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Total racism, total war

On the first anniversary of Israel's war on Gaza, shocking revelations are appearing on the methods and reasoning behind the war

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Mahmoud Hussein tries to hold back his tears as he looks at his 30-year-old brother Ahmed who suffers from colon cancer. The family is impatiently waiting for the Gaza border to open so Ahmed can travel abroad for treatment, since in light of the Israeli imposed siege, medical facilities in Gaza cannot treat his condition. Ahmed, who lives in Gabalya, north of Gaza, is not the only Palestinian who developed cancer at a relatively young age.

According to Palestinian medical sources, the number of patients with cancerous tumours residing in areas that the Israeli army targeted during its war on Gaza is on the rise. As the first anniversary of the war on Gaza approaches, the Palestinians are shocked to discover more of its damaging effects. A Palestinian woman whose house in the district of Al-Shaaf, east of Gaza City was targeted with white phosphorous missiles gave birth to a baby with a deformed heart. Doctors reported another pregnant woman in north Gaza, whose home was attacked with the same chemical agent, gave birth to a baby with the same deformity.

The infant's chances of survival are very low because under siege medical services in Gaza are not equipped to treat such cases. The mother told doctors that during the war she inhaled excessive amounts of white phosphorous smoke because of repeated attacks on her area. White phosphorous is a chemical incendiary agent that is highly combustible

when mixed with oxygen. It burns through skin, body tissue and bones; the corpses of white phosphorous victims are usually heavily charred.

In a report marking the first anniversary of the war, the Dameer Centre for Human Rights reported "high levels of deformed births and miscarriages", and that the use of radioactive and toxic ammunition by the Israeli army on Gaza resulted in significant deterioration in the health of Palestinians. The report was based on a survey that found that health and environmental conditions in the Gaza Strip are worsening by the day as a result of Israel's aggression and border closure by occupying forces for the third consecutive year.

Meanwhile, Italian researchers revealed that the soil in Gaza now contains carcinogens and toxins as a result of Israel's use of internationally prohibited weapons during the last war on Gaza. In a news conference in Gaza City, experts said that these toxins and carcinogens are a high risk to unborn children, and called on the Palestinian Health Ministry to test all Palestinians in areas that were bombed during the war. The Italians, who carried out fieldwork in these areas, further warned that many Gazan residents would suffer from chronic gastrointestinal and respiratory illnesses.

According to these experts, tests that were carried out inside Gaza indicated that 12 toxins and radioactive materials were released by Israel's abundant use of internationally prohibited weaponry. Such weapons led to the bodies of many victims being mangled.

More disturbing facts are being disclosed. Adala Human Rights Centre asserted that the Gaza Strip is now home to the highest number of disabled people in the world. Some four per cent of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, or 70,000 residents, have some form of disability. Their suffering is compounded further by Israel's refusal to allow the passage of necessary medication and rehabilitation materials for them. At the same time, Israel prevents any of them from travelling abroad to seek medical help.

As Palestinians mark the first anniversary of the war, Israelis are revealing the reasons behind their army's savage treatment of Palestinians during the war. An edict by Chief Military Rabbi Brigadier General Avi Ronzki to Israeli troops on the first anniversary of the war called for no mercy or compassion for Palestinians. The edict, quoted in the Israeli media, stated that, "the goal of the recent war on Gaza aimed to destroy and annihilate the enemy, not to take prisoners." It continued that, "some 80 jets focussed on various targets in Gaza; then the tanks began their assault. We fought the gentiles with all our willpower and force."

Oren Yiftahel, political science professor at Ben Gurion University in the Negev, described Israel's atrocities during the war. "It was expected Israeli behaviour and an extension of Zionist policy that believes in the annihilation of the Palestinian people, and erasing their history and existence. It ignores the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, which they are entitled to, and not out of Israeli charity."

Yiftahel argued in an article in *Haaretz* newspaper that, "Israel's invasion of Gaza was not purely a military operation to end missile attacks, or an attempt to restore Israel's

deterrence capability or even an effort to impose order on others and oust the elected Hamas government. The war was a continuation of a long-standing strategy to deny, erase and eliminate any historic reference to the Palestinians and their existence."

He further accused all Israelis of participating in the hostile plot against the Palestinians, noting that Israeli politicians, artists, the media, university researchers and intellectuals supported this war with enthusiasm. Yiftahel asserted that Israel's war on Gaza, and Hamas specifically, came in reaction to Hamas's rise to power that undermined the possibility of reaching a two-state solution. "This solution is ideal for Israel because it would mean Israel could continue its settlement project indefinitely," he stated.

According to Yiftahel, the appointment of Ismail Haniyeh, who was born to a refugee family, as prime minister of the Hamas government gave Palestinians another reason to insist on the right of return for Palestinian refugees, which Israel believes is an issue that threatens its very existence. "Instead of confronting reality with all its complications, Israel resorted to state terrorism," wrote Yiftahel. "More bullets, explosives, killing of children and burning down towns will not succeed in silencing history. The time lost to war drums will be restored after they are muted."

Israeli historian Tom Segev believes that "one of the main goals of the war on Gaza was to exercise a principle rooted in Zionism, namely the necessity to strike against Palestinians to teach them a lesson. This is one of the main bases of the Zionist project since its inception." Segev explained that the thinking behind this is that "we, the Jews, represent modernisation and civilisation, logic and ethics. The Arabs are primitive savages of irrational violent tendencies, who are ignorant and must be disciplined and educated in the proper ways of thinking with the use of a carrot and stick."

Segev continued that Israel believed the war would topple Hamas from power, "out of another Zionist belief, namely the need to impose on the Palestinians a moderate leadership which will concede on national aspirations." Segev described Israel's reasons and goals of the war on Gaza as "revisiting failed beliefs, but Israel continues to rehash them from one war to the next."

In fact, Israeli political and military analyst Ofer Shelah was the first to point out that the assault on Gaza marked the birth of "a new defensive doctrine for Israel, namely for Israel to act as a rogue nation in the face of enemies who adopt a strategy of attrition and shelling at a distance." In other words, "to respond to sources of gunfire with a savage and massive military operation, irrespective of the number of casualties in its ranks."

These arguments explain the shocking outcome of the war on Gaza. During this war, Israel acted on a clear security principle of settling confrontation with the Palestinian people regardless of losses in civilian ranks.

Caption: A Palestinian woman walks past buildings destroyed during Israel's 22-day offensive in Gaza which was launched on 27 December. On the anniversary of the tragic slaughter of Palestinians by Israelis, the world remembers that no less than 30,000

Palestinian homes were destroyed during the Israeli onslaught, which killed more than 1,400 people

C a p t i o n : A Palestinian woman walks past buildings destroyed during Israel's 22-day offensive in Gaza which was launched on 27 December. On the anniversary of the tragic slaughter of Palestinians by Israelis, the world remembers that no less than 30,000 Palestinian homes were destroyed during the Israeli onslaught, which killed more than 1,400 people