

“ Hamas is still in power in Gaza, and Israel is losing on the ground,” Interview with Tawfieq Toameh

By [Tawfieq Toameh](#) and [Steven Sahiounie](#)

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The truce in Gaza has collapsed, and Israel has resumed their attacks on the civilians of Gaza. Over 14,000 people have died in Gaza, and about half are children. On Friday, the death toll is increasing once again after days of peace.

[Philippe Lazzarini, the Commissioner General of UNRWA](#), recently was in the south of Gaza during the truce, and told the BBC that the families staying at a UN shelter that had been a vocational school number 35,000. According to Lazzarini, they are sleeping on bare concrete, without any blanket, and in the clothes they had on for the last 50 days.

Steven Sahiounie of MidEastDiscourse interviewed Tawfieq Toameh, a Palestinian living in Los Angeles, California who is an expert on political affairs in the Middle East and the US. The questions ranged from Hezbollah, to hostages, and to the US occupation of Syria.

Steven Sahiounie (SS): Many were wondering if Hezbollah would open a war front against Israel in response to the Israeli attack on Gaza. In your view, why didn’t Hezbollah open a full war front on Israel?

Tawfieq Toameh (TT): Concerning Hezbollah getting involved in the war in Gaza: I don’t believe Hezbollah will open a full war front with Israel. There are things going on right now on the borders, but I don’t think it will turn into a full scale war between both sides.

If Israel were to launch preemptive attacks against Hezbollah inside Lebanon, then Hezbollah might get involved in the war.

If Iran decided to launch missiles from Syria, Iraq or Yemen, then we might see a regional Middle East war, and we might see different developments, but this will not serve the US interests and its allies in the Middle East, and is the last thing the US wants to happen.

Hamas is still in power in Gaza, and is strong and fighting, and Israel is losing equipment, personnel, and losing on the ground. I don't think Israel will finish this war because it is losing on the ground.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and his right-wing government have not achieved any of the goals they set out to accomplish in Gaza. Netanyahu had three goals in mind: to destroy Hamas, destroy the tunnels used by Hamas, and to safely return the Israeli hostages in Gaza. In 48 days of war, those goals have not been achieved.

Israel's attack on Gaza targeted innocent civilians: men, women, children, ambulances, hospitals, homes, and buildings. They destroyed all the civil infrastructure.

Israel is losing the war internationally. Hamas is still in power, and the Israel forces can't get rid of Hamas. Experts and western media analysts have said there is no way for Israel to get rid of Hamas with the current military strategy employed by Israel.

As long as Hamas is in power in Gaza, and still controlling the situation on the ground, Israel cannot achieve their military goals there, and Hezbollah will not get involved in my opinion.

SS: Israel and Hamas had come to an agreement to swap Israeli hostages for Palestinians prisoners. It ran smoothly for days, but is now over. Will we see more of this?

TT: Concerning the hostages swap: Hamas had offered to release the civilian hostages for free before Israel launched its ground attacks on Gaza. Hamas had said that they didn't need those Israeli civilians. Also, Hamas on October 7 did not capture those civilians, as they were taken by other people, who are other factions, or people who stormed the Israeli settlements on that day. For Hamas, I think, it wasn't a good idea to keep them, because there is no need for them. I believe Hamas has enough Israeli soldiers and can use them to get back all the Palestinian prisoners in Israel. The hostages swap was going smoothly, and I hope they will swap for more Palestinian prisoners, and I hope the war will end, and the Israeli captives can go back home, and go back to their families, and also the Palestinians who have been in jail for many, many years will also go back to their families, and the war will stop. I am hoping they will reach a negotiated political solution to this war.

SS: The resistance fighters, in the far eastern desert region of Syria, have attacked the illegally occupying American military bases there. In your opinion, could this tactic be successful in driving out the American occupation?

TT: Concerning the resistance fighters in the eastern desert in Syria: I think that occupation is occupation, as we see it is the American military occupying a piece of land in Syria, and it is the same thing as Israel occupying a piece of land in Palestine. So, the occupier has no right to be there, because it is not their land, and is not their area. There is an interest for the US to be there in that area, because there is oil there, and to control the oil wells, and also to give support to the Syrian Democratic Forces, because they are aligned with the US. The resistance fighters will continue to try to drive the occupiers out, but so far they have not succeeded. I think it will take some time, and with more power, and if the US starts to lose on the ground military personnel, then the US will consider leaving that area, just like what happened in Afghanistan, and I think it is the same scenario in Syria. The US has to lose in Syria for it to leave the area.

SS: Israel is waging a war on Hamas, and the civilians in Gaza. How do you view the Syrian

position in this conflict?

TT: Israel is waging a war on Hamas, and on civilians in Gaza. The Syrian position, is like any other Arab position, and they are against this savage, bloody war on civilians in Gaza. They want Israel to stop its military attack on civilians and Gaza, and sit and reach a political solution by implementing the UN resolution that calls for a Palestinian state in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem, and calls for the return of refugees.

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Steven Sahiounie is a two-time award-winning journalist. He is a regular contributor to Global Research.

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