A woman and child walk among debris in the aftermath of Israeli strikes, where Israeli hostages were rescued at the Nuseirat refugee camp in Gaza. Photo Credit: Abed Khaled, Reuters

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Current Reality

In response to Hamas’ October 7 offensive Israel has vowed to "crush and destroy Hamas." Following through with the promise, the most recent offensive in Rafah has brought Gaza’s southernmost city to the brink of complete capture by the Israeli army. Now, after nine months of continuous warfare, no area in Gaza remains fully safe for civilians.

Meanwhile, the rhetoric intensifies regarding the potential for border clashes between Hezbollah and Israel to escalate and transform into a region-wide conflict. On June 23, 2024, Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah warned Israel to stop its offensive in Rafah, otherwise a full-blown war "without

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restraint, without rules, without limits" would follow. In light of such an announcement and with Gaza now almost fully captured, Netanyahu indicated that an "intense" phase of the war in Gaza was soon to be over. Instead, he warned of a transition to a new phase, likely encompassing fighting along the northern border with Lebanon.

Gaza: Humanitarian Hellscape

World Health Organization report published in May called out the current war unprecedented in the scale of death, destruction, and human suffering, "with repercussions that will echo for generations to come". As of June 20, the death toll is estimated to be at least 37,431 people and 85,653 people wounded according to the Ministry of Health of Gaza.

Reports indicate that both children and adults are falling ill due to contaminated water, as access to clean drinking water has become a luxury. The summer heat exacerbates the situation, leading to dehydration and other heat-related illnesses. Over 1.7 million Palestinians have lost their homes to Israeli shelling since October 7, 2023, forcing many to live in makeshift camps or overcrowded areas where temperatures exceed 40°C.

The demand for food and essential supplies is growing, but severe shortages persist. March 2024 damage assessment report by the World Bank revealed that out of 980 officially registered NGOs in

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Gaza majority are non-operational.\textsuperscript{10} Additionally, Israeli airstrikes have killed over 200 aid workers since the start of the conflict, prompting an international outrage.\textsuperscript{11}

Not only is civil society work facing extreme disruptions but also the healthcare facilities have long exhausted their capacities to house the injured, malnourished, and otherwise terminally ill. As of May 1, 2024, out of 36 hospitals, only 12 are partially functional, and 24 out of 88 primary healthcare centers.\textsuperscript{12}

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Palestinians bike past destroyed buildings al-Bureij camp in Gaza Strip in June 2024 Photo Credit by Eyad Baba AFP.
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Palestinians in the area targeted by Israelis in the Gaza City Shujayea. Photo Credit: Omar Al-Qatta AFP

Earlier this month, the Israeli army captured the last remaining border checkpoint in Rafah after seizing the Philadelphi Corridor on the Palestine-Egyptian border, placing all aid access points in Gaza under Israeli control. Since the start of the war, the majority of aid has entered Gaza through Rafah and nearby Kerem Shalom crossings, yet now with Israelis in charge of all the crossing points it is unclear what is the future of aid reaching Gaza. To make matters worse, a limited amount of aid that reaches Gaza gets caught up in a crossfire or is looted by different ‘gang-like’ groups.

The collapse of the Gazan healthcare system coupled with a lack of aid that struggles to reach Gazans either due to checkpoint restrictions or looting has led the UN Secretary-General (UNSG) to refer to Gaza as a “humanitarian hellscape” calling for an immediate ceasefire in hopes of reversing an “entirely manmade disaster”.  

**Ceasefire agreement far in sight**

Since October, the United States has vetoed three separate UNSC resolutions calling for a ceasefire in Gaza. On March 25, 2024, however, the Biden administration abstained from vetoing, showcasing growing frustration and disapproval over Netanyahu’s war conduct.  

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Washington downplayed the resolution as "non-binding," it marked a significant shift in U.S. policy.  

On June 10, 2024, the UNSC adopted Resolution 2735, endorsing a U.S.-backed ceasefire proposal advocating a three-step plan to halt the conflict. The resolution passed with 14 votes in favor and one abstention (Russia). The initial step includes a six-week ceasefire and the exchange of Israeli captives for Palestinian prisoners. The second phase calls for the release of remaining captives and a permanent ceasefire, followed by the reconstruction of Gaza as the third phase.

While both sides initially appeared to accept the resolution, the agreement has yet to be implemented. Each side accuses the other of hindering progress and pushing for additional demands. The United States has blamed Hamas for the failure, with U.S. Secretary Anthony Blinken accusing Hamas of requesting "unworkable" changes. Hamas has denied such accusations.

**Response to the Ceasefire Deal from both Sides**

Netanyahu's recent announcement that the war will continue disregards the U.S. ceasefire proposal, contrary to Blinken's assertions that Israel is aligned with it. Over the past few days, Netanyahu has indicated that the Israeli army plans to stay in Gaza to control the territories rather than withdraw. However, he suggested that fighting might shift to the northern border with Lebanon. "We are clearly approaching the point where we can say we have dismantled the Rafah Brigade,

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Benny Gantz has recently resigned from Netanyahu’s war cabinet to voice his opposition to Netanyahu’s policies in Gaza which disregards ‘the day after’ and called for immediate elections. While it is common for resigned officials and opposition to criticize Netanyahu’s policies, in a recent statement Israel Defense Force spokesperson Rear Adm Daniel Hagari made public criticism of Netanyahu's war effort to completely wipe Hamas out: "If we don't bring anything else to Gaza, then at the end of the day we will get Hamas.26" It seems, that Netanyahu is facing internal tensions within its cabinet and such potentially has the power of shaping the foreign policy and pushing the ceasefire deal forward.

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