

# Cease-fire calls mount as death tolls rise in Gaza

## International Desk

Amid the escalating tensions in Gaza, calls for an immediate cease-fire have mounted as the United Nations warned Friday that “many more will die” as a result of Israel’s ongoing siege of the enclave.

Pressure is building on the international community to persuade Israel to allow desperately needed aid into Gaza. The UN and several countries in the region have called for an immediate cease-fire, while others advocate for a “humanitarian pause” in fighting.

But the world has so far failed to unite around a common position on the crisis nearly three weeks since the outbreak of the war, sparked by Hamas’ October 7 attacks, which killed over 1,400 people in Israel.

The Health Ministry in Hamas-governed Gaza said Friday that 7,326 people have been killed in the Palestinian territory since the eruption of war.

The latest death toll includes 3,038 children killed, a ministry statement said, while 18,967 people have been wounded across Gaza.

## ‘Soon, many more will die’

“As we speak, people in Gaza are dying. They are not only dying from bombs and strikes, (but also) soon, many more will die from the consequences of (the) siege imposed on the Gaza Strip,” said Philippe Lazzarini, commissioner general for the

UN agency for Palestinian refugees.

“Basic services are crumbling. Medicine is running out. Food and water are running out. The streets of Gaza have started overflowing with sewage,” AFP reported.

## Humanitarian ‘pauses’

European Union leaders on Thursday stopped short of calling for a cease-fire in Gaza, instead appealing for humanitarian “pauses” to provide aid as the UN warned that its operations were being “paralyzed” by Israel’s bombardment of the besieged enclave. They said the EU “will work closely with partners in the region to protect civilians, provide assistance, and facilitate access to food, water, medical care, fuel, and shelter”. The communique, released after meetings in Brussels Thursday, follows several failed attempts by the UN Security Council to pass a resolution on the Israel-Hamas war, with member states preparing to vote on another draft resolution on Friday — this time put forward by Jordan on behalf of Arab states.

Jordan’s Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi told diplomats gathered at the United Nations Assembly Hall that “collective punishment is not self-defense.” Jordan’s proposed resolution calls for a “cessation of hostilities,” the release of Israelis captured during the Hamas attack, and the rejection of “any attempts at forced transfer of the

Palestinian civilian population,” CNN reported.

## New phase of war

Israeli forces entered a new phase of their war against Gaza on Thursday, launching a substantial but limited raid into the coastal strip, in what was described as a probing action in preparation for a more sustained ground offensive. Israel says it is preparing a ground invasion but has been urged by the US and Arab countries to delay an operation that would multiply the number of civilian casualties in the densely populated coastal strip and possibly ignite a wider conflict.

The ground raid into Gaza was carried out for the second consecutive night, Israel’s military said Friday. The small raid was backed by fighter jets and drones, with the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) saying it had struck dozens of targets on the outskirts of Gaza City.

An opinion poll published on Friday suggested almost half of Israelis now want to hold off on a ground invasion out of fears for at least 224 civilian prisoners that are reported to be held there.

## Release of prisoners needs cease-fire

The Russian newspaper Kommersant quoted a member of a Hamas delegation visiting Moscow as saying that time was needed to locate all those who had been abducted by various Palestinian factions in the Hamas attack.

“They seized dozens of people, most of them civil-

ians, and we need time to find them in the Gaza Strip and then release them,” Abu Hamid said.

He said Hamas, which has freed four prisoners so far, had made clear that it intended to release “civilian prisoners”.

The officials visiting Moscow were quoted by Russian media on Friday as saying the resistance group viewed all its prisoners as Israelis, whatever additional passports they held, and could not release any of them until Israel agreed to a cease-fire.

## Iran’s priority

During the meeting with Hamas’ representative

Moussa Abu Marzouk, Iran’s deputy foreign minister Ali Baqeri Kani also emphasized the need for achieving a cease-fire, lifting the blockade of the Gaza Strip, and providing humanitarian assistance to Gazans, according to a statement Friday by the Iranian Embassy in Moscow, Mehr news agency reported.

IRNA said Abu Marzouk told Baqeri Kani that he appreciated Iran’s support for the Palestinian people.

## EU’s stance

With the EU’s 27-nation bloc being split between relatively pro-Palestinian members such as Ireland

and Spain, and staunch backers of Israel including Germany and Austria, there was less consensus on urging any halt to Israel’s retaliatory bombardment of Gaza. Ahead of the Thursday talks in Brussels, Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer said, “All the fantasies of truces, cease-fires, etc. have the effect of strengthening Hamas in its determination to continue its action and perpetuate this terrible terror.”

In their statement, the EU leaders said they supported a Spanish proposal on “holding an international peace conference soon” to discuss trying to find a lasting, two-state solution.



Smoke plume ascends following Israeli bombardment over the northern Gaza Strip on October 27, 2023.  
● MENAHEM KAHANA/AFP

Diplomats from some EU nations had warned that delays over finding the right words as the death toll mounts in Gaza were damaging the bloc’s global standing.

“We can feel that some in the world are using the circumstances to try to rally a part of the international community to attack the European Union,” European Council President Charles Michel said.



## Israel’s war exposes West’s hatred of Palestinians

### OPINION

The ongoing Palestinian-Israeli war has galvanised massive Western support for Israeli Jews coupled with genocidal calls to “finish” off the Palestinians from across the Western political spectrum.

Indeed, even voices sympathetic to the Palestinians condemned the breakout against their Israeli prison guards on 7 October. They also rushed to adopt Israeli

propaganda, including the outlandish claims of decapitated babies and rapes, which were later quietly retracted by the very same Western outlets like CNN and the Los Angeles Times that initially helped spread these fabrications.

This fanatical Western hatred of the Palestinians and adoration of Israel have shocked most Arabs, even those who already considered the West the main enemy of the Pal-

estinian people. Over the last four decades, there has been a prevailing misconception by liberal and pro-Western Arab intellectuals, businesspeople, and political elites that Western liberals, and even some conservatives, had changed their views of Palestinians and become less hostile.

However, this change in the Western perception of Palestinians is limited to their being no more than victims of massacres. But

this has not translated into Western support for their right to resist their sadistic colonisers, and any sympathy they receive always co-exists with the undying Western support for Israel regardless of how many Palestinians it kills.

While some Westerners may sympathise with Palestinians as victims of Israeli oppression, they do not sympathise with any form of resistance the Palestinians adopt.

The underlying convictions governing where Palestinians fit in Western morality are derived not from what Palestinians do or do not do, but from how they relate to European Jews. Whereas in the West, European Jews are depicted as refugees fleeing the Nazis and the subsequent horrors of post-Holocaust Europe, survivors of a war of annihilation, and victims of British commitments to the Arabs, Palestinians view European Jews from their own direct experiences.

For Palestinians, European Jews did not arrive as refugees but as invaders whose sole purpose was to appropriate Palestine by any possible means to realise Zionist colonial aspirations, which began half a century before the rise of Hitler to power. This is why Palestinians view European Jews not as helpless refugees, but as armed colonists

committing massacres. It is this perspective that Edward Said wanted to convey in his classic essay “Zionism from the Standpoint of its Victims”.

While much of Israel’s violence is therefore “explained” in the West by the pre-Israel status of European Jews, Palestinian resistance is also viewed through the same status of those same Jews, and not through the history of the Zionist colonial conquest of the land of the Palestinians. Israel’s actions are presented in the West as stemming from the status of those Jews who arrived on the shores of Palestine after fleeing the Nazi regime, only to be confronted by yet another violent “antisemitic” campaign, this time by Palestinian Arabs and Arabs from neighbouring countries intent on expelling them from their last and only haven. Thus, Israel’s violence, regret-

table as it may be on occasion, is in effect viewed as always self-defensive in nature.

In the same vein, Palestinian resistance, peaceful or violent, which has always been and remains in self-defence against foreign invading colonists, is explained as part of an “antisemitic” campaign against Jewish refugees rather than resistance to Zionist colonists. This means that while some Westerners may sympathise with Palestinians as victims of Israeli oppression, they do not sympathise with any form of resistance the Palestinians adopt that could succeed in overthrowing the Israeli colonial and racist regime. The moment Palestinians did on 7 October, all the sympathy disappeared.

*This is part of an opinion that first appeared on Middle East Eye.*



Egyptian activist Zein Rahma (R) confronts CNN’s Clarissa Ward (L) on the network’s reporting of the Israel-Palestine war in Rafah, Palestine, on October 20, 2023.  
● AIJAZEERA