

Is It a Real Ceasefire or Only a Scam? Philip Giraldi

What concessions did Steve Witkoff offer to Netanyahu?

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*The [negotiations in Doha](#) involving the United States, Israel, Hamas, Egypt and Qatar remind me of **Frank Sinatra's query, "Is it an earthquake or only a shock? Is it a good turtle soup or only a mock?"***

Given the history of the various Middle Eastern peace proposals of one kind or another that have briefly raised their heads only to die ingloriously, it would perhaps be wise to consider the latest Israel-Gaza ceasefire, originally due to start on Sunday, to be, like Sinatra's soup, a work in progress. And maybe not even really in progress due to likely hidden agendas and understandings that might run counter to what is being put down on paper. I am particularly thinking of possible commitments to Israel by the United States that will give Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu options that will enable him to resume hostilities by citing Hamas violations of details in the ceasefire terms, whether they have actually occurred or not. That was how the game was recently played with respect to Lebanon and Syria where Israel manipulated the situation to its own advantage, presumably with the full connivance of President Joe Biden and his band of cutthroats.

Interestingly, both Genocide Joe Biden and Donald Trump are taking credit for the ceasefire, which has been delayed and not been fully accepted by Israel initially due to alleged "details." "Hamas is backing out of the understandings and creating a last-minute crisis that prevents a settlement," Netanyahu's office [said on Thursday](#), adding that the government Cabinet would not meet to vote on the issue until Hamas backed down on "new demands," accusing the militant group of renegeing on parts of the agreement in an attempt to gain further concessions. Sources in Israel indicate that the dispute involves the Philadelphi "security corridor," where Israel wants to maintain a military presence, and details over the exchange of hostages. Some of the issues were reportedly resolved by Friday morning, when the Israeli Security Cabinet and approved the ceasefire.

But there continue to be concerns about what will actually take place. **Chris Hedges observes that Israel has [never fully implemented](#) any agreement made with the Palestinians**. Nevertheless, whatever eventually transpires, it is clear that Joe Biden, who actually collaborated with and enabled the Israelis to slaughter as many as 80,000 Palestinians, had nothing to do with the successful move towards the possible ceasefire agreement, nor has he ever even had the bravery to confront the Israelis to compel them to moderate their behavior. It was Donald Trump who clearly sent his chief Middle East negotiator **Steve Witkoff**, himself a Jew and a dedicated Zionist, on a mission to give some straight talk to Netanyahu about his options with the new administration coming in on Monday.

It would appear that Trump genuinely desires an end to the crisis over Gaza and there are numerous reports that he has been sending signals to Netanyahu suggesting that there is a new sheriff in town and that Gaza is both a distraction from bigger problems like Iran and BRICS as well as bad politics and a huge public relations problem for the US and Israel if the conflict is allowed to continue. [One of the signals](#) was, notoriously, a video featuring Columbia professor Jeffrey Sachs bad mouthing Bibi, saying

“Netanyahu had from 1995 onward the theory that the only way we’re gonna get rid of Hamas and Hezbollah is by toppling the governments that support them. That’s Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Iran. And the guy’s nothing if not obsessive. And he’s still trying to get us to fight Iran this day, this week. He’s a deep dark sonofabitch, sorry to tell you. ‘Cause he’s gotten us into endless wars, and because of the power of all of this in the US politics, he’s gotten his way.”

The video was posted on Trump’s social media website Truth Social. Also, [Trump’s warning](#) that the hostages in Gaza would have to be released by the Inauguration date or “all hell would break loose” might have been a demand to Netanyahu to do something in addition to being a threat to Hamas.

I rather choose to believe that Witkoff offered Netanyahu a stick and a carrot. The prime minister is in deep trouble with his own governing coalition, most particularly the factions led by **Itamar Ben Gvir** and **Bezalel Smotrich**, who reject any ceasefire until Hamas is destroyed completely, but it now appears that even if they resign from the government they will not choose to bring down Netanyahu. One inducement from Trump appears to be overturning [a Biden decision](#) to sanction right wing Israeli settlers on the West Bank who are using violence to harass Palestinians in their remaining villages and on their farms. It has also been suggested that the US might look the other way if Gaza itself might be resettled with Israeli Jewish settlers, eliminating any return home for Gazans. Convincing the settler movement to stay positively engaged with what is about to happen could be crucial to Netanyahu’s survival. To bring the settlers around, they have also been invited by senior Republican Party officials to attend the Trump inauguration on Monday. The settlers will also attend the first session of a newly-created “Friends of Judea and Samaria Caucus” in the US Congress. Judea and Samaria are Israel’s preferred biblical names for the West Bank, indicating that the Republicans are amenable to Jewish state’s eradicating both the Palestinians and even the name of Palestine itself.

More important in terms of what is happening on the ground, Israeli news channel *ynet* is [reporting that](#)

“President Trump, according to a source familiar with the details, has already promised Netanyahu and Minister Ron Dermer that if they agree to a ceasefire and the withdrawal of IDF forces from the Gaza Strip, he will support Israel retroactively if it decides to return to fighting and violate the ceasefire.”

Alternatively, Israel might choose to renew fighting after the initial six-week truce period is over, making it appear to be in full compliance with the ceasefire. They can play it either way and might even have a commitment from Washington to advance preparations for a joint military action against Iran.



As a third incentive for Israel, the Trump Administration has reportedly agreed to remove [commercial US sanctions](#) that were [initiated in](#) November 2021 on the Israeli spy company NSO Group and its “maliciously targetable” Pegasus spyware that “has been used to hack US government officials and other top level politicians, peace and human rights activists, international lawyers, journalists and more – and which is said to have played a key role in Saudi Arabia’s murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi.” Biden administration officials claimed at the time that the move represents the first time that the Treasury Department has sanctioned people or entities for the misuse of spyware. The software “allows a user to infiltrate electronic devices through zero-click attacks that require no user interaction or opening of the virus for the spyware to infect the device. The spyware, which has been used in dozens of countries, has allowed for the unauthorized extraction of data, geolocation tracking and access to personal information on compromised devices.”

A list of 50,000 phone numbers of interest to NSO ‘Pegasus’ software clients has leaked and was published in France. NSO’s founders were members of the Israeli military’s top secret electronic surveillance Unit 8200 and NSO is believed to be currently a front for the Israeli military and Mossad. According to ex-8200 whistleblowers, the unit’s members used to mark an ‘X’ on their headset for each assassination their surveillance had enabled.

An Amnesty International report and also [an investigation](#) by the *Washington Post* and 16 other media groups revealed that clients using NSO’s ‘Pegasus’ military-grade spyware include many governments known to conduct surveillance of their own citizens. NSO claims that Pegasus is only used by legitimate agencies to spy on ‘terrorists and serious criminals’, but the leaked list “includes numbers of journalists, human-rights activists, heads of state, royals, prime ministers – and the fiancée of murdered Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi, as well as of murdered Mexican journalist Cecilio Pineda Birto.”

The investigation by the *Post*, titled the *Pegasus Project*, identified and verified the names of several Arab royal family members, 64 business executives, 85 human rights activists and more than 600 politicians and government officials. According to the *Washington Post*, the software was used in multiple ‘attempted and successful hacks.’ The *Post* was particularly sensitive to the threat as 189 journalists were on the list. In practical terms, the “legalization” of Pegasus means that the FBI and NSA will be able to use it to increase its spying on American citizens, which will mean a seeking out of critics of US foreign policy, and one would not be surprised to see it employed to root out critics of Israel, which will be regarded as antisemitism, increasingly viewed as a major crime by US administrations.

The freeing up of Pegasus is a big deal as it is a major money earner and source of top-level intelligence for the Israeli government and its security services. If my instincts on this are correct, Israel will strike as hard a bargain on the ceasefire as it possibly can, creating

conditions or interpretations that will enable it to back out and resume military operations after claiming mythical violations on the part of Hamas. It will be able to resume hostilities while still obtaining the release a number of its hostages, which would be a boost for the Netanyahu government. Trump will shy away from exposing the Israeli false flag having made his point that he is a peace maker and in charge. The un-sanctioning and Congressional embrace of the Israeli settlers will also help Netanyahu politically. Interestingly, Israeli media and its public have reacted negatively to the news that a ceasefire is imminent, claiming that it is a “defeat.”

In reality, Israel could, as ever, be the winner in what is taking place, with no real pushback from Washington. When it comes to dealing with Israel, Trump might talk tough but could wind up going down the same path as Joe Biden. So will there be a real ceasefire? Maybe not.

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