

## Cut oil production, Israel will cave to global pressure

International Desk

By Javad  
Mohammad Ali  
Staff writer

### OPINION

The only things that came out of the Riyadh summit between Arab and Islamic States were a statement and a delegation that was sent to the capitals of the permanent member states of the UNSC to beseech them to demand a cease-fire in Gaza. Individually, Arab states did not do any better. Jordan and Bahrain only recalled their ambassadors from the occupied territories, and that was it, which is still more than what any other of them did. Latin American countries have taken more practical steps for Gaza in quantity and quality, when no one ever expected them to say anything.

So far, the response of Arab countries to the Israeli genocide of Palestinians in Gaza has been so meager that one wonders that maybe, just maybe, this is the most that they can do, that the balance of power has shifted so much toward Israel and its allies around the world, including the United States, E3, and a few odd countries here and there, that the majority, in fact, cannot stand against the minority on the most visible violation of human rights and senseless, indiscriminate killings. It sounds a bit preposterous because it is. Arab countries have powerful allies, the support of global public opinion, and a weapon that is metaphorically gathering dust: Oil.

Arab countries know that they have this weapon because they once used it. They probably fear that picking it up from the shelf will backfire because this is not 1973. The oil-producing Arab countries imposed an oil embargo in October of that year on the United States, the Netherlands, Portugal, Rhodesia, and South Africa in retaliation for their support of Israel during the Yom Kippur War. Until then, OPEC, which was formed in 1960 by a cartel of Muslim countries, was trying not to step on anyone's toe and just cash in on the increase in oil prices, but Israel was advancing further and further into Egypt and Syria — which, incidentally, was a less grave war crime than what has been going on in Gaza in the past seven weeks. However, Nixon's threat of seizing the oil fields of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Abu Dhabi brought them back to the negotiating table very quickly in 1974, and ended the embargo.

Now, the member states of OPEC+, which was formed when Russia and 10 other oil-producing countries joined OPEC, are economically independent, tied to major global powers like China and Russia, and have already voiced their condemnation of the Israeli massacre of Gazans. Their main buyer is not the US, either; it is now China. It's not like they have not at times acted against Western interests. Riyadh and Moscow famously drew the ire of the West in early September when they announced a major cut in oil production, which pushed the price of a barrel to \$90.

Cutting oil production is still enough to cause a big ruckus in the global economy. Of course, the sole intention would be to put pressure on Netanyahu to back off, not to cause mayhem for the sake of mayhem. As such, no one is suggesting that the cut would be permanent. No hostility or countermeasures towards OPEC members and Arab states need to occur if their demands and conditions for raising crude production back to previous figures are clearly stated. Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi already called on Arab countries at the Riyadh summit to impose an oil embargo on Israel, but if the Arab countries still care about stopping the genocide of their fellow Arab Palestinians, cutting oil production is even easier. It can be implemented instantly, it requires no statement or pre-planning, and not a drop of blood from their citizens would be shed. Israel is already using water, food, fuel, and electricity in the same vein to force Hamas to surrender and Gazans to migrate.

# Israel kills eight more Palestinians in West Bank

International Desk

Israel cannot stop its killing machine in the Palestinian territories, whether in the West Bank or in the Gaza Strip. According to Palestinian health officials on Sunday, Israeli forces claimed the lives of at least eight Palestinians in the West Bank in a 24-hour period.

The killings came as the regime agreed a four-day truce with the Hamas resistance group in the Gaza Strip.

Violence in the West Bank has surged in the weeks since Hamas attacked Israel on Oct. 7. Israeli forces have killed dozens of Palestinians and arrested hundreds in the West Bank. Israeli settlers have also stepped up attacks. The Palestinian Health Ministry said that five Palestinians were killed in Jenin, while three others were killed in separate areas of the West Bank since Saturday morning. One of those killed, in Al-Bireh in the central West Bank, was a teenager, the ministry said.

The intensified violence in the territory follows more than a year of escalating raids and arrests in the West Bank and deadly Palestinian attacks on Israelis. Before



the Hamas assault, 2023 was already the deadliest year for Palestinians in the West Bank in over two decades.

Israel and Hamas have briefly ceased fire to allow for more aid to enter Gaza and permit the release of captives in exchange for Palestinian prisoners held by Israel.

The Israeli Army claimed that fourteen Israeli captives and three foreign nationals were handed over to the Red Cross in the Gaza Strip on Sunday. Earlier in the day, Egypt said it received the list of 13 Israeli captives who were due to be freed on Sunday in exchange for the release of 39 Palestinian prisoners on the

third day of the truce, following two earlier exchanges.

Egypt also said it received positive feedback from both sides about the idea of extending the truce for a day or two and releasing more hostages and prisoners. US President Joe Biden told reporters Friday that "the chances are real" for extending the truce.

Meanwhile, Jordan's Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi called for "a permanent cease-fire and a complete end to this aggression."

But Israeli Armed Forces chief, Herzi Halevi, said Saturday that "immediately at the end of the cease-fire" the

war would continue.

### Aid trucks enter Gaza

The pause in fighting has allowed more aid to reach Palestinians struggling to survive with shortages of water and other essentials. Israel had placed Gaza under a near-total siege.

A total of 61 trucks delivered food, water and medical supplies to northern Gaza on Saturday, the United Nations office for humanitarian affairs said.

Another 187 trucks of vital supplies bound for aid organizations also crossed into the Gaza Strip, it said.

The UN estimates that 1.7

million of Gaza's 2.4 million people have been displaced by the fighting.

### New tanker seized

Anti-Israel sentiment has been on the rise in the region, which has led to measures against the regime. On Sunday, a tanker linked to an Israel-affiliated company was seized off the coast of Yemen by unidentified armed individuals, a US defense official confirmed, following a series of incidents on the same shipping route. Declaring itself as part of the "axis of resistance," Yemen has launched a series of drone and missile strikes targeting Israel since October. Sunday's incident came a week after Yemen seized an Israel-linked cargo ship in the southern Red Sea. Protests against Israel's crimes in Gaza still continue across the world. On Saturday, thousands of protesters carried placards, waved Palestinian flags and chanted slogans before Canada's Parliament in Ottawa, demanding a permanent cease-fire. "A pause is not enough," said Yara Shoufani, a protest organizer, adding that "thousands of Palestinians have been killed and Gaza's infrastructure has been destroyed."

## Former French ambassadors called for an end to Gaza war

France urged to reevaluate Mideast diplomacy for lasting peace

International Desk

Eighteen former French ambassadors, in an op-ed in the popular *Le Monde* newspaper, have called for the acceleration of the process leading to the end of the Israel-Hamas war.

In the op-ed published in *Le Monde* on Saturday, the ex-diplomats stressed that "everything must be done" to extend the four-day truce between Israel and Hamas in order to forge a lasting cease-fire.

The ambassadors said Israel had embarked on a strategy of total war in Gaza that is "as brutal as it is futile, and increasingly contested."

The former diplomats wrote "eradicating Hamas" is more of a slogan than a realistic objective.

"In 2006, Israel had already proclaimed its desire to 'eradicate Hezbollah,' with the known results. Such a strategy is illusory."

Hamas, which has already been targeted by five deadly military campaigns, will inevitably be reborn, the envoys said, noting that the Israeli army will not be able to defeat a movement supported by a large part of the Palestinian population, in Gaza as well as in the occupied West Bank, "in the face of a disqualified Palestinian Authority."

The ex-diplomats said a two-state solution is still worth attempting despite being "increasingly difficult to build" due to the annexation of greater Jerusalem (Al-Quds) and growing settlements in the occupied West Bank.

The solution of a single binational state, mentioned even before October 7, is regaining relevance. But the dilemma remains the same. Either Israel accepts the principle of equality of rights, with the risk of losing the majority for the Jewish population, currently equal to the Arab population on the territory of historic Palestine; or Israel refuses such a principle,



loses an essential part of its soul, and exposes itself to an accusation of apartheid, the op-ed added.

"The summary of six weeks of fighting in the Gaza Strip is overwhelming: More than 13,000 deaths, mainly civilians, including 5,300 children; half of the enclave's real estate destroyed. Israel, under the term 'total war,' is developing a punitive strategy that is as brutal as it is futile, and increasingly contested," they wrote.

The former diplomats also strongly warned against any temptation to transfer populations to neighboring countries, writing the move "can only be seen as unacceptable ethnic cleansing and, in any case, cannot solve the problem of Israel's security". The op-ed suggested a renewal of the political classes that will occur on both sides, as those currently in place have lost much of their legitimacy.

"On the Palestinian side, elections should be organized as soon as possible and involve all the political forces present."

"A strong commitment from the international community, particularly the permanent members of the UN Security Council and the Arab countries, is essential," they wrote.

"France, which has lost much of its credibility in the Middle East and has seen its image deteriorate significantly in the Arab-Muslim world, must take part in this. However, it would require it to change its diplomacy towards a balanced and coherent policy that is independent from external pressures. Despite some rebalancing, this is not how it is perceived by many countries and public opinion. Such a policy requires courage and clarity, beyond the emotional reactions that this 'total war' provokes," they concluded.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi  
Cartoonist

