

Anti-War Protests in Gaza

The fragile ceasefire in Gaza inevitably came to an end on 18 March, with the resumption of Israeli airstrikes. In what was one of the deadliest days of the conflict so far, hundreds of Palestinians were killed in a matter of hours. Israel's actions were motivated by three main factors: military considerations (Hamas was beginning to regroup), the internal political situation (Netanyahu's coalition government is attempting to stay in power amid rising opposition), and wider regional imperialist interests (the war in Gaza being key to Israel's attempt to remake the Middle East). The Trump Administration – which for the past weeks had itself been adding fuel to the fire with various threats of mass expulsions of Palestinians from Gaza to make way for a "riviera of the Middle East" – simply gave Netanyahu a green light.

It is Palestinians who are once again paying the ultimate price, reduced to nothing more than numbers, with entire families and their meagre livelihoods being continually wiped out. Yet despite the war and occupation, "Palestinians" are not simply one homogeneous bloc, but also a society with conflicting social, political and economic interests. Recent events have illuminated this fact in striking fashion.

On 25 March, hundreds came out onto the streets of Beit Lahia in defiance of the brutal reality of their everyday lives. They waved white scraps of fabric, carried home-made placards, and chanted. The protests spread to other cities and the slogans which echoed through the rubble speak for themselves: "we want peace", "stop the war" and "Hamas out". The most simple but direct slogan was a throwback to the economic protests in Gaza which Hamas dispersed in 2019 – "we want to live".

As is always the case when faced with seemingly spontaneous and leaderless movements, different ruling class factions instantly try to step in, to manipulate the narrative and exploit the event in their own interest. This is reflected in the media, where in the Middle East news reports downplayed the anti-Hamas sentiment of the protests, while in the West the anti-Hamas sentiment was the headline. Nevertheless, some of the participants were able to elaborate:

We refuse to die for anyone, for any party's agenda or the interests of foreign states. Hamas must step down and listen to the voice of the grieving, the voice that rises from beneath the rubble – it is the most truthful voice.

Our children have been killed. Our houses have been destroyed. We are against the war, against Hamas, and the Palestinian political factions, against Israel and against the world's silence.

We are oppressed by the Israeli occupation army and we are oppressed by Hamas.

In other words, these protests are a brave and desperate cry, against war and against all sides in the conflict. In them we can hear the real voice of dispossessed masses who are beginning to see that no ruling class faction can offer them salvation. Workers around the world need to hear this cry.

Imperialist wars are the direct product of a world system which ultimately cares about profit, not human lives. The one force capable of not only stopping the drive to war, but also creating a new society without war, is the mass movement of the international working class, whose very exploitation capitalism is built upon. Only such a movement could truly answer the cry coming from Gaza.

