

Israel's psychological warfare aimed at insinuating victory

# Netanyahu backs down from eliminating Hamas

By Ebrahim Beheshti  
Staff writer

EXCLUSIVE  
INTERVIEW



Rahman Qahremanpour

Israeli officials have reportedly put forth several proposals for governing the Gaza Strip after the war. Some hawkish members of Netanyahu's cabinet advocate for the expulsion of Palestinians from the Gaza Strip and their relocation abroad. Meanwhile, the plan presented by Yoav Gallant, Israeli defense minister, focuses on Israel ensuring the survival of Palestinians and controlling Gaza's security. It's important to note that the conflict in the region is ongoing. In light of these developments, Iran Daily conducted an exclusive interview with Rahman Qahremanpour, an expert in strategic affairs, to provide further insight on this matter.

**Numerous plans have been formulated within the Israeli cabinet regarding Gaza, some of which have been made public. Notwithstanding the specifics of these plans, does this signify that, in Israel's perspective, the Gaza conflict has concluded? Or could it be a psychological operation aimed at instilling a sense of triumph over Hamas?**

The announcement of post-war plans for Gaza is seen as a reaction to internal pressures coming from within the Israeli government against the leadership of Prime Minister Netanyahu. Political parties, former officials, and media outlets have strongly criticized Netanyahu's handling of the Gaza war. Israeli think tanks have also stressed that the absence of a clear post-war plan and strategy beyond the ground war in Gaza would indicate a failure in Israel's approach to the conflict. Therefore, the unveiling of various plans for Gaza, such as the potential expulsion of Palestinians or Israel assuming security control, could be interpreted as a response to these criticisms, asserting that the government and the military have achieved their objectives and have future plans for Gaza. It's import-

ant to note that the war is not over, and Netanyahu has not achieved his objective of dismantling Hamas.

However, many analysts doubt the feasibility of Netanyahu's pledge to eliminate Hamas. They argue that Hamas is not just a military group, but also an ideology and a political and social movement with supporters in Gaza, across Palestine, and in the wider Arab and Islamic world.

**Is the plan attributed to Gallant, the Israeli minister of defense, fundamentally feasible, given that it differs from the more hardliner proposals of other cabinet ministers by not including the expulsion or removal of Palestinians from Gaza, and instead emphasizing that Israel will retain control of security in the region?**

It appears that there is a growing consensus within the Israeli cabinet that completely eradicating Hamas and the resistance movement in Gaza may not be feasible. Consequently, it seems that Netanyahu is gradually moving away from the promise of destroying Hamas, instead focusing on eliminating significant threats to Israel's security. This suggests a potential shift in his stated objectives. The inclusion of the provision in the Gallant plan that Israel will retain control over the security of Gaza could indicate an acknowledgment of the reality of the presence of Palestinians in Gaza as well as anti-Israeli sentiments, while aiming to neutralize substantial threats. Essentially, the Israeli perspective seems to be that even if some Hamas members and supporters remain in Gaza, they would not pose an immediate threat to Israel.

**What is your assessment of the potential response from the international community to Israel's proposed plans for Gaza, such as the expulsion of Palestinians or Israel's assumption of security responsibilities? Do major global powers appear to endorse these plans?**

Diverse viewpoints exist on this matter. While historically, the United States has been supportive of Israel, it has recently adopted a poli-



Palestinians ride on an Israeli military vehicle commandeered by Hamas fighter during Operation Al-Aqsa Storm near the Gaza Strip fence on October 7, 2023, in Gaza City. AP

cy characterized by a series of "no's," including opposition to the annexation of Gaza to Israel and the expulsion of Palestinians. The current stance of the United States is to merely reject certain plans, and it remains uncertain whether it will ultimately align with an Israeli plan regarding Gaza. The Americans were previously opposed to the launch of an Israeli ground assault in Gaza as well, but Israel went through with it nevertheless. It seems that the United States' plan involves delegating the administration of

Gaza to the Palestinian Authority, with the aim of facilitating the establishment of two independent Palestinian and Israeli states.

The positions of European countries, however, are not uniform. France has been critical of Netanyahu, while Germany has consistently supported Israel. As a result, it is unclear whether Europe will ultimately support or oppose Israel's security presence in Gaza.

Currently, China and Russia do not favor such a plan. However, Russia may make a deal with European nations regarding the Ukraine conflict. Recent statements by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, drawing parallels between Israel's goals in Gaza and Russia's goals in Ukraine, suggest that Russia is open to negotiating with Europe.

**Is the Arab world capable of playing a significant role and exerting influence in this matter?**

The Arab world is characterized by internal divisions. Qatar serves as a key

focal point for negotiations between Israel and Palestinian resistance groups. The United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia form a closely aligned axis with each other, while Egypt and Jordan represent yet another axis.

Among these, Qatar, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia have more influential roles. Israel seeks to exert influence over the UAE and Saudi Arabia, whereas Iran and Turkey support strengthening Qatar's role. The United States also aims to involve all three countries. Consequently, the Arab world lacks a unified stance and is unable to uniformly oppose Israel's plan for Gaza, for instance.

**Iran is the primary supporter of the resistance front, while the United States is the main supporter of Israel. It appears that in recent months, Iran and the United States have been attempting to manage tensions between themselves. There are concerns that the Gaza conflict may impact the adjusted ties between Tehran and Washington.**

This is a significant matter. In recent months, the United States has sought to prevent Iran from entering into direct conflict with Israel. Iran, for its part, also aims to avoid direct confrontation with Israel. Thus far, Washington has successfully averted the Gaza conflict from escalating into a regional war. However, the potential impact of the Gaza conflict on Iran-US relations remains uncertain.

Prolonging the Gaza conflict raises the risk of unforeseen or uncontrollable events, particularly as the proxy war between Iran and Israel persists. Consequently, there is a possibility that the proxy war between Israel and Iran could inadvertently escalate and draw in the United States. Therefore, a protracted Gaza conflict may have adverse effects on Iran-US relations.

Israeli soldiers work on a tank at the Israel-Gaza border on October 9, 2023. ILLA YEFIMOVICH/GETTY IMAGES