

Special Report 122, Israel Under Attack



(Released Israeli abductees and their families)

On Saturday, May 5, **Hamas rejected the Israeli offer of an extended ceasefire** in exchange for the release of 33 children, women, the elderly and the wounded abducted on October 7, 2023. The offer was framed in cooperation with the US, Egypt and Qatar, and described by US Foreign Secretary Blinken as “very generous”. Hamas, persuaded that the US and the rest of the international community will not allow Israel to enter the organization’s last bastion in Rafah, rejected the offer, thereby seeking to call what it thought to be Israel’s bluff and daring it to attack. **In response, on Sunday, Israel called upon the civilian population in eastern Rafah to temporarily relocate** to a safe area prepared for them, where food, water, medical facilities and accommodation was prepared. Clearly, Israel was not bluffing.

Hamas, now threatened, engaged in an effort to avoid the expected attack and to portray Israel as the war-mongering, intransigent party, hastily announced its acceptance of a proposal modified by Egypt and Qatar: “**we agreed to a six-week cease-fire**”, they declared. The proposal was very different from the one Israel made. It included three stages. In the first, a ceasefire would commence; Israel would release thousands of Hamas and IJ prisoners, alongside convicted terrorists arrested in the West Bank; Israeli forces would withdraw to the border of Gaza, and north Gaza residents would be allowed to return to the north. Following those steps, for the following six weeks, Hamas would each week release three abductees, “dead or alive”. In the second stage, Israeli troops would fully vacate the Gaza Strip, and **the ceasefire would become permanent** (Egyptian, possibly American, surreptitious guarantees were offered to ensure this would happen). Hamas would release the remaining live abducted soldiers (no guarantees were offered they would not be murdered rather than released). In the third stage there would be an exchange of bodies, and the restoration of Gaza would commence, geared to last no longer than five years.

Civilians in Gaza flooded the streets, celebrating what it assumed would be a respite from the horrors of war: “We thank the Egyptians. We feel like we’ve been reborn,” said a celebrating Gazan. A correspondent for the AFP news agency reported civilians were rejoicing in the streets, firing celebratory shots into the air. “People are crying with happiness,” he reported.

Their joy was unfounded. A senior Israeli official said the Egyptian-Qatari proposal was made "without Israeli involvement. **This is not the proposal we discussed with the Egyptians**, [who] unilaterally flexed the parameters to get Hamas to agree. The proposal is unacceptable". The reasons are obvious: the terms proposed would spell Israel's defeat at the hands of a determined terrorist organization, nor does the proposal secure the lives of abductees still held by Hamas and IJ. It enables Hamas to remain intact, and allow the restoration of Hamas' military capabilities and its continued control of Gaza, so that it could fulfill its declared intention to repeat the October 7 atrocities "a thousand, no – ten thousand times over again" That is the goal of **Hamas' central and oft-repeated demand is for a complete cessation of hostilities** and Israel's withdrawal from Gaza. Hamas does not care how many Gaza civilians, nor even militants, are killed so long as it can pursue its conflict with Israel.

About two hours after Hamas' announcement, following the departure of the civilian populations, **Israel Defense Forces (IDF) entered East Rafah**. They took control of the border between Egypt and Gaza, relieving Egypt's fear of Gaza civilians breaching that border and spilling into Egypt. Egypt formerly governed Gaza, which borders the north east of Egypt's Sinai peninsula. It could easily cordon off a sector in the desert near the border with Gaza to ensure that Hamas and IJ militants do not infiltrate its territory but, stating security concerns, it refuses to allow temporary shelter to suffering Gaza civilians. **Muslim solidarity does not extend to the point of offering the hospitality** that could relieve Gaza civilians of the need to relocate each time military operations take place in one area or another. Israel has reluctantly conceded to Egypt's refusal and is protecting that country's border, along which runs a route (the Philadelphi Route) and under which Hamas dug tunnels that enabled the organization to smuggle weapons and various more innocuous commodities it then sold to the populace, providing Hamas with a major source of income. Israel now controls the entrance to those tunnels and is preparing to destroy them.

An IDF spokesman reported: "IDF forces are presently operating in East Rafah against Hamas infrastructure in a carefully targeted manner." Israel announced it is able (but not for long) to stall what is a very limited military operation, and will do so immediately, **if Hamas agrees to the terms of Israel's original proposal**. Meanwhile, in an effort to exert maximum pressure, the IDF continues to attack Hamas and Islamic Jihad (IJ) targets in east Rafah, providing Hamas with motivation and an opportunity to sue for a ceasefire.

The US has repeatedly opposed Israeli plans to enter Rafah "unless a credible plan is made to secure civilians". Israel has laid out such plans and is convinced that its execution will effectively address **the very legitimate concerns for civilian lives in Gaza**.

John Kirby, spokesman for the US National Security Council, said. "We're currently reviewing [Hamas'] response, and discussing it with our partners in the region." Credible but unconfirmed reports indicate that President Biden responded to Israel's measures by instructing the US military to **delay providing the IDF with precision weaponry** and ammunition, specifically 6,500 kits that enable unguided bombs to be steered to a chosen target, needed to ensure intended targets are hit, thereby reducing civilian casualties. Having initially declared Israel must eliminate Hamas, President Biden is now seeking to force Israel to concede to terms that will ensure Hamas' continued capabilities. Having spoken in the past of his desire to see the release of the abductees and the complete eradication of Hamas'

capabilities, he now endeavors restrain Israel from operating in Rafah even though this would ensure Hamas' existence, and spell **Israel's defeat and a continued threat to the Jewish State's existence**. Apparently, for lack of sufficient contrary pressure, President Biden is bowing to well-funded and well organized pressure exerted on him by those calling for Israel's destruction, while those who think otherwise remain silent. Israel is determined, regardless of the cost it must pay, to do all in its power to obtain the release of the abductees, and to ensure its continued prosperous existence and the peace and security of its population. It is hoping persons of goodwill everywhere in the world will support its efforts and encourage their political representatives to do likewise.

On a follow-up note to the criticism the USA levelled at Israel following the misguided attack that led to **the deaths of seven World Kitchen Market volunteers**, see the following link <https://www.cnn.com/2021/09/17/politics/kabul-drone-strike-us-military-intl-hnk/index.html> I've no idea if any measures were taken against the US operatives responsible for the misguided attack in Kabul. I do know that the IDF took immediate and firm steps against those responsible for the attack on the WKM volunteers.

While all the above is going on, Iran and its proxy in Yemen are **extending their threats against international shipping**. On May 4, Iran moved the Shahid Mahdavi, a ship refitted to carry sophisticated electronic equipment, launch drones and helicopters, crossed the equator in the Indian Ocean while the Houthis in Yemen repeated their threat to target ships sailing from the Far East to Europe. On April 26, Houthi drones struck the MSC Orion, more than 300 nautical miles away, southeast of the Horn of Africa. The message was clear: any ship on its way to Europe from the Middle East or the Indo-Pacific is liable to be attacked.

Washington's unwillingness to bring an end to Houthi piracy any more than it has shown a determination to bring an end to the mindless chaos on elite US campuses has led to an increasing number of the region's policymakers beginning to **rethink their relations with the West on the one hand and with China on the other**. They are beginning to wonder if the US has the necessary will to withstand Russia in Europe, Iran in the Middle East, or China in the Indo-Pacific. China, emboldened by the **US and Western listless response in the Ukraine and the Pacific Ocean**, is intensifying its military pressure on Taiwan and on other Indo-Pacific countries, clearly preparing for war, with barely a response from the US. **North Korea** breaths threats against South Korea while expanding its military capabilities, yet the US is silent. Seeing American hesitation for what it is, **Russia has taken courage and threatened US allies** that, if the Ukraine uses their weapons to attack Russian soil, Russia is liable to punitively attack their own bases. Russia continues to advance in the Ukraine, while **Iran empowers and motivates its proxies in Iran, Yemen, Lebanon, the West Bank and Gaza**, and the US dilly-dallies or acts the part of a well-wisher wholly out of touch with reality, calling upon Israel to act in ways no sane country would ever choose to act, nor ever acted.

Has America lost its love of Freedom? Has the West? Have we lost the values that enabled us to provide our citizens with the highest standard of living, the fullest sense of security, the widest scope for personal growth and the most satisfying sense of liberty human history has ever witnessed? What will it take to wake us up from this stupefying slumber?