



## **Unraveling the Israel-Hamas Conflict: Internal Turmoil, Regional Dynamics, and Post-Confrontation Prospects**

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of November, the first deal is agreed between Hamas and Israel on the mediation of Qatar. According to the deal, sides agreed to humanitarian pause of 4 days so that 50 women and children under the age of 19 taken hostage could be freed in return for 150 Palestinian women and teenagers in Israeli detention.

The last phase of humanitarian crisis in Gaza began with the Al-Aqsa storm attack and escalated due to Israel's response with air strikes. As a result, more than 1,400 Israelis were killed in the assault, and more than 240 were taken hostage, according to a count by Israeli officials. The Ministry of Health in Ramallah says more than 10,000 Palestinians were killed in the military campaign launched in response by Israel. This period is considered one of the most tense times in the Israel-Palestine conflict since the second intifada.

The purpose of this research is to focus on the internal causes behind the latest escalation, the progress of internal affairs during the confrontation, and future possibilities in this context. In fact, while some are attempting to identify the reasons behind the October 7 attack, others interpret it as a manifestation of the ongoing occupation, suggesting that such an attack could occur at any time. This analysis will investigate the factors that contributed to the October 7 attack, seeking to answer the questions: Under what political and social conditions did the Al-Aqsa storm operation break out? How these conditions are shaped during the confrontation? And what is the next?

### **Political turmoil in Israel: Increasing in Right Extremism**

First dimension of internal turbulence is the political turmoil in Israel side. It is noteworthy

that Israel currently has one of the most right-wing governments in its history. This situation has caused concern not only among Palestinians but also among Israelis, prompting them to take to the streets.

The appointment of Itamar Ben Gvir as the national security minister in the current government has raised warnings. He is known as a far-right Jew with a tendency for racism and a strong antipathy-hate to Palestinians. Furthermore, his past is full of instances of provocation against the Israeli left and Palestinians. He was convicted for eight times in inciting violence against Arabs.[1] Due to these characteristics, Ben Gvir has been considered an outlawed political figure, even by some Israelis. In fact, just last year, Israeli lawyers voiced their apprehensions about Ben Gvir gaining power.[2]

Another indicator of the power of Israeli-right is Netanyahu's efforts to overhaul Israel's judiciary system in order to weaken the Supreme Court. This policy targeted Israel's functioning democracy that was resulted with protests of people, especially from army, to demonstrate that they are not willing to function under dictatorial rule. This step escalated the conflict from both sides. Firstly, in an oppression-based government, Palestinians were treated worse than usual[3]. Secondly, Hamas thought that there are gaps in the Israeli army and this is an opportunity to attack and take advantage of them.[4] The potential impacts of judicial overhaul was reported in the letter addressed to Netanyahu which was written by head of research in Military Intelligence, Amit Sa'ar. Letter that was written on March, aimed to warn Israel's government for the emergence of opportunity for "our main enemies, Iran, Hezbollah and Hamas" of Israel being in unprecedented political crisis. This weakness was seen as "expression of process that can be resulted with the collapse of Israel". "To our understanding, this insight (opportunity arising from vulnerability) is the foundation of Hamas' high motivation to execute attacks from the north at the present time, and it also spurs Iran to increase efforts by its proxies to advance attacks against Israel."

wrote Sa'ar.[5]

## **Vulnerabilities in Palestinians' side and Last Development in Gaza before the Confrontation**

In addition to political conditions in Israel, regional developments have also fueled today's confrontation. Palestinians were waiting for some steps by the US after Trump. That did not happen. They started to wait for something from Arab Leaders, while Saudi Arabia started to normalize its relations with Israel. Under these political conditions, the appropriate political opportunity, in a horrific way, was ready for Hamas "to reshuffle the deck"[6]. By this way, it is being considered as an opportunity for Hamas to show itself as an alternative to Mahmoud Abbas authority, as a "real" representatives of Palestinians.

Moreover, on September, Israel put a ban to exports from Gaza after inspectors found several kilograms of "high-quality explosives" in a shipment, hidden in the lining of clothes, despite Palestinians' demands on Israel to lift ban saying it would hit thousands of families and ruin export goods, like fish. The Hamas spokesman warned that this would escalate already existing tensions.[7]

## **How did Netanyahu's Situation Progress in Internal Policy during the Confrontation?**

In any case, the situation does not look encouraging for Netanyahu. Since the right-wing government perceived the Palestinian resistance under Mahmoud Abbas as a real threat, it drew international attention to Hamas to show their enemy as a non-adequate terrorist organization for years. For this sake, it allowed Hamas to grow stronger and make small attacks from time to time. This ignorance made Hamas another real threat for Israel.

In addition to the already existing internal causes, the controversial nature of war and uncertainties related to the results have increased the questions related to the stability government. Eran Etzion, who is a diplomat and strategist with more than 20 years of experience in senior government positions of Israel, talked about the instability and concerns for the Middle East Institute. According to him, two main goals of war are release of the Israeli hostages and collapse of Hamas's political and military power on the Gaza Strip[8]. In terms of release of hostages, only women and children under the age of 19 will be freed according to the deal[9]. But what about the others? It is crucial point for Israeli public opinion. In terms of the political goal to eliminate Hamas's capabilities on Gaza, it is uncertain in what extent this is feasible, even if it is, in what time and for which costs?

Nimrod Goren, who is a senior researcher for Israeli affairs, includes the view that Netanyahu's inefficient communication with the hostages' families reveal the focus on his own political survival. This scene influences the public opinion obviously. Although during the warfare people shift to the right-wing generally, in Israel there is a shift towards to center from the right.[10]

After the attack, senior officials such as Israel's finance minister said that they were not successful in protecting their citizens, while Netanyahu refrained from making a statement about whether he felt responsible. He first shared a post on social media blaming security agencies, and then apologized for the post.[11]

Pressure on Netanyahu's government is not sourced from only the current opposition politicians, but also from former senior Israeli statespersons. A former chief of staff of the Israel Defense Forces said that Netanyahu should "resign now", while a former intelligence official described the government as "dysfunctional".[12] The election polls show that centrist Benny Gantz would be ahead of Netanyahu. If elections were held today in the



parliament, Netanyahu's block, which won 64 seats in 2022 elections, would win only 45 seats in 122 seats- Knesset.[13] Citing mounted public anger against Prime Minister since Hamas attack, main opposition leader Yair Lapid expressed his position with the words that "Mr. Netanyahu must go now". He stated that he would join a political coalition in which Netanyahu is excluded. [14]

The radical minister Itamar Ben Gvir opposed the approval of the hostage deal. He publicly warned against it, portraying the agreement as a significant fault and a sign of weakness[15], although the main issue for the public was the fate of hostages.

In any case, Israeli public lost their trust to Netanyahu's government. On Saturday, a survey conducted by Israel's Channel 13 Television revealed that 76% of the Israeli population believes that Netanyahu, currently in his record-breaking sixth term as prime minister, should step down. Additionally, 64% expressed the opinion that the country should conduct an election promptly following the conclusion of the war. Regarding responsibility for the attack, the poll indicated that 44% of Israelis held Netanyahu responsible, while 33% attributed blame to the military chief of staff and senior IDF officials. A smaller percentage, 5%, pointed the finger at the Defense Minister, according to the survey[16].

### **What are the Next Probabilities?**

In terms of Israeli political turmoil, probability of more shift to the right in despite of public opinion and further corruption of governance and democracy will increase the political violence not only in the context of the Israel-Palestine conflict, but also within the country, and to eliminate the long-term effects of this violence are both difficult and time-consuming. In any case, the situation does not look encouraging for Netanyahu. However, if the election held after the confrontation as Israeli people demand, more centrist political path would be

followed with the new government in order to prevent the political violence and to proceed for conflict resolution. Without doubt, for the potential new government, those unpleasant developments would be warning to take more moderate steps.

It is clear that the possible path towards resolution of the conflict will go through neither the right-wing Netanyahu government nor Hamas. Right in this context, the political division of Palestinians side between Hamas and Mahmoud Abbas governance keep the two-state solution alive.

## **Conclusion**

In summary, the recent escalation and humanitarian crisis in Gaza stems from a combination of factors in internal and regional dimensions. Israel's political turmoil, marked by right-wing extremism and controversial policies, coupled with regional developments, set the stage for the Al-Aqsa storm attack. The research delves into these internal causes, highlighting Netanyahu's government's vulnerabilities and the impact of regional events. The uncertain outcomes of the confrontation raise questions about the government's stability and Netanyahu's political survival. Public dissatisfaction is evident, with a majority calling for Netanyahu's resignation. The potential for a shift in Israeli politics, either towards the right or a more centrist path, will shape the post-conflict landscape. The ongoing political division among Palestinians between Hamas and Mahmoud Abbas keeps the two-state solution relevant for conflict resolution.

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