

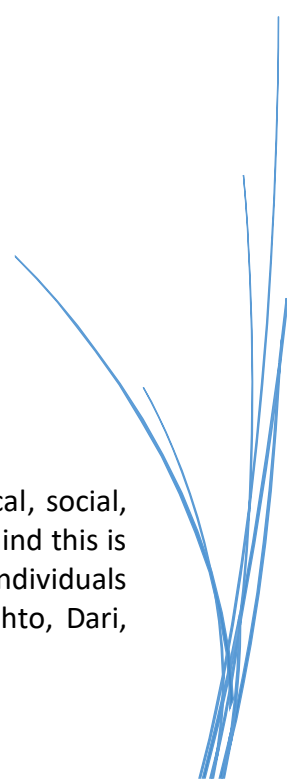
WEEKLY ANALYSIS

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CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT IN GAZA: FACTORS AND CONSEQUENCES



Weekly Analysis is one of the CSRS publications analyzing significant weekly political, social, economic, and security events in Afghanistan and the region. The prime motive behind this is to provide strategic insights and policy solutions to decision-making institutions and individuals in order to help them design better policies. Weekly Analysis is published in Pashto, Dari, English and Arabic languages.



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Center for Strategic and Regional Studies (CSRS)



CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT IN GAZA: FACTORS AND CONSEQUENCES

Introduction

Over the past 15 months, since the start of Operation Al-Aqsa Storm, the relentless attacks by the Israeli regime on Gaza have resulted in widespread destruction. This conflict has led to the death of over 46,913 Palestinians and injuries to 110,750 more, the majority of whom are women and children. Additionally, about 92% of residential buildings have been damaged or destroyed. Approximately 90% of Gaza's population, equating to 2.1 million people, have become displaced by the end of this ceasefire. Moreover, around 70% of healthcare facilities have been destroyed, and over 95% of schools have been partially or completely demolished.

The ceasefire agreement between the Israeli regime and the Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas, took place under dire circumstances. The international community and human rights organizations watched with concern as Gaza experienced a severe humanitarian crisis. The region faced food shortages, destruction of infrastructure, and homelessness for millions, and the spread of diseases amid the devastating war that claimed lives daily, turning the area into an open wound.

Following the implementation of the ceasefire agreement, there have been two stages of prisoner exchanges. In the first stage, 90 Palestinian prisoners, including 69 women and 21 children, were released in exchange for three Israeli women. In the second stage, 200 Palestinian prisoners, 120 of whom were serving life sentences, were released in exchange for four (military) Israeli women.

This article delves into the factors behind the Gaza ceasefire agreement, the key contents of the agreement, its benefits, and its consequences.

FACTORS LEADING TO THE CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT IN GAZA

Internal Factors

From the Palestinian Resistance: Over the 15 months of brutal conflict, the Palestinian resistance, led by the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas), has demonstrated remarkable resilience and



bravery. Despite Netanyahu's initial insistence on annihilating Hamas and liberating Israeli prisoners through force, aggression, and genocide, the Palestinian resistance has consistently responded to enemy actions with determination and courage. Recently, the Palestinian resistance regained control over areas in the Gaza Strip, such as Al-Nusayrat, Al-Mawasi, and Deir al-Balah, surprising even Western officials. Despite the Israeli regime's expectations, especially during the conflict, the resistance, particularly Hamas, has managed to reclaim these areas. Throughout the war, the steadfastness of the Palestinian people, despite facing martyrdom, injuries, displacement, and sanctions, alongside the resistance fighters, has demonstrated their ability to stand against Zionist threats and aggression, never wavering in their values.

From the Israeli Regime: From the beginning of the war, the Israeli regime has faced significant human and military losses against the Palestinian resistance. Despite these losses, they have been unable to achieve their military objectives. In addition to the pressure from the families of Israeli prisoners and the emergence of leaders like Trump in the United States, who view everything through an economic lens, it appears that the Israeli regime, under Netanyahu's leadership, perceives the future of continued warfare in Gaza as bleak. This is particularly true if they defy American authorities and face the potential cessation of American aid. The Israeli regime has felt its inability to sustain prolonged conflict.

External Factors

The American Factor

The primary driver behind the continuation of the war in Gaza was the United States. American officials, under the Biden administration, openly supported Netanyahu on the international stage, using their veto power in the UN Security Council to prolong the conflict in Gaza. They also sent ships loaded with heavy weapons to the Israeli regime, which were used to kill Palestinian children and women. This support made it clear that previous talks of a ceasefire were insincere.



However, the main factor behind the ceasefire in Gaza was a shift in the American stance on the conflict between the Israeli regime and the Palestinian resistance. With Donald Trump's victory in the U.S. presidential election, the cessation of hostilities between the Israelis and Hamas became a focal point for the American administration for two reasons:

1. **Biden Administration's Position:** Although Biden withdrew from the election race, Kamala Harris, who Biden's party and administration supported, failed to win the presidency. During the election campaign, Trump accused Biden of failing in various areas, including the chaotic U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, the handling of the war in Ukraine, and the strategic defeat in the Middle East due to supporting the Israeli regime in its battle with Hamas. Biden wanted to demonstrate to the next American administration that he could stop the war between the Israeli regime and Hamas, even though the credit for the ceasefire agreement would go to Donald Trump.

2. **Trump Administration's Realization:** The newly elected American team, led by Trump, recognized that despite over a year of unwavering support from Western governments, led by the U.S., the Israeli regime had not achieved any of its objectives. It was felt that continuing the war would not only bring defeat and disgrace to the Israeli regime and the U.S. but could also negatively impact the new American administration's relations with Arab and Islamic countries. Therefore, pressure was exerted on Netanyahu to agree to a ceasefire. As the Qatari Foreign Minister stated in a press conference, this ceasefire was the result of America's recent stance and its attention to this issue.

Regional Efforts

Regional Efforts: The efforts of regional countries such as Qatar and Egypt have been commendable. Qatar, in particular, has played a significant role in establishing a ceasefire in Gaza. Alongside the United States and Egypt, Qatar has sent humanitarian aid to the people of Gaza and engaged in various mediations to achieve a ceasefire. In some cases, Qatar has even been accused of supporting the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas). As stated by the Qatari Foreign Minister, Mohammed



bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, their joint efforts with Egypt and the U.S. have successfully led to a ceasefire between Hamas and the Israeli regime.

Public Dissatisfaction and International Pressure

Public dissatisfaction and international pressure have undoubtedly been key factors in reaching the ceasefire agreement in Gaza. This is evidenced by the millions of people protesting worldwide, as well as individual and group protests during speeches by Zionist officials, particularly former U.S. President Joe Biden and his Secretary of State, who were accused of involvement in the genocide in Gaza. The reactions against Israeli soldiers outside of Israel, who were held accountable for the crimes of the Israeli regime, further illustrate this point.

In some cases, these protests led to military actions, such as attacks by Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Houthis in Yemen, and the Popular Mobilization Forces in Iraq against the Israeli regime. Additionally, South Africa's filing of a complaint against the Israeli regime in the International Court of Justice to prevent genocide in Gaza marks the first step of its kind against Israel. Following this, the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for Netanyahu and Gallant, the former Israeli Defense Minister. All these factors likely encouraged the achievement of the ceasefire agreement between Hamas and the Israeli regime.

CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT IN GAZA: KEY POINTS

Overview of the Ceasefire Agreement

The ceasefire agreement between the Israeli regime and Hamas consists of three stages. We will focus on the most important points, especially in the first stage, which has now begun and will last for 42 days:

Withdrawal of Israeli Soldiers: In this section, both parties will stop military operations, and Israeli soldiers will withdraw from densely populated areas along the border and throughout the Gaza Strip,



moving eastward. The economic blockade of Gaza, which had been a long-standing dream of the Israeli regime before Operation Al-Aqsa Storm, will be neutralized with this agreement.

Prisoner Exchange: Hamas will release 33 Israeli prisoners, including both military and civilian women, children under 19 years old, and civilians over 50 years old who are ill or injured. In exchange, the Israeli regime will release 30 Palestinian women, children, and elderly for each released Israeli woman, child, or elderly person. Additionally, for each released Israeli female soldier, the Israeli regime will release 50 Palestinian prisoners, 30 of whom are serving life sentences and 20 who are serving sentences of up to 15 years. In the first stage, the Israeli regime will release about 2,000 Palestinian prisoners. In the second stage, negotiations will be held regarding the remaining Israeli and Palestinian prisoners. Despite Netanyahu's earlier insistence on forcibly freeing Israeli prisoners without any exchange, the Israeli regime has failed in this plan. On the other hand, Hamas has achieved its goal of securing the release of Palestinian prisoners by capturing Israeli soldiers.

Content of the Ceasefire Agreement in Gaza

Netzarim Corridor: The Netzarim Corridor stretches 6 kilometers from the border of the occupied territories through Gaza City to the Mediterranean Sea. This corridor, created during the Israeli regime's war on Palestine, will see Israeli forces withdraw to a point near the border on the 22nd day of the ceasefire's implementation.

Rafah Crossing: The Rafah Crossing, located in the southern Gaza Strip on the border between Palestine and Egypt, serves as a vital gateway for the people of Gaza to the outside world. It has long been a target of Zionist efforts to control it. According to the agreement, the crossing will reopen seven days after the agreement's implementation, allowing humanitarian aid to flow into Palestine.

Return of Internally Displaced Persons: The agreement stipulates that starting on the seventh day, internally displaced persons will be allowed to return to their homes without any inspection. This is notable given the severe devastation inflicted by the Israeli regime during the war, which had left many doubting whether anyone would ever return to this war-torn city.



Humanitarian Aid Protocol: As per the agreement, 600 trucks carrying humanitarian aid will enter Palestine daily through the Rafah Crossing. This includes 50 trucks with fuel and 300 trucks heading to northern Gaza. In the third stage, all bodies and remains recovered by both parties will be exchanged. Additionally, a reconstruction plan for Gaza will be implemented throughout 3 to 5 years. This plan will focus on rebuilding homes, civilian buildings, and infrastructure, as well as providing compensation to all affected individuals, under the supervision of several countries and organizations supporting the agreement.

It is worth noting that the provisions of this agreement were approved by Hamas eight months ago, in May 2024, but were initially rejected by the Israeli regime.

BENEFITS AND CONSEQUENCES

Benefits:

- 1. Strategic Defeat for the Israeli Regime:** Despite always considering itself victorious and invincible in every war, the Israeli regime has faced a strategic defeat against the Palestinian resistance, particularly Hamas. The regime has lost its informational and defensive prestige in the region and the world.
- 2. Exposure of Atrocities:** The Al-Aqsa Storm incident on October 7, 2023, not only forced the Israeli regime into a destructive war against Gaza's residents but also revealed its true criminal face, documenting its involvement in genocide for the first time. Previously, the regime had always portrayed itself as a victim to the world, especially to its Western allies.
- 3. Loss of Legitimacy:** The brutal actions of the Israeli regime against the people of Gaza, in light of the ceasefire agreement with Hamas, have led to a significant loss of moral and legal legitimacy for the regime. This conflict has brought the Palestinian issue back to the forefront of the international political agenda.



4. **Exposure of Western Hypocrisy:** The war from October 7 until the ceasefire agreement has exposed the West's hypocrisy and double standards in dealing with Gaza compared to Ukraine. It has eroded the moral and humanitarian legitimacy of Western regimes that have always advocated for human rights and freedoms.
5. **Weakening of the Iranian Axis:** The Israeli regime's aggression against Gaza, alongside Iran's commendable stance, has, amid the ongoing war in the Middle East, led to a weakening of Iran's influence in the region—a development that was previously unimaginable at the start of the conflict.
6. **Halt to Normalization:** Since the late 1970s, especially after the Arab Spring in 2011, many Arab countries have pursued a policy of normalizing relations with the Israeli regime, aiming to recognize Israel without addressing the Palestinian issue. However, the Al-Aqsa Storm operation and the victory of the Palestinian resistance have halted this normalization process.
7. **Revival of the Palestinian Issue:** The Palestinian issue, which had been forgotten by many countries, especially Arab and Islamic nations, and international organizations, has been revitalized. The Al-Aqsa Storm has brought it back to the international political agenda and reawakened its importance in the minds of future generations worldwide.
8. **Rekindling Values of Courage and Sacrifice:** From the start of the Al-Aqsa Storm operation to the Palestinian resistance's victory in the ceasefire agreement, the values of courage, martyrdom, and sacrifice have been revived among the Palestinian people and Arab and Islamic nations. These values had been overshadowed for years due to the influence of Western media and technology.

Consequences

1. **Lack of Permanent Solution:** While the Al-Aqsa Storm operation had its specific benefits, the ceasefire agreement, despite the significant human and financial losses for Palestinians, has not provided a permanent solution to the Palestinian issue. Given the Israeli regime's occupation policies, the conflict between the regime and Palestinian resistance fighters may resume sooner or later.



2. **Concerns about Resuming Conflict:** Although the agreement is based on a UN Security Council resolution emphasizing a permanent ceasefire, there are concerns about the resumption of conflict, at least after the first stage ends. The second stage also requires separate negotiations and agreements.

3. **Netanyahu's Dilemma:** Netanyahu's failure to fulfill his war promises has placed him in a dilemma regarding the ceasefire agreement. On one hand, American pressure led to the ceasefire in Gaza. However, given the corruption charges against him in Israel and his failure to achieve his war objectives against the Palestinian resistance, it is unlikely that the U.S. sees Netanyahu as a suitable option for Israel's future.

4. **Right-Wing Dissatisfaction:** The dissatisfaction of the right-wing faction with the ceasefire agreement is seen as the end of Netanyahu's political career in Israel. To appease the extreme right wing, it is not unlikely that Netanyahu might fabricate excuses to return to war. For instance, while a ceasefire has been established in Gaza, the Israeli regime initiated conflict in the West Bank yesterday, resulting in the death of two young Palestinians and injuries to several others in an attack by Israeli soldiers.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, despite the Israeli regime's brutality and significant military losses, they have not achieved any of their objectives during the war. Multiple factors, including American pressure, regional efforts such as mediation by countries like Qatar and Egypt, and the steadfastness of the Palestinian people and their brave resistance fighters, compelled the Israeli regime to agree to this ceasefire. This agreement has not fulfilled any of their goals except for the release of Israeli prisoners from Hamas, in exchange for which even large numbers of Palestinian prisoners were freed.

Undoubtedly, the ceasefire agreement has its benefits and consequences, which include the withdrawal of Israeli soldiers from densely populated areas in Gaza, the exchange of prisoners under specific conditions, the return of displaced persons to their homes, the temporary reopening of vital



crossings like Rafah and Salah al-Din, and the delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza. Additionally, a reconstruction program for Gaza will be discussed in the third stage of the ceasefire.

Nevertheless, the unresolved Palestinian issue after the Al-Aqsa Storm operation and the severe humanitarian impact of the war on Gaza are concerns that the international community and organizations should not overlook. Overall, the ceasefire agreement between the Israeli regime and Hamas is a significant step toward improving the humanitarian situation in the Middle East, especially in Gaza and ending a long and brutal conflict primarily caused by the Israeli regime's occupation and the suffering of innocent Palestinian civilians.

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