



Smoke raises after an Israeli air strike in the northern Gaza Strip on October 28, 2023.
● ARIS MESSINIS/AFP

Need for setting up a 'Muscat hotline'



By Heshmatollah Falahatpisheh
Expert on International Affairs

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

Heartbreaking choice

Speaking to CNN by phone from near Gaza's Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital, one eyewitness, Salem Ahmad Ammar said that he and his wife had decided to separate in hopes that one would survive to care for their kids.

"Don't know if I (will) live to see the daylight tomorrow morning," Ammar said. "I split from my wife, and the kids went to her parents' house, and I came to the hospital here in the event we die in different places and maybe one of us would live and our kids will live. Difficult choices we are making."

Since the beginning of the conflict between Israel and Hamas in Gaza, Arab countries' diplomatic efforts at the UN Security Council and the General Assembly to end the conflict have produced no results.

In such events, diplomacy in parallel with war determines the course of scenarios related to that event. But what is happening in Gaza is not a good example of this policy because, unfortunately, diplomacy is serving the ongoing war in the Palestinian territory.

I believe that Iran, as the most important supporter of Hamas, and the United States, as the most important ally of Israel, were surprised at the beginning of the conflict, but now they should act in such a way that they would not be surprised again. Therefore, I propose setting up a "Muscat hotline" between Tehran and Washington.

Currently, Iran and the US are engaged in a war of words, and this issue usually goes nowhere. Extremely violent conditions prevail in the battlefield and, in such circumstances, it is better for the regional countries to take a long-term view about the event and its consequences and try to strengthen diplomatic channels to put an end to the conflict.

I believe that diplomacy between Iran and the US, in any form, can definitely be fruitful for ending the conflict. If the future of the region, the people of Gaza, especially the children, are important, instead of warning and threatening each other, the US and Iran should seek a solution for the deadly conflict in the Gaza Strip.

The Americans, especially President Joe Biden, tried hard not to fall into the trap of Benjamin Netanyahu's extremism in the past year, but now it seems that this has happened and Netanyahu has dragged the US into the middle of the regime's tensions.

In fact, both sides of the conflict are trying to drag others into the war. If Iran and the US do not have a proper assessment of the situation, the ongoing conflict may lead to a wider conflict between the two countries. But it does not seem that Tehran and Washington intend to worsen the current tensions between themselves, which would be against their national interests.

It seems that Hamas attacked Israel without coordination with Tehran. Just as Israel does not seem to have coordinated with the US in the initial stage of its operation. Now, both Hamas and Israel expect support from Iran and the US, respectively. This support is being given now, but in order to end this devastating war and prevent the killing of more women and children in Gaza, Iran and the United States must manage the situation through diplomacy.

Given the importance of Iran and the US in the world, the idea of setting up a "Muscat hotline" between them can play an important role in resolving the conflict.

"The superpowers at play are not doing enough at the moment," said a protester. "This is why we're here: We're calling for a cease-fire, calling for Palestinian rights, the right to exist, to live, human rights, all our rights."

Echoing Washington's stance, Sunak's government has stopped short of calling for a cease-fire, and instead advocated humanitarian pauses to allow aid to reach

Hebron called on Saturday for a global boycott of Israeli products.

"Don't contribute to the killing of the children of Palestine," they chanted.

Elsewhere in Europe, people took to the streets of Copenhagen, Rome and Stockholm.

Some cities in France have banned rallies since the war began, fearing they could fuel social tensions, but despite a ban in Paris, a small rally took place on Saturday. Several hundred people also marched in the southern city of Marseille. In New Zealand's capital, Wellington, thousands



people in Gaza. In Malaysia, a large crowd of demonstrators chanted slogans outside the US Embassy in Kuala Lumpur.

Iraqis took part in a rally in Baghdad; and in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, Palestinian protesters in



of people holding Palestinian flags and placards reading "Free Palestine" marched to Parliament House.

Reuters, AFP, AP, and Tasnim contributed to this report.

