

Will the Israeli Aggression on Gaza Prolong?

Introduction:

After 50 days of the Israeli aggression on Gaza Strip (GS), it appears that the declared objectives of the Israeli occupation are still elusive, whether in “crushing” Hamas, freeing its captives, imposing an alternative governance system, or obtaining full assurances that GS will not pose a threat to its security in the future.

On the other hand, despite the large number of killed and wounded, and the widespread destruction in the region, Hamas and the resistance forces, supported by popular backing, continue to demonstrate resilient resistance, inflicting significant losses on the occupying forces. They have even succeeded in imposing their conditions in the humanitarian pause and the first prisoner exchange deal. Having achieved victory on October 7, 2023, surrendering to Israeli conditions, which only aim to uproot resistance in GS or drain it of its substance, is not on the table.

Consequently, the situation leans more towards a “bone-breaking” scenario and “mutual finger-biting.” This implies that the war may prolong, but to what extent remains uncertain!

Key Israeli Considerations:

After the fiftieth day of the war, Israeli considerations remain governed by the following:

- Recovery of the security and deterrence theory, and considering the battle as “decisive” for the Israeli state, especially after Operation Al-Aqsa Flood on 7/10/2023 have struck at its core and undermined it in the eyes of many. The failure to regain a strong, secure environment would render the Zionist state project meaningless, turning it into a hostile environment. Its role as an advanced fortress for Western powers and a stabilizer for the region would also lose its significance.
- Israel is haunted by the “fear of failure” in its aggression on GS and is reluctant to admit to a new strategic failure after its major setback on October 7. Acknowledging failure might embolden the resistance forces to impose their conditions, signaling the potential beginning of a countdown for the occupation.
- There is a quasi-governmental and popular Israeli consensus on seeking revenge against Hamas and GS, reclaiming Israeli captives and preventing resistance forces in GS from posing a threat to the occupation and settlements in the GS envelope. However, there is a difference in opinion regarding the duration of the war and the acceptable final form.





- Israel benefits from a stark imbalance in military capabilities, possessing the latest lethal weapons by land, sea and air, fueling its confidence in its military strength.
- Netanyahu and the Likud party are experiencing a significant decline in popularity. Many believe that Operation Al-Aqsa Flood ended Netanyahu's political life, potentially pushing him to continue the war in a quest for victory or a semblance of victory to rebuild his image and avoid his fate.
- The international alliance led by the United States plays a significant role in influencing the duration of the war and adjusting Israeli objectives. The alliance has provided international cover for Israel's aggression and its commission of heinous massacres, which led to having 15 thousand killed, including more than 6 thousand children and 4 thousand women. It provided Israel with weapons and money, and brought its forces to the region to show support and prevent any regional interference. However, time pressure is mounting due to ongoing massacres, increasing public discontent in the Western world, and Israel's continued failure to achieve tangible accomplishments beyond destruction and civilian casualties. Therefore, a state of restlessness began to emerge, pushing towards more realistic goals.
- Israel benefits from a weak or complicit Arab environment, incapable or unwilling to provide real military or logistical support to the resistance that could make a qualitative difference in favor of the resistance.
- The increasing military and human losses for Israel push it to conclude the war.
- Escalating economic losses, the costs of war, disruptions in various facilities, tourism setbacks and a loss of security present an additional pressure factor.
- The failure of Israeli forces to free the captives and Hamas' success in imposing its conditions on the occupation.

Hamas and Resistance Calculations:

- The resistance is banking on its significant achievement on October 7th and its readiness for a long-term battle. It relies on the quality of its fighters, numbering over 60 thousand, and the popular support rallying around it.
- For the resistance, an Israeli victory and control over GS, imposing its conditions, would mean uprooting the resistance. This would drive them to fight to the end, unwilling to accept anything less than new gains for the resistance and the Palestinian people. Having demonstrated strength, efficiency, and continued field control for fifty days, the resistance remains capable of inflicting significant and increasing losses on the Israeli forces. It can still launch missiles at most areas of the 1948 occupied Palestinian territories. The prospect of its defeat in the foreseeable future becomes highly unlikely, if not impossible.
- Overall, the political and military leadership structure of Hamas remains strong and cohesive, possessing high efficiency in controlling GS. This signifies a resounding failure for Israel after fifty days of aggression.



- The resistance still holds the card of Israeli captives, and the military aggression has not succeeded in freeing a single prisoner. This remains a powerful card that Hamas can play in any future arrangements.
- There are immense sacrifices, especially at the level of the supporting people and the level of massive destruction of homes, infrastructure, schools, hospitals, mosques and churches. However, these sacrifices have turned into fuel for the resistance and the widening revolution. They are no longer elements of submission and subjugation to the occupation.
- The escalating Arab, Islamic, and international popular support for the resistance boosts its morale and puts pressure on political regimes to halt the aggression and support the resistance.
- The continuation of aggression and massacres may eventually lead to an escalation of tension in the region. The situation may deviate from the norms of continuous conflict since the beginning of the war in southern Lebanon, raising concerns among regional and international powers about the possibility of it turning into a regional or global war.

Conclusion:

It appears that the Israeli occupation will exert every effort to extract a victory or the semblance of victory, considering it a fundamental necessity for its existence, stability, prestige and regional standing. On the other hand, the resistance aims to reinforce the victory it achieved on October 7th, and will not accept any concessions that would lead to its uprooting or subjugation, especially after the significant sacrifices made by both the resistance and its popular base.

Therefore, the possibility of prolonging the duration of the aggression remains, but the resistance's ability to continue its qualitative performance, coupled with the anticipated significant military, human and economic losses on the Israeli side, along with the escalating Arab and international public pressure and the widening conflict in southern Lebanon, will force the international alliance to lean towards more realistic solutions. This will also compel the Israel to backtrack on most of its demands. This process may take weeks, but the more intense the resistance becomes and the fewer genuine targets or pressure points the occupation has, the shorter the time frame will become. Eventually, it may resort to solutions to save face.

*This text was prepared by Prof. Dr. Mohsen Mohammad Saleh