

Netanyahu vows continued war on Gaza as Israel, US agree to hostage swap, brief pause in Israeli rampage

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22 November 2023

Early Wednesday morning, the Israeli cabinet of ministers approved a proposed hostage exchange and a four-day pause in its genocidal war on Gaza. The terms of the deal mediated by Qatar between Israeli and US officials, on the one hand, and the Hamas administration of Gaza on the other were not published. However, Washington and its Israeli ally clearly intend at most a brief lull in the genocidal onslaught waged against the people of Gaza.

As Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu held talks with his ministers to approve or reject the deal, he said: “We are at war and we will continue the war until we achieve all our goals. To destroy Hamas, return all our hostages and ensure that nobody in Gaza can threaten Israel.”

Netanyahu’s strategy to ensure that Gaza is utterly helpless entails a blockade of water, fuel and food to Gaza, and the unrestrained application of overwhelming firepower against civilians, which has already destroyed half of Gaza’s buildings and claimed over 14,000 lives. Israeli officials laid out plans to expel all the Palestinians who survive the conflict from Gaza, ethnically cleansing the area. The pause agreed by Netanyahu does not mark any change in this strategy.

It aims to allow the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) some time to regroup and obtain the return of about 50 of the hostages taken by Hamas forces during the October 7 uprising against the Gaza blockade, and to lull to sleep mass global protests against the Israeli war on Gaza.

The weeks since October 7 have seen millions protest worldwide against the NATO-backed Israeli genocide in Gaza. This movement has shaken capitalist governments around the world which maintain close relations with the Israeli regime. This deal does not in any way represent an attempt to grant the demands of this movement, but rather

to be seen as partially granting its demands while preparing even greater atrocities. Indeed, the same day Israeli and US officials agreed to the deal, they escalated threats and attacks on Gaza, Lebanon, Iraq, Iran and Russia.

The war on Gaza must be not paused, but stopped. The announced deal indicates the possibility and the necessity of escalating the movement to stop the war on Gaza—above all, by mobilizing workers internationally in a struggle against it.

The deal approved by the Israeli cabinet of ministers, on the other hand, states: “The Israeli government is committed to bringing all the abductees home. Tonight, the government approved the outline for the first stage of achieving this goal, under which at least 50 abductees—women and children—will be released over a span of four days, during which there will be a lull in the fighting. ... The release of every ten additional abductees will result in an additional day of respite.”

To underscore that the Israeli government is opposed to any halt to the war on Gaza, the statement added: “The Israeli government, the IDF and the security forces will continue the war to return all the abductees, complete the elimination of Hamas and ensure that Gaza does not renew any threat to the State of Israel.”

Six weeks after the conflict began, it is apparent that Netanyahu’s plans to “eliminate” Hamas and kill all of its members entail the destruction of Gaza as a functioning society and the unleashing of genocidal violence to complete the conquest of the Palestinian enclave.

Two central points can already be made based on the initial, partial reports on the deal Qatar has negotiated between the Netanyahu regime, Washington and Hamas.

Firstly, it is an inherently unstable and shaky agreement, opposed by powerful factions in the Israeli ruling elite

who openly support a genocidal policy. Israeli National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir of the far-right Otzma Yehudit party denounced the pause as a “disaster” and the decision of the Israeli cabinet to approve it as “idiocy.”

Secondly, the deal does not announce a shift by the Israeli government or its allies to a peace policy. Rather, it is part of a plan for a continued escalation of Israeli and NATO military operations across the Middle East and the entire Eurasian landmass, as the capitalist system again plunges humanity into a world war.

Shortly before the deal was announced, Israel launched yet another air strike on the Jabaliya refugee camp, which it has repeatedly targeted for atrocities. The Palestinian Wafa news agency reported that the strike killed 33 people and wounded dozens more.

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) also launched intensified bombings across Israel’s northern border into Lebanon. The Israeli strikes claimed the lives of three employees of Al Mayadeen TV, which said the IDF “deliberately” targeted its correspondent Farah Omar and cameraman Rabih Me’mari. Both of them, together with another employee of the channel, were killed.

The escalation of Israeli military aggression against Gaza, Lebanon, and other surrounding areas proceeds hand-in-hand with NATO military escalation against Iran, Russia and China.

Yesterday, the Pentagon announced that US warplanes bombed pro-Iranian militias in Iraq, who had fired on US troops at al-Asad Airbase in western Iraq. US forces have been stationed there since the illegal 2003 invasion of Iraq as part of the war for regime-change in Syria that NATO has waged since 2011.

Pentagon spokesman Brigadier General Pat Ryder said:

We can confirm an attack last night by Iran-backed militias using a close-range ballistic missile against US and coalition forces at Al-Asad Airbase, which resulted in eight injuries and some minor damage to infrastructure ... Immediately following the attack, a US military AC-130 aircraft in the area conducted a self-defense strike against an Iranian-backed militia vehicle and a number of Iranian-backed militia personnel involved in this attack. This self-defense strike resulted in several enemy KIA (killed in action).

part of a broader, global war that NATO is waging against Iran, Russia and, ultimately, China, which has supported Iran and Russia. In a webinar for the press, White House National Security spokesman John Kirby emphasized that as part of the war on Gaza, Washington and its NATO allies will intensify military operations against Russian and Iranian forces in Ukraine and the Middle East.

Kirby denounced Russia’s Wagner Group militia, which he claimed was preparing to provide anti-air missile systems and other essential weaponry to Lebanese or Iranian forces. “Wagner, at the direction of the Russian government, (is) preparing to provide an air defense capability to either Hezbollah or Iran,” he said.

“Iran may be preparing to go a step further in its support for Russia,” he continued. “We are ... concerned that Iran is considering providing Russia with ballistic missiles now for use in Ukraine.” He made clear that NATO—which is already at war with Russia in Ukraine and is firing on Iranian troops or allied forces in Iraq, Syria and Lebanon—intends to escalate these wars.

“We’re certainly prepared to use our counterterrorism sanctions authorities against Russian individuals or entities that might make these destabilizing transfers,” he said, adding: “We’re going to continue to use these and other tools at our disposal to expose and disrupt Russians’ and Iranians’ expanding military partnership, alongside our allies and partners.”

Such statements reveal that the genocidal war Israel has waged on the Palestinians is bound up with far broader political and geopolitical calculations of the NATO imperialist powers. To truly stop the genocide against Gaza, workers and youth around the world must continue and intensify the struggle against militarism and imperialist war.



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NATO attacks against Iran and pro-Iranian forces are