

Israel pressured by allies over plight of civilians in Gaza

Raisi calls on int'l community to impel Israel to end attacks, blockade

International Desk

Israel faced mounting pressure from some of its closest allies Wednesday over the plight of civilians in Gaza, as Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi also called on the international community to double down on efforts to halt the regime's attacks on the besieged strip.

In Gaza, thousands streamed on foot out of the enclave's north because of dwindling food and water and fear of approaching Israeli forces.

Over 70% of Gaza's population of 2.3 million have already left their homes, but the number making their way south has enlarged recently as Israeli troops began the war inside Gaza City and the humanitarian situation grows increasingly dire.

The Group of Seven wealthy nations called Wednesday for the "unimpeded" delivery of food, water, medicine and fuel, and for "humanitarian pauses" in the fighting. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has left open the possibility of small pauses to deliver humanitarian aid, but has ruled out a broader ceasefire unless all hostages are freed.

Meanwhile, Americans have become more likely to describe Israel as an ally that shares US interests and values since the war began, but they're divided over whether Israel has gone too far in its response to Hamas' last attack, according to a new poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

The survey, which was conducted from November 2-6, also reveals skepticism among Democrats toward Israel, which could present a challenge for President Joe Biden as he tries to balance support for the country's defense and his party's shifting priorities.

The result is a rather muddled picture that presents few easy options for the White House as it keeps one eye on public opinion with an election year on the horizon.

49 journalists killed

As fighting in the Palestinian terri-

tory enters its second month, the Hamas-run Health Ministry in the strip said on Wednesday that the death toll from the war reached 10,569, among which were 4,324 children and 2,823 women, with more than 26,000 more wounded. Meanwhile, the intensified assaults on the Gaza Strip have killed 49 journalists since October 7, when the Hamas resistance group launched a full-scale attack against the occupied territory.

Two more Palestinian journalists fell victims to the attacks by Israeli forces on civilians in the besieged strip on Tuesday, bringing the total number of journalists killed to 49. The Gaza-based Government Media Office said in a statement on Tuesday that one of the journalists worked for local Al-Aqsa Radio, Anadolu Agency reported.

'Crimes against humanity'

According to an independent United Nations expert, a month of attacks on targets within the Gaza Strip have destroyed or damaged 45 percent of all housing units in the Palestinian territory.

The widespread and systematic bombardment of housing and civilian infrastructure in Gaza amounts to a war crime and a crime against humanity, Balakrishnan Rajagopal said on Wednesday.

The UN special rapporteur on the right to adequate housing stressed that systematic or widespread bombardment of housing, civilian objects and infrastructure are strictly prohibited under international law.

"Carrying out hostilities with the knowledge that they will systematically destroy and damage civilian housing and infrastructure, rendering an entire city – such as Gaza City – uninhabitable for civilians is a war crime," he said.

When such acts are "directed against a civilian population, they also amount to crimes against humanity," he said.

Rajagopal, an independent expert appointed by the UN Human Rights Council but who does not speak on behalf of the United Nations, had previously coined the term "do-

micide" to refer to the systematic and widespread attacks on civilian housing and infrastructure that cause death and suffering. Domicide, he said, "is now being committed in Gaza."

More Palestinians fleeing

Around 1.5 million people have been displaced in Gaza amid the destruction and Israeli calls to evacuate the entire north of the territory, according to UN figures.

The pace of civilians fleeing the combat zone in northern Gaza has picked up as Israel's air and ground campaign there intensifies. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said Wednesday that about 15,000 people fled on Tuesday, compared to 5,000 on Monday and 2,000 on Sunday.

The densely populated northern area of Gaza, specifically Gaza City and adjacent crowded urban refugee camps, are the focus of Israel's campaign to fight Hamas.

Also, in the occupied West Bank, more than 160 Palestinians have been killed in the violence and Israeli raids. More than 1,400 people in Israel have been killed, most of them in the October 7 Hamas attack.

Out of medical supplies

As the healthcare system is "under severe strain," the International Committee of the Red Cross warned on Wednesday that doctors in Gaza are running out of medical supplies.

"In the last week, I've had to tell a father that his child has non-survivable burn injuries. We've had to treat young patients pulled out of the rubble after 48 hours," said the ICRC chief surgeon Tom Potokar, who is now working in the European Gaza Hospital in Khan Younis.

"We are really running out of things now, dressings, particularly for the burns. We are running out of anesthetic and analgesic drugs. The staff, both ourselves and the local staff here are getting very worn out. The living conditions are very basic. There's not much food.

... But of course, it's nothing compared to what the people here in Gaza are suffering at this moment," Potokar said.

Call for end of attacks

Speaking in a joint press conference with his Tajik counterpart Emomali Rahmon, the Iranian president called on the international community to double down on efforts to "halt Israeli attacks on Gaza, saying the entire world is concerned about the situation in the small blockaded territory.

Raisi said that "all the conscientious people" are worried over the fate of the poor Palestinians in Gaza. He described Palestine as the priority "issue of Islam as well as an issue of humanity," and everybody wants an immediate halt to attacks on Gaza and the end of genocide of people, including children in Palestine.

"The people of the world want the end of atrocities, the removal of the blockade, delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza and restoration of the rights of Palestinians," he said, calling on international organizations to hear the voice of the people and take serious action to stop Israel.

Hezbollah retaliation

On Wednesday, Lebanese resistance group Hezbollah claimed two attacks on Israeli infantry units in the areas of Shomera and Dovev which it said inflicted casualties on Israeli forces. There was no immediate confirmation of the casualties from the Israeli military.

Following the strikes, Lebanon's state-run National News Agency and an Associated Press journalist in south Lebanon reported heavy shelling in several border areas in Lebanon.

Hezbollah said in a statement that the attack on Dovev was in retaliation for Israeli forces targeting an ambulance in Lebanon. On Sunday, local Lebanese officials said an Israeli drone had struck near two ambulances on their way to pick up casualties from overnight strikes in southern Lebanon, wounding four paramedics.

Why is US target of global protests?



By Amirali Abolfath
Expert in US Affairs

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

Since the beginning of the war and the criminal attacks of Israel on the people of Gaza, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Hezbollah, as well as Palestinian resistance groups, have always addressed the United States and taken a position as if the main party in this war was the United States, not



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Israel. This position is based on the fact that Israel is not a significant power without US support. It has neither a large population nor a large territory. Economically, although it has some advantages in some industries, such as military and agriculture, it is not considered a large economy as a whole and is defined as a dependent economy.

Its regime, which is at the level of a moderate power, does not refrain from any action to reach its objectives. It does not implement UN resolutions, is building settlements against international law, is not committed to any peaceful plan, and has now undertaken genocide in Gaza in the past month. All these actions are carried out with Washington's support. As an example, Russia is considered a powerful country, and has the world's largest nuclear power plant, but after the attack on Ukraine, the Western world, led by the United States, put the greatest pressure on Russia. The same Western world and the United States have not only hushed up Israel's crimes in Gaza, but also supported it, as the US is opposed to the various global pressures for a ceasefire. In fact, the US is doing everything it can to support Israel. So if it were not for decades of US support, the Israel-Palestine conflict would not have lasted for 75 years.

It is natural for the United States to face protests and criticism. In the diplomatic sphere, we are also witnessing that the main destination of US Secretary of State's visits is Arab countries, which means that the Arabs also see the US as an influential side in the war between Israel and Hamas. Therefore, if a ceasefire is to be achieved, it must be agreed upon by both parties. But it is the US that is drafting the Security Council resolutions for a ceasefire, and its president goes to Tel Aviv in the midst of the war to support Israel and meet with Netanyahu and provide its regime with all the military weapons and equipment it needs.

Since Israel and the United States recognize Hamas as a terrorist group, they are committed to destroying the group. So they are not willing to negotiate with Hamas for a ceasefire, because they think it means acknowledging Hamas. So against global pressures, they are playing with words, and instead of a ceasefire to end the war, they speak of a "friendly human ceasefire," which, in fact, has nothing to do with a ceasefire and an end to war.

Since the United States is Israel's primary supporter, it is the most influential side of the war and, therefore, ceasefire will only be achieved when the US wants it. Then Washington would convince Tel Aviv to accept the ceasefire.

My prediction is that with the rise of global protests around the world, especially in the West, and the increasing pressure of public opinion, the United States and Israel will be willing to talk to the Palestinians and accept a ceasefire. Many Western analysts have also told Israel that the goal of destroying Hamas is unattainable, and even if Hamas disappears, new groups or organizations will emerge stronger than Hamas.