the Prime Minister of Iraq responded to the U.S. attack saying, "American forces have repeated irresponsibly all the actions that would undermine the established understandings and hinder the initiation of bilateral dialogue. It conducted a blatant assassination through an airstrike in the heart of a residential neighborhood in the capital, Baghdad, showing no regard for civilian lives or international laws. By this act, the American forces jeopardize civil peace, violate Iraqi sovereignty, and disregard the safety and lives of our citizens. Even more concerning is that the coalition consistently deviates from the reasons and objectives for its presence on our territory. This trajectory compels the Iraqi government more than ever to terminate the mission of this coalition, which has become a factor for instability and threatens to entangle Iraq in the cycle of conflict, and our armed forces cannot neglect their constitutional duties and responsibilities, which demand safeguarding the security of Iraqis and the land of Iraq from all threats. God's mercy and honor to the martyrs of this attack and to all martyrs of Iraq."

Yahya Rasool, military spokesperson for Iraqi Prime Minister Shia' al-Sudani, said in a statement on February 8 that the "U.S. coalition" in Iraq "has become a factor for instability and threatens to entangle Iraq in the cycle of conflict." "This path pushes the Iraqi government more than ever before to end the coalition's mission which has become a factor of instability for Iraq," he said.

UN Security Council Discusses U.S. Violations of Iraqi and Syrian Sovereignty

The United Nations Security Council met on February 5 to discuss the U.S. violations of Syrian and Iraqi sovereignty during last week's attacks. The meeting was called by Russia which claimed that through its reckless acts of aggression and violations of the UN charter, the U.S. threatens international peace and security. That same day the U.S. had carried out 85 attacks at different locations in Syria and Iraq, killing 37 and 17 people respectively. It claimed that the attacks were carried out in response to attacks on its bases by the Iraqi militias and resistance groups. In one of those attacks, at least three U.S. soldiers were killed and dozens of others were wounded.

Linda Thomas-Greenfield, the U.S. representative in the UN, claimed that they were carried out in "self-defence" citing article 51 of the UN Charter which sets out individual or collective self-defence of a member country in case of an armed attack. The U.S. representative also tried to differentiate the U.S. and UK joint attacks inside Yemen from the attacks carried out in Iraq and Syria.

Syria's Ambassador Bassam Sabbagh rejected the U.S. claims that the attacks on Syria and Iraq were retaliatory, calling the U.S. argument "flimsy and misleading" and "flagrant violations of international law, humanitarian law and the principles and purposes of the United Nations." He accused the U.S. of providing blind and unlimited support to the Israeli occupation and the atrocities it is committing against the Palestinian people, including the ongoing genocide in Gaza.

The Iraqi representative Abbas Kadhim Obaid called the U.S. strikes a violation of his country's sovereignty and security, and asked the Security Council to do its work and protect the territorial integrity of all the countries including Iraq and Syria.

Iran's Ambassador Saeed Iravani called the U.S. strikes "illegal and unjustified" and said that they "blatantly violate the basic norms and principles of international law, and the UN charter." Iran accused the U.S. of ignoring the root causes of the conflict in the region which is "occupation, aggression and continued genocide and horrific atrocities committed by [the] Israeli regime and

fully supported by the U.S. against the Palestinian people."

The Palestinian Ambassador to the UN Riyad Mansour issued a letter to the President of the United Nations Security Council criticizing the council for its inaction in the face of the ongoing Israeli genocidal war on Gaza, and expressing disappointment over the body's inability to fulfil its mandate to protect peace and security. He wrote that the death toll in Gaza "should have long ago compelled the Security Council to demand a ceasefire."

"But the Council continues to betray its charter mandate and the expectations of nearly the entire international community demanding an immediate humanitarian ceasefire for months now," he said. Mansour said only a ceasefire can "ensure implementation of the ICJ provisional measures. [...] and resolutions to protect the Palestinian civilian population. [...] We once again implore the Council, General Assembly, and all states and organizations to uphold their obligations, in accordance with international law," he added.

South Africa's Minister of International Relations, Naledi Pandor, has warned that all states have a legal obligation to uphold the provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in regard to Israel's actions in Gaza, adding that failure to do so is complicity in the crimes of genocide. "In fact, all states now have a legal obligation to ensure respect for the provisional measures as well as ensure that they are not complicit in the genocide," Pandor explained.

"Essentially if the case proceeds as we anticipate, and it is found that Israel committed genocide, all those who were complicit are as guilty as Israel." Minister Pandor also stressed that despite Israel's "attempts to block the ICJ from making this order, and in its failed attempt to spin the judgment itself as a victory for them, Israel stands facing the international community and peoples of the world."

It stands "having failed to deflect attention from its crimes or justify its unfolding genocide. It is now naked to the world, for the first time."

She explained that "for the first time in 75 years, Israel is being held accountable by an institution and by the global community."

U.S./UK Attacks on Yemen Continue



Funeral February 10, 2024, for Ansarallah fighters, killed in U.S. attacks.

The U.S. and UK continue to carry out attacks on Yemen, most recently on February 9. Yemen's Ansarallah resistance group (the Houthis) informed that 17 of its fighters were killed in these latest attacks. Despite ongoing attacks from the U.S. and UK since mid-January, supported by other countries such as Canada, Ansarallah continues to wage armed struggle against shipping related to Israel and U.S. and British warships in the region, in support of the Palestinian people's resistance and to put pressure on Israel and its accomplices to end the genocide in Gaza. Those martyred in the February attacks by the U.S. and UK were honoured in a solemn funeral procession in Sana'a on February 10. One of the mourners affirmed to AFP that the Yemenis remain firm in their conviction to support the Palestinians, saying, "We convey our message through these martyrs that it is absolutely impossible for us to abandon our position, which is based on principles and faith, and which forced us to take action."

A previous round of U.S./UK attacks took place on February 3. Houthi military spokesperson Yahya Saree said there were 48 attacks on multiple governorates, including 13 on Sana'a and surrounding areas, 11 on Taiz, nine on Hodeidah, seven on al-Bayda, seven on Hajjah and one on Sa'dah.

On January 31, the Houthis announced that they had fired missiles at the U.S. warship USS *Gravelly*, in support of the Palestinians and in response to U.S./UK aggression. Commander of the U.S. Fifth Fleet, Vice Admiral Brad Cooper, described the difficulty for the U.S. military in stopping missiles fired by the Ansarallah armed forces targeting Israeli or U.S. vessels in the Red Sea. "There is about 75 seconds between when that missile launches and when it's going to hit something," Cooper said in an interview with CBS. The captain of the destroyer has "about nine to 15 seconds to make a decision whether to shoot it down," he said.

Saudi Arabia-Israel Relations Stalled

Saudi Arabia on February 8 said that it will not establish diplomatic ties with Israel without the creation of an independent Palestinian state. "There will be no diplomatic relations with Israel unless an independent Palestinian state is recognized on the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital, and that the Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip stops," a Saudi Foreign Ministry statement said.

Lebanon Rejects Israeli Demands

Lebanese Foreign Minister, Abdallah Bou Habib, on February 6 rejected Israeli and international demands on Lebanon to push the Lebanese resistance group Hezbollah north of the Litani River. "Western countries demand the retreat of Hezbollah for about eight to 10 kilometres north of Litani. This is a formula that Lebanon rejects. Beirut will not accept 'partial solutions' that do not bring the desired peace and do not secure stability [by resolving the cross-border conflict] but will lead to the renewal of the war again and again," Habib said. "Lebanon will only accept a complete solution to all border issues with Israel, and half solutions do not work and will not be accepted." He also demanded that part of a potential deal be for Israel to "stop the air, land and sea violations that have exceeded 30,000 violations since 2006."

Israeli Losses in Last Four Months of Fighting with Hezbollah

In the first four months of Hezbollah's current conflict with Zionist Israel, in support of the Palestinian resistance in Gaza, Hezbollah operations have:

- carried out 169 unique military operations;
- destroyed 56 Israeli military vehicles, including 24 tanks, 28 military personnel carriers and four vehicles used for logistics;
- targeted 26 military leadership centres, 178 military bases and over 500 settlement units;
- struck 237 technical positions (radars and spying satellites), two military factories, 25 border walls and 316 personnel gathering areas. The targeted areas were located in 122 border points, 670 border positions, 72 settlements and 61 positions deep behind the borders.
- killed or wounded more than 2,000 Israeli troops while over 230,000 settlers have been evacuated since October 8.

Israeli Retaliation Against South Africa

South Africa's Minister of International Relations and Cooperation Minister Naledi Pandor has shared that Israeli intelligence has been trying to intimidate her as well as her family following South Africa's case at the International Court of Justice against Israel for genocide. She said: "The Israeli agents, the intelligence services, this is how they behave, and they seek to intimidate you, so we must not be intimidated. There is a cause that is under way."

Nicaragua Gives Notice to Israel's Accomplices for Violations of Genocide Convention

In a statement on February 1, the Government of Reconciliation and National Unity of Nicaragua indicated it has issued notice to the governments of the UK, Germany, the Netherlands and Canada of its decision to hold them responsible under international law for "gross and systematic violations" of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, international humanitarian law and customary law, including the law of occupation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, in particular the Gaza Strip.

In its statement Nicaragua makes reference to the January 26 ruling of the International Court of Justice and the fact that the obligation to prevent genocide "arises and begins when there is a risk of it occurring; in fact, when it is plausible that it is occurring or might occur." It says, "This plausibility is now beyond doubt and dispute." In view of that fact, it urges the governments of the UK, Germany, the Netherlands and Canada to "immediately halt the supply of arms, ammunition, technology and/or components to Israel," saying it is plausible they might be used to facilitate or commit violations of the Genocide Convention.

Nicaragua reminds those governments that "a State's obligation to prevent, and the corresponding duty to act, arise at the instant that the State learns of, or should normally have learned of, the existence of a serious risk that genocide will be committed." It notes that Israel's genocidal attacks on the Gaza Strip have not stopped or diminished since they began in October 2023.

The statement also draws attention to the same four governments' suspension of funds to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. It says that this further exposes their disregard of their obligations as well as their active facilitation of Israel's violations of the rules of international law "to the severe and immediate prejudice of the Palestinian people, particularly Gazans, and the international community as a whole." It says this also contributes to the collective punishment of the Palestinians and to the apparent objective of forcing them to leave

the Occupied Palestinian Territories, particularly Gaza, and preventing the exercise of their right to self-determination.

In light of all the above, Nicaragua has given written notice to the four named governments that it "will adopt all measures it considers appropriate in accordance with international law, including recourse to the International Court of Justice, to guarantee respect for these fundamental international texts and customary international law."

On January 24, Nicaragua announced that it had filed an application with the International Court of Justice for permission to participate as a state party to the case South Africa has brought against Israel under the Genocide Convention.

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