

Editorial

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04 On October 7, the façade of peace in Palestine was shattered when thousands of Hamas fighters entered Israel, tearing down fences erected to cage them and tearing down the complacency of the Western elites who have ignored the plight of the Palestinians for a decade.¹ The figures for casualties are disputed, but there were certainly hundreds killed, including soldiers and civilians. More than 200 prisoners were also taken. Israel was quick to denounce Hamas as a death cult; a terrorist organisation hellbent on killing Jewish people without any wider objective.

In reality, Hamas was reacting to two overriding geo-political challenges – a near twenty year blockade of the Gaza Strip and the immediate possibility that relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia would be ‘normalised’, leaving the Palestinians ever more isolated and forgotten. October 7 shattered the status quo by forcing the world to pay attention again. It also torpedoed Benjamin Netanyahu’s wider strategy of squeezing the Palestinians into submission through military containment, creeping annexation, and ‘normalisation’ with Israel’s historic enemies. As one observer put it,

Hamas declared in the most clear, painful, and murderous way possible, that...the idea that [Palestinians] can be bypassed via Riyadh or Abu Dhabi, or that the 2 million Palestinians imprisoned in Gaza will disappear if Israel builds a sufficiently elaborate fence, is an illusion that is now being shattered at a terrible human cost.²

The Israeli response has been brutal and predictable. Since October 7 they have drowned Gaza in a sea of bombs, enacting collective retribution on a people who refuse to simply disappear into the Sinai. As we go to press, 8525 people have been murdered including 3542 children. At least another 1050 children are buried under the ruins that increasingly characterise much of Gaza. Israeli planes currently bomb day and night with impunity. Since their campaign began, the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) have dropped an average of 42 bombs per hour, killing an average of 15 people and maiming 35 more. The IDF has also stopped fuel entering Gaza, so there is little machinery capable of rescuing people when buildings crash down around them. Parents often know their children are buried but can't physically get to them. Others, write their children's names on their limbs so they can identify their remains later on. Collective punishment of the Palestinians is subjecting 2.3 million people to a shared trauma that will never leave them. Indeed, such is the brutality, that UNICEF has recently defined Gaza as a "graveyard for children and a living hell for everyone else".³ The United Nations have gone further, denouncing Israel for war crimes, including collective punishment, the targeting of civilians and the siege of Gaza.⁴

Western Hypocrisy

This viewpoint is shared by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch but not the Western ruling classes. When Vladimir Putin cut water and electricity to the Ukrainian people, he was rightly denounced as a war criminal. European Union President, Ursula Von der Leyen, was particularly forthright, stating that,

Russia's attacks on civilian infrastructure, especially electricity, are war crimes. Cutting off men, women, children from water, electricity, and heating, with winter coming — these are acts of pure terror. And we have to call it as such.⁵

But when Israel did the same, and worse, Von der Leyen travelled to stand with Netanyahu, declaring "We are friends of Israel. When friends are under attack, we stand by them. Israel has the right and duty to defend itself".⁶ The same rhetoric has been trotted out by Joe Biden, Rishi Sunak, and Olaf Scholz, allowing Israel to murder Palestinian civilians with virtual impunity. The idea that Western leaders support a rules-based humanitarian order is just one more casualty of Israeli terror – this time torn

to shreds by their own hypocrisy and double standards.

The reality is that considerations of power and profits have always formed the basis of their calculations, not human beings, or universal human rights. Since the Second World War, Russia has been one of the major opponents of the West, while Israel was created to project the power of the Western ruling classes further into the Middle East – a region with significant geo-political importance and vast resources of oil.⁷ For the American elites, a partnership with Zionism meant the ability to replace Britain as the major power in the region, while for the rest of the Western elites it meant guaranteed oil and a block on communism. Zionism understood its role and acted accordingly – promising its Western masters an imperialist outpost in return for impunity during the Nakba of 1948, the forced expulsion of 750,000 Palestinians from their land to create the space for an Israeli state.⁸ Since then, the Israeli ruling class has been defined by two key characteristics; they have consistently pursued the interests of the West and they have continued to annex historical Palestine, while making those Palestinians that remained into second class citizens. The logic of Zionism has always been to clear the remaining Palestinians from their land in another

Nakba. The Israeli ruling class have pursued this objective for decades, but until recently, they also used the Oslo Accords, signed between 1993-1995, to give the impression of working towards a compromise.

The Oslo Accords

Ostensibly, Oslo created a pathway to peace by creating a Palestinian Authority (PA) with responsibility for limited self-governance in parts of Gaza and the West Bank and the wider promise of a future Palestinian state on borders set by the 1967 war (surrendering land lost from 1948-67). In reality, the promise of a two-state solution proved the perfect cover for Israel to annex territory and undermine what was left of Palestinian sovereignty and the Palestinian economy. The rhetoric of compromise always masked a deeper strategy of domination, as Yara M. Asi explains,

“The Oslo Accords were not really about peace or justice... [instead, they] cemented occupation as a permanent form of governance, giving Israel almost complete control of Palestinian borders and the Palestinian economy”.⁹ Most Palestinians distrusted the Israelis from the outset, with Edward Said speaking for many when he suggested

the Oslo Accords were designed as “an instrument of Palestinian surrender”.¹⁰

This, coupled with the corruption of the Palestine Authority (PA), explains the subsequent rise of Hamas and the Second Intifada which began a mere five years after Oslo was signed. Within Israel, the fig-leaf of a two-state solution actually helped to push politics to the right, as the Zionists had the perfect cover for every incursion; every violation of international law, while in the West, the Accords allowed the elites to abandon the Palestinian people altogether. No matter how often Israel broke international law or committed human rights abuses the stock response was always the same – we understand the Palestinians have rights, but they must work through the Oslo Accords.

The growing influence of the far right in Israel coupled with growing resistance by ordinary Palestinians explains the subsequent period, as ongoing occupation and injustice have been punctuated with periods of brutal violence, always disproportionately inflicted on the Palestinians. Trump’s election in 2016 shifted the calculus, giving the Israeli eliminationist right the possibility to fulfil their historic objective – namely, erasing Palestine by pursuing a new Middle East strategy with the central

objective of isolating Palestinians from their historic allies in the Arab world.

Netanyahu’s Trump Card?

Barely a month into his Presidency, Donald Trump stood with Netanyahu to announce a new Middle Eastern peace deal that would include all the players in the region. Ostensibly, Trump’s ‘normalisation strategy’ was designed to bring peace, but the real objective was twofold. On the one hand, the agreements would strengthen US power in the Middle East as states moved further into its sphere of influence. On the other hand, it would create the conditions for a final Nakba, this time freed from the historic constraints imposed by Israel’s Arab neighbours. Symbolically, Trump’s real intentions were evident in his decision to move the US Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem – which was proposed as the capital of a future Palestinian State as part of the Oslo Process and has always been the historic capital of Palestine.

In the wider region, meanwhile, Trump’s strategy was to offer the same benefits that US ruling classes always offer less powerful states – loans, military aid, trade deals, and local strategic advantages - in return for accepting that Israel is a legitimate state with a

legitimate claim over the historic land of Palestine and a legitimate right to defend itself. On 15 September 2020, Israel signed the Abraham Accords - a normalisation agreement with the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain which established full diplomatic relations and recognised Israel's sovereignty. This was followed by further agreements with Morocco and Sudan; but the main objective was always to agree a deal with Saudi Arabia, which, in the words of one observer would.

08 Be a tectonic shift in Middle East geopolitics...Israel would benefit from normalisation relations with the Saudis – long seen as the “holy grail” of potential normalisation agreements for the country. The Saudis, in turn, would see their interests advanced through strengthened U.S. partnership...But this deal could also have serious implications for the future of the Palestinian national movement and further afield for the role of China in the Middle East.¹¹

Trumps strategy facilitated a lurch right in Israeli politics, as the most radical Zionists saw their opportunity to finish the job begun in 1948. This was made explicit by the current far right Finance

Minister, Bezalel Smotrich, whose aim is to annex the rest of the Palestinian territory and turn Israel into a Jewish theocracy.¹² Under Smotrich's watch, the number of settlements has escalated, as have attacks on Palestinians. There are now 500,000 settlers in the West Bank and 200,000 in Occupied East Jerusalem. The rate of expansion has been 16.1% over the past five years, but for Smotrich and his ilk, this is still not enough.¹³ He wants all of the land cleared of Palestinians, starting with the West Bank. Indeed, prior to October 7, 2023, had been the deadliest year for Palestinians in the West Bank since the UN began keeping records in 2005.¹⁴ Assaults on popular new resistance groups like the Lions' Den meant a dramatic escalation in the use of administrative detention by Israel and the PA, as well as deadly assaults on resistance strongholds in Jenin, Nablus and Tulkarm.¹⁵ Faced with these wider geo-political realities, Hamas attacked, and Israel is now retaliating.

For some in the Israeli elite, they finally have their chance to unleash hell on the Palestinians, but there are a number of dangers for themselves and the Western ruling classes that are important to identify. The first is the reality that the war against Hamas is unwinnable, with the potential to inflict unimaginable harm on the people of the region but also on

the reputation of the West.¹⁶ Short of annihilating the Palestinians or physically driving them into Egypt and Jordan, this latest act of brutality will create what it has always created among colonised and occupied populations: ongoing resistance and perpetual conflict. The severity of the attacks coupled with the hypocrisy of the Western elites also risks radicalising new layers in Europe and America – a potential that socialists everywhere must look to exploit.

As Israel continues to bomb defenceless people behind the shield of Western imperialism, it will also have ramifications in the global South, with the Financial Times recently reporting that the strident support for Netanyahu by Biden and the Europeans has caused a major backlash. One senior diplomat told the paper that “we have definitely lost the battle in the Global South. All the work we have done with the Global South (over Ukraine) has been lost... They won’t ever listen to us again.”¹⁷

Far from strengthening the hand of Western Imperialism, the fallout from Trump’s normalisation process might yet push developing countries closer to China. The situation might also get beyond despots and reactionaries in the Arab states as resistance from the streets erupts against the brutality of the IDF. Tens of thousands have repeatedly taken

to the streets in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Yemen, and the West Bank. While in Bahrain, one of the signatories of the landmark Abraham Accords, the regime has caved to mass pressure, expelling the Israeli ambassador – an early indicator that a return to normalisation is likely to be impossible. For readers of the IMR the next steps should be clear. We must throw ourselves into the struggle for Palestinian liberation, building movements of solidarity across the country to undermine the US and European consensus that enables Israel. In so doing, we should also confidently challenge the wavering centre left, including Sinn Féin, seeing this moment as an opportunity to deepen support for independent Irish foreign policy and against militarism. This movement has the potential to fundamentally weaken the NATO-led imperial bloc that has consolidated itself since the invasion of Ukraine. Their agenda is to end neutrality in Ireland and re-militarise Europe, but in a world wracked by capitalist crises, there is now an opportunity to push back and forge global resistance. The stakes could not be higher – in our thousands, in our millions we are all Palestinians.

In this Issue

Despite showing strong support for Palestine over many years, Sinn Féin (SF) have recently refused to vote with the left on motions to expel the Israeli Ambassador – both in the Dáil and in local councils. At the same time, they have supported conservative government-led motions that include Israel's right to defend itself within the limits of international law. Acknowledging the right of an apartheid settler-state to its own self defence is a backward step that surely cannot be lost on SF's more radical supporters. But this is also part of a more general move to the centre by a party now seeking to reassure the Irish elites, and their American backers, that it can be trusted in government. Charting Sinn Fein's shift to the political centre, Kieran Allen argues it is part of the general play book of nationalism as it seeks popular support by talking left at the same time as it aspires to govern a system controlled by the right. When the Adams-McGuinness leadership first sought an electoral base in the North, they positioned SF to the left of the SDLP. This made sense, as the Provos recruited disproportionately from the working classes while more affluent nationalists were more likely to vote for the SDLP. As they established this base, however, SF began to pivot towards pan-

nationalism and, more importantly, towards conservative forces in the US to bolster their campaign for a united Ireland. Governing the Irish tax haven is one more step towards their objective, but it will rely on putting the interests of big business ahead of SF's working class supporters. This, in turn, will force them into endless contradictions as their rhetoric remains to the left of the establishment even as the substance of their policies moves towards the centre.

The dangers of attempting to implement radical policies from within the structures of the bourgeois state is also taken up by Mike Gonzalez, who uses the fiftieth anniversary of Pinochet's counter-revolt in Chile to remind readers of two central lessons learned in the struggles of the 20th century. The first is the impossibility of a reformist road to socialism. The second is the necessity of relying on the self-activity of the working class, particularly when they are in open revolt. As Gonzalez makes clear, Salvador Allende was not merely misguided and outmanoeuvred. His politics suffered from a major weakness - informed by Stalin's idea of a popular front - that assumed the armed forces are neutral in a bourgeois society and that the ruling class can be nudged towards socialism if the working class is kept under control. Allende paid for his mistakes with his

life, but he also cost thousands of others, as the right viciously destroyed the sparks of working class revolution with their ‘Caravan of Death’ following Pinochet’s coup in 1973.

In her analysis of the family under neoliberalism, Sinéad Kennedy argues that one powerful way to think about oppression is through the sacrifices and repressions, the options taken, and forgone by women that ensure their own happiness is often sacrificed to the happiness of the family unit. Analysing the double burden placed on women in the workforce, the different experiences of working class and wealthier women and the deeply conservative nature of the Irish state, she argues for a sophisticated version of Marxist social reproduction theory that understands that women’s oppression cannot be understood outside the class dynamics of capitalism but must never be reduced to these dynamics.

In his introduction to artificial intelligence (AI), Memet Uludağ argues that the radical left must not fall into fetishising this powerful new technology nor into denouncing it as the harbinger of doom. Like all technologies created under capitalism, AI will very likely bring massive potential to humanity at the same time as that potential is distorted and often fully subverted by the logic of capital. Reminding readers that

the same class relations exist today as in Marx’s time, Uludağ encourages us to think about the issue dialectically – to see the vast potential and the often destructive reality as two sides of a technology being created within a class society; and to see the outcomes and future uses of AI as being dependent on the balance of class forces in society.

Mark Walsh takes up similar themes arguing that bourgeois society has been responsible for the greatest flowering of the sciences in human history at the same time as this knowledge has been deployed in the interests of the ruling classes often to the detriment of humanity as a whole. Insisting that science is a collective endeavour built up through the trial and error experiences of millions of people, Walsh argues against the ‘Great Man’ theory of science, rooted as it is, in elitism and class snobbery. Newton and Einstein certainly made amazing discoveries, but they relied on the vast network of merchants and artisans, mechanics, and engineers to create the knowledge that they synthesised and improved. Their ideas also flowed into a class society which deployed them to create technologies used to control the lives of millions of people - industrial machinery and atomic energy. Like Uludağ, Walsh encourages

his readers to think about science as a dialectical process containing enormous potential for positive transformation but also with a destructive side that is currently putting our collective futures in peril.

Taking up this theme, Eoghan Ó Ceannabháin argues that the logic of capitalism is driving a climate emergency that cannot, and will not, be solved under this same logic. Competitive accumulation continues to inform the major decisions of the major corporations, ensuring the planet is heading for temperature rises that could eventually make life impossible. Expecting capitalists to resolve a crisis that they are creating is like asking a tiger to give up meat and live on grass. Understanding this, Ó Ceannabháin explains the hollow strategies being pursued by the ruling classes, as they engage in climate theatre or outright denial, all-the-while continuing with business as usual. Ó Ceannabháin then looks at the weaknesses of the climate movement arguing that without ecosocialist politics and a major turn to the working classes, the movement has little chance of success.

In the final article in this edition, Paul O'Brien lays out one of the central arguments in his new book *Seán*

O'Casey: Political Activist and Writer. O'Brien argues that O'Casey's art was deeply informed by the struggles of the working classes during the early part of the 20th century. O'Casey was himself inspired by his involvement in the Dublin lockout but also by his strong conviction that nationalism could never deliver for the working classes, whether it was the conservative nationalism that undermined the revolution in Ireland or the fascist nationalism that did so much to destroy the lives of working people in the first half of the 20th century. O'Casey always knew which side he was on, and O'Brien argues that this is at least partly responsible for the vibrancy of plays like *The Shadow of a Gunman* and *The Plough and the Stars*.

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Endnotes

¹ The author would like to thank Conor Reddy and Mark Walsh for useful suggestions.

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³ Gaza has become a graveyard for thousands of children @ <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/gaza-has-become-graveyard-thousands-children>.

⁴ Chris McGreal. Have war crimes been committed in Israel and Gaza and what international laws apply? Guardian 31 October @ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/oct/31/have-war-crimes-been-committed-in-israel-and-gaza-and-what-international-laws-apply>.

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⁶ Ibid.

⁷ John Rose. 1986. Israel the Hijack State. London. Bookmarks @ <https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/document/mideast/hijack/index.htm>.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Yara M. Asi. 2023. Thirty years on the Oslo Accord Betrayal still haunt Palestinians. The New Arab @ <https://www.newarab.com/opinion/30-years-oslo-accords-betrayal-still-haunts-palestinians/>

¹⁰ Edward Said. 1993. The Morning After. London Review of Books @ <https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v15/n20/edward-said/the-morning-after>.

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¹² Benjamin Asraf. How Smotrich’s West Bank plan actualises a second Nakba. The New Arab @ <https://www.newarab.com/analysis/how-smotrichs-west-bank-plan-actualises-second-nakba>.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ 2023 becomes the deadliest year for Palestinians in the West Bank as Israeli military launches fresh attack on Jenin. Medical Aid for Palestinians @ <https://www.map.org.uk/news/archive/post/1483-2023-becomes-deadliest-year-for-palestinians-in-the-west-bank-as-israeli-military-launches-fresh-attack-on-jenin-refugee-camp>

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Alex Callinicos. 2023. Biden backs Israel in unwinnable war. Socialist Worker @ <https://socialistworker.co.uk/alex-callinicos/biden-backs-israel-in-an-unwinnable-war/>.

¹⁷ Ibid.