

Hillary Clinton celebrates Israeli war crimes

Bill Van Auken, Socialist Equality Party candidate for US Senate from New York
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The speech given by New York's Democratic Senator Hillary Clinton to a rally staged by Zionist organizations Monday across from the United Nations headquarters in Manhattan amounted to a celebration of massacres and war crimes.

Her remarks left no doubt that a vote for Clinton in November is a vote not only to continue the US war in Iraq, but to expand and intensify the slaughter throughout the region.

Under conditions in which Israeli war planes, gunships and artillery are turning Lebanese bridges, highways, power plants and residential buildings into rubble while killing hundreds of civilians, Clinton made it clear that she not only supports the ongoing aggression that has been unleashed against the Palestinian and Lebanese people, but is quite prepared to back its escalation into a full scale war against Syria and Iran as well.

"We will support [Israel's] efforts to send a message to Hamas, Hezbollah, to the Syrians, to the Iranians, to all who seek death and domination instead of life and freedom," she told the crowd.

"Send a message" is such an innocuous phrase to describe mass murder and state terrorism. How is this message being sent? In southern Lebanon, Israeli planes dropped leaflets warning villagers that they should flee north for their lives. When they complied, a warplane attacked a column of refugees incinerating 18 people, most of them children. Then other planes demolished the main roads as well as all of the bridges over the Litani River, forcing many of the refugees to abandon their vehicles and continue their exodus on foot.

Homes, schools and even hospitals and ambulances have been targeted by Israeli bombs and missiles. On Sunday morning, an Israeli air strike took out an entire wing of the Jabel Amel hospital in Tyre, killing a family of nine, who had come there seeking aid after suffering a previous bombing of their apartment building.

Hundreds of Lebanese have been killed—nearly all civilians and most of them women and children. Many hundreds more have maimed in the bombings and hundreds of thousands have been forced to flee, facing an increasingly catastrophic humanitarian crisis. What is involved is a massive act of "ethnic cleansing," aimed at driving an entire population of impoverished Shiites out of southern Lebanon.

Meanwhile, the Israeli military is simultaneously sending a similar "message" in Gaza, where bombings and artillery strikes have killed scores of civilians, wounded hundreds and left large parts of the crowded Palestinian territory in rubble. The Israeli siege has cut off power and water to the population, while, as in Lebanon, sealing it off from the outside world.

In both territories, Israel is carrying out massive and brutal acts of collective punishment against civilian populations, war crimes in the strictest sense of international law. Israeli military officials have openly proclaimed that their aim is to drive Gaza "back to the stone age" and in Lebanon to "turn the clock back 20 years"—to the days of

brutal civil war.

"We will stand with Israel because Israel is standing up for American values as well as Israeli ones," the New York Democrat proclaimed at the New York City rally.

Clinton's remark constitutes a libel against the American people. The indiscriminate slaughter from the air of innocent children with the aim of terrorizing an entire population represents not the values of American working people, the vast majority of the population, but rather the perverse and criminal methods of ruling elites in both the US and Israel, which are determined to impose their imperialist diktat upon the entire Middle East, by whatever means necessary.

Whose "values" Clinton defends was demonstrated by her next public appearance after the pro-bombing rally at the UN—when she was the guest of honor at a campaign fundraising event sponsored by billionaire publisher Rupert Murdoch, whose right-wing media empire includes Fox News and the *New York Post*, two of the foulest spokesmen for the American ultra-right.

The reality is that both politicians and the media are systematically feeding lies to the American people about the escalating war in the Middle East, portraying the one-sided aggression against largely defenseless populations as a legitimate act of "self-defense." No major newspaper or broadcast network provides a clear picture of the carnage that has been unleashed against the people of Lebanon.

Given the near universal portrayal of Israel as the innocent victim, one would hardly know that Lebanese casualties—nearly all civilian—outnumber those in Israel—half of whom are soldiers—by close to ten-to-one.

The claim made by Israel, and echoed by Clinton at the New York rally, that these massive military offensives are a response to the capture of three Israeli soldiers—one in Gaza and two in south Lebanon—is absurd on its face. These operations have been long planned, and the captured soldiers have merely been exploited as a pretext—much to the dismay of their families, who have called on the Israeli government to negotiate their release.

In one of the demagogic lines that won the biggest round of applause from the Zionist rally, Clinton declared: "I want us here in New York to imagine, if extremist terrorists were launching rocket attacks across the Mexican or Canadian border, would we stand by or would we defend America against these attacks from extremists?"

The analogy is a far-fetched one at best, but she should have continued: "Wouldn't we bomb apartment buildings in Montreal, demolish Toronto's international airport, incinerate entire Canadian families in their homes and on the highways, and turn the population of southern Ontario into refugees?"

Another border analogy, which more accurately captures the wildly disproportionate character of Israel's response, would be: "Imagine if members of the right-wing Minutemen group opened fire on Mexican migrants preparing to cross the border and the government of Mexico

responded with massive air raids against San Diego, Dallas and Houston, blew up the runways at New York's JFK airport and sent hundreds of thousands of Americans fleeing north."

Of course Mexico has no military means of carrying out such a response against its neighbor to the north, any more than the Palestinians in Gaza can launch such an assault on Israel every time IDF forces storm into their territory, killing civilians and abducting people who disappear into Israel's prison system without ever being charged, much less tried. Nor has Lebanon the wherewithal to mount such an exercise in "self-defense" every time Israeli troops have crossed its border. Such self-righteous acts of massive military violence are reserved only for the most powerful gangsters in the region, Washington and Tel Aviv.

Speaking on the same platform with Hillary Clinton, Israel's UN Ambassador, Dan Gillerman, gave voice to this gangsterism. Turning toward the UN building, he shouted, "Let us finish the job!" Then, addressing the timid criticisms of certain European governments, he declared, "And to those countries who claim we are using disproportionate force, I have only this to say: you're damn right we are!"

This arrogant indifference to world public opinion and reveling in the use of brutal force are hallmarks of Israeli policy. Underlying them is the unconditional support provided by successive US governments and big business politicians like Clinton.

Hillary Clinton is perhaps the most slavish in her support for the positions of the Israeli right of any US political figure. According to figures released by the Federal Election Commission, she is the number-one recipient of campaign funds from the Israeli lobby in the 2005-2006 campaign cycle, far exceeding all other Democrats and Republicans alike.

Late last year, she made a trip to Israel for a photo opportunity next to the apartheid-style wall which Israel is using to grab more Palestinian territory and seal off thousands of people from their jobs, schools and farming lands. Endorsing the project, she proclaimed it was not "against the Palestinian people" but only "against terrorists."

She has distinguished herself by attacking the Bush administration from the right on its policy towards Iran, largely echoing the positions of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), which is promoting a US war against the Iranians.

Clinton's policies, however, are by no means unique. Both major parties have remained silent and indifferent toward the suffering of the Lebanese and Palestinian people, while fully endorsing Israel's "right" to launch aggression against Lebanon and Gaza. Both houses of the US Congress are preparing resolutions making this position explicit.

Clinton and the Democrats, no less than Bush and the Republicans, have made a calculated, cold-blooded decision to allow the carnage in Lebanon and Gaza to continue and to oppose any serious effort to secure a cease-fire before Israel has achieved its military objectives.

In running against Hillary Clinton for Senate, I categorically reject her support for Israeli militarism and expansionism. I call for the immediate cut-off of all US aid to the Israeli military machine, which today receives some \$3 billion annually—one fifth of Washington's total foreign aid spending, for a country that represents little more than one-one-thousandth of the world's population.

This enormous expenditure of US funds to arm Israel has the same aim as the illegal war and occupation in Iraq. It is not to "defend democracy" or "defeat terrorism," but rather to secure US domination of the Middle East and its strategic oil reserves and project American

economic and military power throughout the region.

Against Clinton's support for the continued occupation of Iraq, the Socialist Equality Party is demanding the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all US troops from the country. It likewise calls for holding all those responsible for dragging the American people into this war based upon lies to be held responsible, both politically and criminally.

Neither the struggle to end the war in Iraq, nor the fight against Israeli aggression in Lebanon and the Palestinian territories, can be advanced through appeals to the United Nations or the "international community," both of which have proven impotent before the eruption of US and Israeli militarism.

Rather, these struggles against imperialist war can be advanced only through the independent political mobilization of working people. Despite the opposition of the majority of the American population to the continuation of the Iraq war, the demand for the withdrawal of US troops finds no significant expression within either major party. The only way forward lies through a decisive break with the Democratic Party and the building of a new independent political party of the working class.

At the same time, the fight against war requires a struggle for the international unity of the working class, including a struggle to unite Jewish and Arab workers in Israel and the Arab countries in the struggle to free the region of the domination of imperialism and the local ruling classes—Arab bourgeois and Zionist alike—and develop its considerable resources for the benefit of all.

It is to further these aims that the Socialist Equality Party is intervening in the 2006 election. I urge all those who oppose the escalation of US and Israeli militarism in the Middle East and the growing threat of a wider war to support our campaign and to help place the candidates of the SEP on the ballot.



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