

Netanyahu outlines his plan to ethnically cleanse and seize Gaza for Israel

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Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has bluntly spelled out his plan to ethnically cleanse and then seize Gaza for Israel. In doing so he rejected domestic demands for a ceasefire tied to the release of hostages and denied face-saving claims made by the United States administration to justify its support for genocide that there will be some form of Palestinian mini-state established in its aftermath.

Speaking at a press conference last Thursday, Netanyahu insisted, “I will not compromise on full Israeli security control over all the territory west of the Jordan River”. His statement also prefigures an assault on the West Bank and the seizure of all Palestinian-held territory.

War would “continue until the end, until the victory, until the elimination of Hamas” and “nothing will stop us.” Ending the war prematurely “would harm Israel’s security for generations,” he said, suggesting this could mean military action continuing until next year.

US President Joe Biden responded Saturday with what was reportedly his first phone call with Netanyahu for a month, after which he claimed that the Israeli leader would consider some “type” of two-state solution.

Netanyahu’s spokesman dismissed Biden’s claim Sunday, saying that “In his conversation with President Biden, prime minister Netanyahu reiterated his policy that, after Hamas is destroyed, Israel must retain security control over Gaza to ensure that Gaza will no longer pose a threat to Israel, a requirement that contradicts the demand for Palestinian sovereignty.”

Netanyahu said Sunday, “I emphasized to President Biden our determination to achieve all the goals of the war, and to ensure that Gaza never again constitutes a threat to Israel.” Under his leadership, Israel would wage a far wider regional war “on all fronts and in all sectors. We are not giving immunity to any terrorist: not in Gaza, not in Lebanon, not in Syria, and not anywhere.”

Netanyahu and his generals have repeatedly made clear that Israel is waging war not just on the Palestinians but Iran and its allies, with Defence Minister Yoav Gallant declaring that Israel faces a war on seven fronts: Gaza, the West Bank, and Iran and its allies in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and the Houthis in Yemen. Replying to a reporter who asked why Israel was making do

with attacks on Iran’s proxies rather than attacking Iran directly, Netanyahu said, “Who says we aren’t attacking Iran? We are attacking Iran.”

On Friday night, Israeli forces bombed Syria’s capital, Damascus, targeting Iranian forces allied to the Syrian government during NATO’s 13-year war for regime change in the country. Those killed included the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps’ (IRGC) Syria intelligence chief and four other IRGC members.

Emboldened by the prospect of a Trump victory in the US presidential elections in November to openly clash with Biden, Netanyahu threw down the gauntlet to his domestic opponents. Rejecting any possibility of holding elections, he said, “Going to elections would be irresponsible and would badly halt the war effort.”

Politically embarrassed by the confirmation that all talk of a Palestinian state, like appeals for Israel to avoid civilian casualties, is empty rhetoric for public consumption, Biden politely stressed that creating a Palestinian state was “still a possibility.”

A spokesman for UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak called Netanyahu’s opposition “disappointing”, while the European Union on Monday leaked a policy document asserting that the block will press ahead with peace talks including a two-state solution without the involvement of Israel, because it was “unrealistic to assume that Israelis and Palestinians will in the near future directly engage in bilateral peace negotiations”.

On all fundamentals, Washington is at one with Netanyahu’s war aims, though it needs the fig leaf of a two-state solution to help regional allies including Saudi Arabia and Egypt justify their refusal to come to the aid of the Palestinians.

Israel’s attack on the Palestinians was planned with Washington and designed as the opening move in a military campaign aimed against Iran and its allies, as part of US imperialism’s broader preparations for war against China. Both Washington and its ally London dispatched warships to the Middle East within days of the October 7 attack to secure hegemony over the resource-rich region.

Netanyahu heads a crisis-ridden and deeply unpopular government and his efforts to play to his right-wing constituency have made this worse. Prior to October 7 and

Netanyahu's assault on Gaza, he faced mass protest movements against his far-right coalition.

Anti-Palestinian sentiment over the October 7 incursion and the launching of revenge attacks was used to suppress opposition, but public anger has grown over revelations that the intended attack was known of and allowed to take place in order to provide an excuse for launching war on Gaza. This has been fueled by the massive cost of the war, its brutality and the failure to prioritise the release of hostages.

The prime minister and his Likud party's poll ratings have plummeted. The opposition National Unity—led by former army chiefs of staff Benny Gantz and Gadi Eisenkot, both now serving in Netanyahu's war cabinet, and Yesh Atid leader Yair Lapid—is predicted to win an election.

On Monday, families of the hostages burst into a session of the Knesset Finance Committee demanding that the government do more to secure their family members' release. Outside the Knesset, dozens of protesters called for new elections before being dragged away by security officers.

This followed days of small but growing protests in Israel's major cities calling for talks to halt the war and secure the immediate release of the remaining 140 hostages, with some protesters also calling for fresh elections. On Saturday, thousands took part in a demonstration in Tel Aviv, whose streets are plastered with signs reading "Bring Them Home" and demanding the immediate dissolution of the Knesset and fresh elections.

Hundreds of anti-war protesters, organized by Partnership for Peace, a coalition of civil society groups, took part in a demonstration in the mixed city of Haifa calling for an end to the war, a hostage deal and elections. The protest had initially been banned by the police and was only allowed after an appeal to the Supreme Court and the imposition of a 700 attendee maximum.

The protests, though much smaller than last year's demonstrations against Netanyahu's attacks on Israel's Supreme Court, suffer from the same political weaknesses. A retired general, Nimrod Sheffer, spoke at the Haifa demonstration and called on Eisenkot and Gantz to "choose whether you are in the government and continue to serve the government, or leave it now and start serving the people. The Israeli Knesset must return the mandate to the people, now."

Demands for a ceasefire, the release of the hostages and fresh elections can never be achieved by appealing to the war criminals Eisenkot and Gantz. Both will continue to wage war alongside Netanyahu for as long as this is required. Speaking of Gaza, Gantz has declared, "The war here is for our existence and for Zionism, and so I can't provide an estimate of the length of each stage in the war and the fighting that will continue after. We can't retreat from our strategic objective," and "On the question of the operation's length, there are no limitations."

Their pledge to the Israeli bourgeoisie and to US imperialism

is that should a change of government become necessary, then National Unity and its coalition partners will continue to wage the war, only more effectively—especially in combining genocide in Gaza with the broader regional conflict with Iran and its allies.

In an interview with Israel's Channel 12, Eisenkot declared his support for a temporary pause in the fighting for talks to secure the release of the hostages, to maintain public support for the escalating war. But he followed these remarks with the declaration, "For me, the mission to save civilians comes before killing the enemy. The enemy can be killed afterward."

Eisenkot boasted of how the decision by National Unity to join the war cabinet and wage Israel's genocide in Gaza had prevented Netanyahu plunging Israel into a disaster. According to the *Times of Israel*, "on October 11, Israel was on the verge of striking Hezbollah but he and Gantz managed to convince Netanyahu and the war cabinet to hold off. 'Our presence there prevented Israel from making a grave strategic error,' Eisenkot said.

"Had a decision been made to attack Hezbollah, 'we would have fulfilled [Hamass's Gaza leader Yahya] Sinwar's strategic vision' of bringing about a regional war, he said. The entire axis — 'Syria, Iraq, Iran' — would have gotten involved, he said, and then '[the war against] Hamass, which caused us the greatest damage since the establishment of the state, would have become a secondary arena,' he said."

The *Times of Israel* adds, "Nonetheless, he did not rule out the potential for escalation to war."

Creating the political conditions for continuing an agenda of genocide and war is what preoccupies Eisenkot and Gantz. The former explained that while both would continue for now to take full part in the war cabinet, "It is necessary, within a period of months, to bring the Israeli voter back to the polls and hold elections in order to renew trust, because right now there is no trust."



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