

Israel's 'Peace' Offer to Opponent in Effect Says—I'll Eliminate You. You Release Hostages, After This I'll Eliminate You

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As any experienced diplomat will tell you, in various conflict situations peace offers are most likely to succeed when these have something for both sides of the conflict (or when there are more than two sides then for all sides of the conflict).

Any side that makes a peace offer will obviously give more importance to protecting or advancing its own interests, but if it at all it is serious about pursuing peace then it will also try to ensure that the other sides and particularly its main opponent also see some immediate benefit or at least future hope in the peace offer.

There should be some reflection of a belief that the side which is making the peace offer has at least some care for the concerns of the other side or the opponent.

Seen from this rather simple perspective, **peace offers that have been made from time to time in the course of the recent Gaza conflict by Israel to its principal opponent of the day namely Hamas do not appear to pass this elementary test of diplomacy.**

The most consistent, oft-repeated statements of Israel, or rather the Netanyahu-led government of Israel, on this conflict say that it is committed to the elimination of Hamas.

These overwhelming statements remain in place at the time when **Israel makes various peace offers of temporary ceasefire in exchange for release of its hostages. So in effect what Israel is saying to Hamas is—I'll eliminate you in any case. You first release hostages, then after a few days I'll return to the task of eliminating you!**

Obviously this is not a way of offering peace that is likely to achieve any durable peace, justice or goodwill. However the obvious fallacy of the kind of peace that is being offered by Israel has not attracted the due criticism from many highly regarded and experienced diplomats of its western allies.

Another contradiction of the self-righteous stand taken by Israel that can be seen very clearly is that while the Netanyahu government is now so keen to present the Hamas as such an evil force that it simply has to be eliminated, no other course of action can be considered, at the same fact the stark fact remains that the Israeli authorities led by Netanyahu in particular played an important role in supporting the Hamas in earlier phases to emerge as the main force in Gaza so that the Palestinian leadership could be presented as sectarian and fundamentalist before the international community, as opposed to the many streams of secular and socialist ideology that have existed among the Palestinian resistance from early times and which have been purposely sidelined, crushed or compromised. So when Netanyahu talks of eliminating the Hamas as the solution, one must remember he was to a large extent responsible for creating the Hamas as a powerful force in the first place.

As a result of several serious mistakes made in the past by various sides, today we have a very serious situation in Gaza, as manifested in one of the most serious humanitarian crisis existing in conditions where solutions are difficult to find and each day passes somehow with many noble persons trying their best to minimize the damage as much as possible.

Humanity thanks and salutes all these noble persons, particularly those who are risking their own life at the ground level while trying to save the life of others. In addition there is the threat of risk escalation at various levels in the Middle-East and a wider conflict breaking out in this volatile region when an already badly threatened world is least prepared to bear this additional burden and threat.

Those who are devoted sincerely to finding solutions should remember that both justice and peace are needed, a combination of peace and justice. Some in their enthusiasm are thinking only of justice and not of peace. Hence they voice slogans which may convey concerns of justice but are unlikely to bring peace and may even obstruct peace by creating avoidable suspicions among even the relatively peaceful persons on the other side. Kindly all sides remember, peace is of the highest importance, particularly keeping in view the overall high level of threats in our deeply troubled world, and so it is better to opt for achievable peace with some sense of justice instead of shouting slogans which create new complications. Please look at the difficult situation carefully and offer solutions in accordance with it.

Once one keeps all this in view then one realizes that the two state solution is still the best way forward, but this should be taken forward in the right spirit and not in any diluted or fragmented form. Any further harm to the Palestinian people by displacing more Palestinians is completely unacceptable.

The Palestinians have suffered so much, and any further disruption of their life and livelihood will be simply too unjust and must be opposed by people who believe in peace and justice all over the world. At the same time, the security of the people of Israel and of Israel as a country (which protects its integrity but does not encroach any more on Palestine land, also takes back West Bank settlements) must be ensured.

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