



By Javad Mohammad Ali  
Staff writer

The role of Benjamin Netanyahu as the Israel's prime minister has time and again come under the spotlight in recent months in the wake of the regime's prolonged onslaught on the Gaza Strip, which has further exposed his inabilities both in politics and the battlefield. However, Netanyahu sees the continuation of war in Gaza as a way out of mounting criticism facing him following Hamas's October 7 infiltration into the occupied territories as well as the high number of civilian casualties during Israel's strikes on the Palestinian territory. He has so far defied the global cease-fire calls to end the deadly bombardments in Gaza, insisting on the continuation of the attacks in order to eliminate the Palestinian resistance group Hamas. But, in fact, the war on Gaza has turned into a final solution for him to escape the political problems he has been grappling with for months before the beginning of war in Gaza.

# Netanyahu seeking political salvation by prolonging war

## Unpopular prime minister

Before the war, Netanyahu was fighting for his political life which was in peril due to the weeks-long protests that had gripped Israel after he proposed reforms in the regime's judicial system.

Critics say the proposed changes would politicize the judiciary and compromise its independence, foster corruption and harm Israel's economy.

The increasingly unpopular prime minister has also been facing several corruption charges, which have contributed to his unpopularity in the Israeli society.

Netanyahu has been charged with fraud, bribery and breach of trust in three cases filed in 2019, known as Case 1000, 2000 and 4000.

He has denied the charges, claiming that he is the victim of a politically orchestrated "witch-hunt" by rivals and the media to remove him from power. A recent poll showed that just 15% of Israelis want him to keep his job after the end of war in Gaza.

In another poll, 53% of Israelis said they believe his wartime decisions are primarily motivated by personal gain.

The intelligence failure which led

to Hamas's successful attack on the occupied territories further made things worse for the regime's longest-serving prime minister.

During the October 7 Operation Al-Aqsa Storm, the Palestinian resistance forces killed more than 1,100 people and took captive about 240 Israelis in revenge for decades of oppression by the occupying regime. About half of the captives have been released under deals mediated by some regional countries.

Now the Israelis, especially the relatives of the remaining captives are exerting pressure on Netanyahu to bring them back and end the brutal war on Gaza, which has endangered the lives of their loved ones.

## Opposite results

It seems that Netanyahu's policy of prolonging the war is producing results opposite to what he expects.

The killing of more than 25,000 people, most of them women and children, has triggered widespread anti-Israel demonstrations worldwide for months and has further shattered the regime's image in the world.

Some Western allies of the regime have gradually tried to distance them-

selves from Israel to preserve their international image. Despite throwing unwavering support behind the regime at the beginning of Israel's ferocious offensive, its allies are now critical of the atrocities happening in the besieged Palestinian territory. The United States, Tel Aviv's main supporter of war against Hamas, has also opposed its military actions in Gaza.

## Israeli PM 'has to change'

Last week, US President Joe Biden publicly called out Netanyahu and the far-right cabinet he leads, criticizing "indiscriminate bombing" of Gaza and saying the Israeli prime minister "has to change".

Biden's comments reflect growing unease in Washington about Israel's conduct of the war, the devastating destruction and the rising death toll.

Washington has been pursuing the two-state policy and the establishment of a Palestinian state for years. However, the Israeli prime minister has recently told the US that he opposes the creation of a Palestinian state when Israel ends its aggression on Gaza.

"Israel must have security control over all the territory west of the Jor-

dan," Netanyahu has said, referring to an area including the occupied territory that Palestinians hope will one day become their independent state. Divisions are also deepening within Netanyahu's cabinet.

The war cabinet minister, Gadi Eisenkot, has recently suggested the key war aim of defeating Hamas is unrealistic and called for elections within months.

"Those who say that there was a major blow and demolition of the capabilities in the north of the strip are telling the truth," Eisenkot told Israeli broadcaster Channel 12 News on Thursday evening. "Those who talk about an absolute defeat and lack of will and ability do not tell the truth. This is why there is no need to tell tall tales."

Eisenkot said Israel needed fresh elections because the public no longer has trust in Netanyahu's leadership.

Established shortly after the October 7 attack, the Israeli war cabinet includes some ministers already at odds with one another.

In pursuing his own agenda for the war, Netanyahu has lost the trust of Israelis and isolated Israel in the world, and there is no end to the war in sight.



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (C) wears a protective vest and helmet as he receives a security briefing with commanders and soldiers in the northern Gaza Strip on December 25, 2023.  
Avi Ohayon/AP

