

Obama backs Israeli crackdown in Jerusalem

By Patrick Martin
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US President Barack Obama endorsed the Israeli crackdown in Jerusalem, Gaza and throughout the occupied West Bank in brief comments made Friday during a press conference with the visiting president of South Korea, Park Geun-hye.

In response to a question about the mounting clashes between Israeli security forces and Palestinian teenagers over the past two weeks, Obama declared his solidarity with the Israeli repression.

“We condemn in the strongest possible terms violence directed against innocent people,” he said, “and believe that Israel has a right to maintain basic law and order, and protect its citizens from knife attacks and violence on the streets.”

Obama said that both Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas should “try to tamp down rhetoric that may feed violence or anger or misunderstanding, and try to get all people in Israel and in the West Bank to recognize that this kind of random violence isn’t going to result in anything other than more hardship and more insecurity.”

In addition to its usual rhetoric suggesting that both the Israeli occupation forces and the oppressed Palestinians should de-escalate their actions, the White House has dispatched Secretary of State John Kerry to the region to perform the ritual of pretending that the US administration is an honest broker between Israel—armed to the teeth by Washington—and the Palestinians who are killed by those weapons.

There was less hypocritical cant, and more open defense of the Zionist state, in the statement issued by Hillary Clinton, Kerry’s predecessor as secretary of state and now the frontrunner for the Democratic presidential nomination. The Clinton statement read, in its entirety:

“I am alarmed by the recent wave of attacks against Israelis, including more than a dozen separate attacks

since last Saturday. My thoughts and prayers are with the victims and their families. Men and women living in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, and elsewhere cannot carry groceries or travel to prayer without looking over their shoulder. It is wrong, and it must stop. There’s no place for violence—only dialogue can produce a lasting peace.”

No one reading this press release for the Netanyahu government would know that the death toll from the violence in Israel since October 1 stands at 37 Palestinians and seven Israelis. Even by the calculations of the Israeli authorities, only 10 of the Palestinians were engaged in the knife-wielding attacks that have been so heavily publicized in the US and world media. The vast majority of the Palestinian dead are teenage youth shot down for throwing rocks at Israeli police and soldiers, or else bystanders merely observing the clashes.

When it comes to the knife attacks, the American media offers no explanation, simply demonizing the youth as “psychotic” or otherwise deranged by hatred of Jews. The Zionist media in Israel is far more acute in perceiving the real social causes of these attacks.

The military correspondent of *Ma’ariv* newspaper wrote, in a column headlined, “The intifada of the young and hopeless,” about “the huge army of unemployed people living in the territories. We are talking about hundreds of thousands of young people, mostly educated, many of them academics, who don’t work and walk around bored, poisoned, without any hope on the horizon.”

The column noted that 200,000 students are enrolled in colleges in Gaza and the West Bank, and 40,000 complete a bachelor’s degree each year, but only a tiny fraction can find meaningful work. Despite their relatively high educational level, “In the West Bank, almost 30 percent of the 19-24 age group are unemployed. In Gaza, their rate reaches 63 percent.”

It is no surprise that under such conditions, facing zero economic prospects, a corrupt Palestinian Authority and grinding daily oppression by the Israeli occupation forces, a small fraction of these young people have erupted in individual acts of despair. Figures compiled from police reports since the knife attacks began suggest that most of the attackers are secular, under age 18, despise the collaborationist Palestinian Authority of Abbas and hate the Israeli occupation. Most had no connection with any Palestinian organization and none had previously been arrested.

There were three more deaths of Palestinians at the hands of Israeli security forces Friday, while no Israelis died. Israeli soldiers shot two Palestinians to death on the border of Gaza Strip, and another Palestinian, 19-year-old Ehab Hanani, was shot and killed at Beit Furik near Nablus on the West Bank. At least 100 Palestinians were wounded by bullet rounds, many of them shot in the legs as they attempted to push down the fence on the Gaza border.

An Israeli soldier was wounded in Kiryat Arba, a Jewish settlement near Hebron in the southern part of the West Bank, and a Jewish shrine, the so-called Joseph's Tomb in Nablus, was set on fire Friday.

While the Islamist group Hamas, which holds power in Gaza, issued the call for a "Day of Rage" Friday, this did not seem to spark much response on the West Bank.

There was more anger over the decision by the Israeli government and the Jerusalem police to bar men under 40 years of age from attending the main weekly prayers at the Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem. The mosque was the starting point of the latest round of violence, with provocations by ultra-right Zionists seeking to convert the Moslem holy place into the Jewish "Third Temple."

The Netanyahu government has banned members of the Knesset from going to the Al-Aqsa site, in an effort to prevent actions by the settlers and Zionist extremists that would spark an uncontrollable explosion throughout East Jerusalem and the West Bank.

Some 300 Israeli soldiers are to be deployed in East Jerusalem on Sunday, the first such mobilization of the military in that area since the last Palestinian *intifada* ended in 2005.

Further repressive measures are directed against the

families of supposed Palestinian "terrorists," in most cases the parents and siblings of teenagers who carried out knife attacks and were then shot to death. On Thursday, seven families received home demolition orders, giving them 72 hours to evacuate before their houses are destroyed.

After canceling a scheduled visit to Germany in early October because of the security crisis, Netanyahu will go next Wednesday to Berlin for talks with Chancellor Angela Merkel, the German government announced Friday. Netanyahu is scheduled to visit Washington November 9 for talks at the White House.

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