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Global Backlash: How the World Could Shift Israel's Gaza Strategy



Image by Ömer Faruk Yıldız.

The decision resonated as shocking for all sides. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, whose entire war strategy hinges on the starvation of Palestinians in Gaza, unilaterally decided on May 19 to allow “immediate” food entry to the famine-stricken Strip. Of course, Netanyahu still maneuvered. Instead of permitting at least 1,000 trucks of aid to enter the utterly destroyed and devastated Gaza per day, he initially allowed a mere nine trucks, a number that nominally increased in the following days.

Even Netanyahu’s staunch supporters, who fiercely criticized the decision, found themselves confounded by it. The prior understanding among Netanyahu’s coalition partners regarding their ultimate plan in Gaza had been unequivocally clear: the total occupation of the Strip and the forced displacement of its population.

The latter was articulated as a matter of explicit policy by Israel's Finance Minister, Bezalel Smotrich. "Gaza will be entirely destroyed, civilians will be sent to... third countries," he declared on May 6.

For food to enter Gaza, however minuscule its quantity, directly violates the established understanding between the government and the military, under the leadership of Netanyahu's ally, Defense Minister Israel Katz, and Chief of Staff Eyal Zamir.

These two significant additions to Netanyahu's war cabinet replaced Yoav Gallant and Herzi Halevi. With these new appointments, Netanyahu stood poised for his master plan.

When the war commenced on October 7, 2023, the Israeli leader promised that he would take control of the Gaza Strip. This position evolved, or rather was clarified, to signify permanent occupation, though without the Palestinians themselves.

To achieve such a lofty objective—lofty, given Israel's consistent failure to subdue the Palestinians over the course of nearly 600 days—Netanyahu and his men meticulously devised the "Gideon's Chariots" plan. The propaganda that accompanied this new strategy transcended all the hasbara that had accompanied previous plans, including the failed "Generals' Plan" of October 2024.

The rationale behind this psychological warfare is to imprint upon the Palestinians in Gaza the indelible impression that their fate has been sealed, and that the future of Gaza can only be determined by Israel itself.

The plan, however, a rehash of what is historically known as "Sharon's Fingers," is fundamentally predicated on sectionalizing Gaza into several distinct zones, and leveraging food as a tool for displacement into these camps, and ultimately, outside of Gaza.

However, why would Netanyahu agree to allow food access outside his sinister scheme? The reason behind this relates profoundly to the explosion of global anger directed at Israel, particularly from its most staunch allies: Britain, France, Canada, Australia, among others.

Unlike Spain, Norway, Ireland and others that have sharply criticized the Israeli genocide, a few Western capitals have remained committed to Israel throughout the war. Their commitment manifested in supportive political discourse, blaming Palestinians and absolving Israel; unhindered military support; and resolute shielding of Israel from legal accountability and political fallout on the global stage.

Things began to change when US President Donald Trump slowly grasped that Netanyahu's war in Gaza was destined to become a permanent war and occupation, which would inevitably translate to the perpetual destabilization of the Middle East – hardly a pressing American priority at the moment.

Leaked reports in US mainstream media, coupled with the noticeable lack of communication between Trump and Netanyahu, among other indicators, strongly suggested that the rift between Washington and Tel Aviv was not a mere ploy but a genuine policy shift. Though Washington had indicated that the “US has not abandoned Israel,” the writing was clearly on the wall: Netanyahu’s long-term strategy and the US’ current strategy are hardly convergent.

Despite the formidable political power of the pro-Israel lobby in the US, and its robust support on both sides of the Congressional aisle, Trump’s position was strengthened by the fact that some pro-Israeli circles, also from both political parties, are fully aware that Netanyahu poses a danger not only to the US, but to Israel itself.

A series of decisive actions taken by Trump further accentuated this shift, which received surprisingly little protest from the pro-Israel element in US power circles: continued talks with Iran, the truce with Ansarallah in Yemen, talks with Hamas, etc.

Though refraining from openly criticizing Trump, Netanyahu intensified his killings of Palestinians, who fell in tragically large numbers. Many of the victims were already on the brink of starvation before they were mercilessly blown up by Israeli bombs.

On May 19, Britain, Canada, and France jointly issued a strong statement threatening Israel with sanctions. This unfamiliar language was swiftly followed by action just a day later when Britain suspended trade talks with Israel.

Netanyahu retaliated with furious language, unleashing his rage at Western capitals, which he accused of “offering a huge prize for the genocidal attack on Israel on October 7 while inviting more such atrocities.”

The decision to allow some food into Gaza, though patently insufficient to stave off the deepening famine, was meant as a distraction, as the Israeli war machine relentlessly continued to harvest the lives of countless Palestinians on a daily basis.

While one welcomes the significant shifts in the West’s position against Israel, it must remain abundantly clear that Netanyahu has no genuine interest in abandoning his plan of starving and ethnically cleansing Gaza.

Though any action now will not fully reverse the impact of the genocide, there are still two million lives that can yet be saved.

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