



A war of destiny unfolds in Rafah

US seems unable to resolve Gaza conflict

Palestinians look at the destruction after an Israeli airstrike in Rafah, Gaza Strip, on February 9, 2024. [FATIMA SHBAIR/AP](#)

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INTERVIEW

The war in Gaza has dragged on beyond expectations, defying efforts to reach a cease-fire. Plans for peace are purportedly in motion. However, the belligerent Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is gearing up to launch an assault on Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip. This attack has sparked grave concerns about the potential humanitarian catastrophe awaiting Rafah. In light of this, Iran Daily interviewed Mostafa Mosleh-zadeh, the former Iranian ambassador to Jordan.

IRAN DAILY: Few foresaw the protracted duration of the war in Gaza. What, in your opinion, has contributed to its continuation?

MOSLEHZADEH: The war in Gaza must be understood within the context of international circumstances, a topic that demands a comprehensive discussion. However, what alarms both Israel and Hamas is the notion that this recent conflict is one of destiny — a war unlike any previous encounters between the two. This realization has dawned upon both sides. To draw an analogy from the world of football, this war has transformed into a sudden-death match with only one victor. While the losing side will not face annihilation, it will be rendered ineffectual on the international and even regional stage. For instance, should Israel lose this war, it will forfeit its strategic standing among other regional and international actors. Other states will perceive maintaining or severing ties with such a weak cabinet as inconsequential. Consequently, neither Hamas nor Israel can accept the fate of elimination. This is why the war has endured.

Does this imply that the significance of this “war of destiny” has hindered the success of negotiations and various peace plans? Do the parties consider any peace proposal that does not align with their conditions as tantamount to losing in this “war of destiny”?

Yes, indeed. The negotiating strategy employed by parties engaging with Hamas, be it the French, Qataris, or Americans, revolves around implementing the American plan as the ultimate solution. At the core of the American plan lies an inescapable destiny for Hamas: destruction and elimination — or, at the very least, uncertainty. The Americans advocate for a cease-fire, the release of Israeli captives, and increased aid to the people of Gaza. However, they remain silent on the future of Gaza and Hamas. Their intentions and objectives are apparent. They seek to eradicate Hamas. In a plan of this nature, Gaza will not revert to its pre-war status.

The Americans are ostensibly pressuring Israel to accept a cease-fire



and peace plan, a plan that prominently features the recognition of an independent Palestinian state. Will Israel’s authorities embrace such a proposal?

No, Israel will not endorse the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. The claims made by the US and the UK that they will accept the establishment of a Palestinian state are also deceptive. The Americans made a promise to form a Palestinian government 30 years ago during the Oslo and Camp David agreements, but they have yet to follow up on their promise. Whenever America and Europe perceive a threat from resistance groups, they raise the issue once again. Even now, it appears that the American plan, centered around the creation of a Palestinian state, serves as leverage to remove Hamas from the Palestinian equation.

During the last four months, the people of Gaza have suffered a staggering loss of lives and money. If the plan for peace and the formation of a Palestinian government is earnest, how would the Palestinian people, both in Gaza and the West Bank, react to it?

As a general rule, the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, encompassing the West Bank and Gaza, hinges on an election. Even though a national election was held previously in 2006, it did not foster unity among Palestinians and rather led to a division between Fatah and Hamas. Both the process of negotiation for peace and the electoral process have been experienced in Palestine, yet neither has resulted in a resolution for Palestine. Thus, even if both negotiation support-

ers and resistance supporters agree to the peace plan, the divide between Palestinians will persist. These plans are essentially along the same lines as previous plans that ended in stalemate, with the primary goal being the elimination of Hamas and the resistance.

Some international relations experts, on the contrary, believe that the United States is trying to resolve the issue of Israel and the Arabs in order to get ready to face its main rival, China, as well as Russia more seriously. That is why, the argument continues, the Americans are trying to force Israel to accept the peace plan and form a Palestinian government.

This is a broader analysis, but the motivation for the United States in the Middle East is not solely to eliminate uncertainty surrounding the Palestinian issue. Of course, it is not that Washington doesn't desire resolution, but that it lacks the capability to achieve it. The United States has lost its ability to solve international and regional conflicts. Over the past 30 years, numerous plans have been attempted to end this problem, but none have succeeded. America lacks the capacity to resolve the issue and yet finds itself compelled to engage in this game or war of destiny. Israel, Europe, and the United States align on one side of the Gaza conflict, while Hamas and the axis of resistance stand on the other side. Both factions are doing their utmost to avoid losing this war.

On the battlefield, a new concern is Israel’s ground attack on Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip, which is expected to create an inhumane situation. Would this be the last stage of this “war of destiny” if Israel attacks Rafah?

It appears that Rafah represents the final stage of this game of fate. Israel and America have brought forth all their resources to the field. Initially, they believed that by destroying northern Gaza, Hamas would surrender, and the game would conclude, but that did not happen. Subsequently, they thought that obliterating the central areas and continuing the genocide would end the game, which, once again, proved futile. Now, they may be contemplating

that destroying the southern regions and persisting with the genocide will lead to the destruction or surrender of Hamas.

However, will Israel achieve its desired outcome of Hamas's demise and a conclusive victory? Only the future can tell. Personally, I predict that not only such an outcome will not be achieved, but also that it would not be favorable for Israel. Up until this point, when a relatively safe area existed in the south of Gaza, Israel's crimes provoked numerous condemnations worldwide. From street demonstrations and campaigns for supporting Palestine to filing lawsuits at the International Court of Justice, these crimes have irreversibly damaged the reputation of Israel and America. If Israel proceeds to attack Rafah and continue the genocide, it will signify the death of their dignity.

If Israel attacks Rafah, it will most likely repeat its previous crimes and establish military dominance there. In such a situation, would a peace plan be imposed on the Palestinian people, and would it be sustainable?

This is the preferred scenario of Israel and America. They aim to prolong the war and either destroy or dismantle Hamas while imposing their peace plan on the Palestinians, as you mentioned. However, another scenario can unfold in this war of destiny. If Israel launches a ground attack on Rafah and continues the genocide, with Gaza's inhabitants lacking any safe havens and Egypt preventing Palestinians from entering its territory, it will trigger a global process that will ultimately drag Israel into a major crisis. Assuming that Israel's actions in Gaza have thus far escalated the humanitarian crisis there to a hypothetical degree of 10, an attack on Rafah would elevate this crisis to a hypothetical degree of 20. The world does not possess the capacity to accept and stomach such a grave human crisis, which would consequently reshape international relations. Therefore, in the final stage of this fateful war, if Israel proceeds with a ground attack on Rafah, it will resemble a boomerang that swiftly returns, inflicting a blow on Israel itself that would be much heavier than previous blows.