

How the U.S. Enabled Netanyahu to Sabotage a Gaza Ceasefire

By [Jeremy Scahill](#)

Global Research, September 03, 2024

[Drop Site](#) 1 September 2024

Region: [Middle East & North Africa, USA](#)

Theme: [Intelligence](#)

In-depth Report: [PALESTINE](#)

After the bodies of six more Israeli hostages of Hamas were found in the Gaza Strip, pressure in Israel is mounting on the government to secure a ceasefire deal and free the remaining hostages and soldiers taken captive on October 7. The announcement Sunday that the captives, including a dual citizen of the U.S., were discovered in a tunnel in Rafah has further fueled the rage toward Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, particularly from the families of those held in Gaza. They have accused the prime minister of sabotaging deals to free their loved ones, saying “their blood is on his hands.”

Senior Israeli officials, most prominently the defense minister, have joined the public demands for Netanyahu to stop obstructing ceasefire negotiations, while Hamas has said they will not participate in any process until the U.S. convinces Israel to accept a negotiating framework Hamas agreed to in early July. Both Hamas and the families of Israeli captives still held in Gaza have stated that Netanyahu bears responsibility for continuing the war and preventing the exchange of prisoners.

The White House clearly hopes the events of the past 24 hours alter the current course. After being briefed on Saturday evening on the hostages found in Rafah, President Joe Biden, who is vacationing in Delaware, said,

“I think we’re on the verge of having an agreement,” adding, “We think we can close the deal, they’ve all said they agree on the principles.”

By Sunday afternoon, street protests were staged throughout parts of Israel and the mayor of Tel Aviv announced a municipal strike for Monday. “[W]e will allow all employees to go out and support the families’ struggle,” he [wrote](#) on Twitter/X.

עדן, כרמל, הרש, אורי, אלמוג ואלכס היו צריכים להיות עכשיו בבית. בחיים.
ממשלת ישראל הפקירה אותם, אבל מדינת ישראל היא אנחנו.
לאות הזדהות עם החטופים ומשפחותיהם, עיריית תל אביב-יפו מצטרפת לשביתה.
מחר, החל משעות הבוקר ועד לצהריים לא תהיה קבלת קהל ונאפשר לכל העובדות והעובדים
לצאת ולתמוך...

— [רון חולדאי \(@Ron_Huldai\) September 1, 2024](#)

Following a meeting Sunday with an association of family members of Israeli captives, the head of the Histadrut labor federation, Israel’s largest trade union, [announced](#) a general strike. If that action extends beyond a symbolic strike of one or two days, it could cascade

into a formidable crisis for Netanyahu.

“Netanyahu abandoned the hostages. This is now a fact,” the family association said in a statement. “We call on the public to prepare. We will bring the country to a halt. The abandonment is over.”

Vice President Kamala Harris released a statement endorsing Israel’s version of events on the captives discovered in Rafah and echoed Netanyahu’s pledge to eliminate Hamas.

“Hamas is an evil terrorist organization. With these murders, Hamas has even more American blood on its hands,” she said, referring to the death of Hersh Goldberg-Polin, a dual citizen whose parents spoke at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago earlier this month.

Goldberg-Polin was abducted from the Nova music festival on October 7 and lost part of his arm after a grenade exploded in a shelter he was hiding in.

“The threat Hamas poses to the people of Israel—and American citizens in Israel—must be eliminated and Hamas cannot control Gaza.”

Hamas has not yet offered a detailed response to Israel’s accusation that Hamas fighters murdered the six captives, but blamed Israel for their deaths.

“We hold the criminal terrorist Benjamin Netanyahu and the biased American administration responsible for the failure of the negotiations to stop the aggression against our people and to release the prisoners in an exchange,” the group said in a statement. “We also hold him fully responsible for the lives of the prisoners who were killed by his army’s bullets.”

The White House has, in recent weeks, portrayed its efforts at achieving a ceasefire as boiling down to resolving a handful of technical details, and Harris has said she is “working tirelessly” with Biden “around the clock” to achieve a ceasefire in the Gaza war. But as U.S. negotiators have worked to placate Netanyahu, the Israeli leader has waged a relentless two-month campaign aimed at thwarting a deal and Hamas has denounced the process and asserted that the U.S. framework it agreed to in early July should be respected.

A Hamas official involved with the ceasefire negotiations told Drop Site News that the vice president and other U.S. officials have deliberately misled the public about the process out of concerns that the Gaza war will hurt the Democrats’ chances of victory in November.

“Kamala Harris is now obsessed with how to defeat Trump, how to win the election, and she knows that the genocide in Gaza and these massacres are a crucial element in the campaign,” said Basem Naim, a member of Hamas’s political bureau. “She wants to create a delusional image that there is something in process, which is not right.”

In an interview, Naim said that while the U.S.—for political purposes—wants to achieve a temporary truce that facilitates the release of Israelis held captive in Gaza and allows aid to reach the besieged Strip, it has given no indication it would insist on Israel ending its war against the Palestinians of Gaza.

“They are looking for a ceasefire, but they are not for ending the war permanently,” Naim said. “There is a tactical discussion how to achieve [Israel’s] goals in a different

way which cannot damage the American image internationally while they are supporting genocide, because they know that it is damaging their chances to win the election.”

He believes that the U.S. also recognizes that Israel’s wars have made it a pariah in the eyes of much of the world, threatening the viability of a nation central to U.S. domination of the region.

“The strategic interests of America to preserve Israel as an advanced base on the front line here are at risk,” Naim said.

Establishing a Framework

In May, Biden laid out what he characterized as “a roadmap to an enduring ceasefire and the release of all hostages” that had been proposed by Israel itself.

“This is truly a decisive moment. Israel has made their proposal,” Biden said on May 31. “ Hamas says it wants a ceasefire. This deal is an opportunity to prove whether they really mean it. Hamas needs to take the deal.”

On June 10, the UN Security Council approved a [resolution](#) affirming the framework. On July 2, Hamas announced that it had agreed to restart ceasefire talks based on the framework.

“We are ready for negotiations that achieve a cessation of aggression and a complete withdrawal from the Gaza Strip,” said senior negotiator Khalil Al-Hayya, a deputy of Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar. “We are ready for genuine negotiations if Netanyahu adheres to the principles outlined by President Biden.”

At the time, Hamas negotiators [indicated](#) they were open to a three-phase deal that would not require an immediate commitment to a permanent ceasefire and complete withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza as a precondition to move forward with the process. Prior to this, Hamas had insisted any agreement must include clearly defined steps that ensure an end to Israel’s war.

Drop Site News has reviewed internal documents from the negotiations showing that on July 2 Hamas formally informed international mediators that it had accepted the framework, which Hamas says it was told had been amended by the U.S. and approved by Israel on June 24. This amendment removed language Hamas had previously insisted on that called for negotiations no later than 14 days into the first phase of a deal on the “necessary arrangements for the return of a sustainable calm (permanent ceasefire),” according to a draft seen by Drop Site News. Hamas believed this compromise was strong evidence of their desire to reach a deal.

“If you draw a timeline for the negotiations along the last 10 months, you will observe a consistent pattern of the Israelis: each time we are near to reach an agreement, either they commit new massacres or backtrack from the deal and add new conditions,” said Naim.

The Israeli government did not respond to a request for comment.

Netanyahu's "Coup" Against His Own Ceasefire Proposal

Since early July, Netanyahu has intensified Israel's attacks in Gaza, repeatedly added new terms to the framework, and [assassinated](#) Ismail Haniyeh, Hamas's political leader and its lead negotiator, in Tehran. Among the new demands put forward by Netanyahu is the right to continue occupying the Philadelphi corridor along the border with Egypt, to maintain control of the Rafah border crossing and to position Israeli troops in central Gaza along the Netzarim axis where IDF forces would establish checkpoints to search Palestinians seeking to return to their homes in northern Gaza.

Egypt has objected to Israeli proposals to remain in the Philadelphi corridor. Israel asked Cairo to amend a 2005 agreement, a security annex to the Camp David Treaty signed in 1979, barring Israel from stationing its forces there. Egypt [rejected](#) this, saying,

"Opening a discussion about amending the Camp David Treaty may lead to new crises that the treaty may not withstand, especially in light of the growing anger in Egypt over the Israeli practices [in Gaza]."

Meanwhile, the independent Egyptian news site Madr Masr recently [published satellite imagery](#) showing Israel has fortified its presence along Netzarim. The IDF began bulldozing areas along that axis five months into the war and insists it wants to maintain a presence there as part of any agreement with Hamas.

"No one in Hamas can accept any form of Israeli presence in the Netzarim corridor and investigating the people while they are returning home. And no one accepts this and accepts the military presence in the Philadelphi corridor and the Rafah crossing," said Naim. "I think the only way to reach a deal is to lift these points from any deal," otherwise "it means that we are accepting a permanent occupation of the Gaza Strip."

Naim also said that Israel was insisting on new veto powers over the release of Palestinian prisoners held by Israel, which would prevent the release of high value political prisoners, including those from Hamas and other resistance groups serving multi decade prison sentences.

"[Netanyahu] totally changed the terms about the prisoner exchange, which has already been agreed upon and negotiated for months," said Naim. "I think it would be shameful for any Palestinian to accept such a deal."

Rather than insisting on upholding what Biden said was Israel's own proposal in May, the U.S. has appeased Netanyahu's efforts to allow an indefinite presence of Israeli forces in Gaza and an open-ended campaign of military attacks. Since Haniyeh's assassination and the selection of Sinwar, the Gaza leader of Hamas, to replace him, Hamas has said it will not participate in what it has described as a rigged process masquerading as negotiations.

"The new conditions [Netanyahu] is adding is a coup against his own proposal," Naim said.

Blinken's Loss of Credibility

In early August, the White House insisted that a ceasefire was within reach and had put forward what it called a "final bridging proposal" to resolve outstanding issues.

“We are closer than we’ve ever been,” Biden said on August 16. Four days later, Secretary of State Antony Blinken was in Tel Aviv meeting with Netanyahu. “He supports it,” Blinken told reporters after their meeting. “It’s now incumbent on Hamas to do the same.”

Within hours of Blinken departing Israel, Netanyahu’s people were leaking stories contesting those assertions and saying the Israeli prime minister had in fact convinced Blinken to accept Israel’s continued occupation of parts of Gaza. The U.S. denied that happened.

“Blinken has damaged the whole process because he lost all his credibility as a serious mediator,” said Naim. “We see today the worst example of a secretary of state of a superpower. Very weak, very weak. He’s a big failure.”

Naim said that the so-called bridging proposals largely advocated for Hamas to accept some aspects of the new demands Netanyahu inserted after Hamas agreed to the Biden and UN framework.

“We are ready to sit for negotiations if we are discussing an executive plan to implement what we have agreed upon on July 2,” said Naim. “We are not ready to negotiate a new proposal because [Netanyahu] added new conditions which has nothing to do with the old.”

The White House insists it is making progress.

“Senior level talks in Cairo over recent days have been constructive and were conducted in a spirit on all sides to reach a final and implementable agreement,” said a State Department official in a statement to Drop Site News. “The process continues through working groups to further address remaining issues and details. We underscore the urgency of an agreement for all sides.”

Hamas maintains it has not directly participated in any negotiations or “working groups,” only receiving updates from Egyptian and Qatari mediators and then offering their responses.

“We weren’t part of the negotiations,” Naim said. “The last round of negotiations, it was only between the mediators, the Americans and [Israel].”

He added that mediators have told Hamas that the Israeli delegations do not appear empowered by Netanyahu to make any decisions and that often, when progress appears possible, Netanyahu vetoes the suggestions of his own delegation.

“They are not authorized to negotiate seriously [on] any point,” Naim said. “It is only negotiations between the mediators and the Israelis. Or to be more accurate, it is negotiations between the mediators, the Americans and Netanyahu. And in this case, the mediator is the Israeli delegation.”

On Thursday, the Israeli security cabinet voted to support Netanyahu’s insistence that its forces remain entrenched along the Philadelphi corridor between Gaza and Egypt. According to [media reports](#) on the meeting, Netanyahu’s own defense minister Yoav Gallant objected.

“The significance of this is that Hamas won’t agree to it, so there won’t be an agreement and there won’t be any hostages released,” Gallant reportedly said. “You’re

running the negotiations on your own,” he added, “we hear everything after the fact.” Netanyahu’s proposal was approved with only Gallant voting against it.

Naim said that the optimism expressed recently by U.S. officials for a deal that ends the war is an attempt to obfuscate an increasingly dire reality, the stakes of which have been devastatingly punctuated by Israel’s [violent invasion](#) of parts of the West Bank, which began Wednesday.

“What’s happening in Gaza and what’s happening in the West Bank is a clear sign, a clear indication that this conflict needs a political solution. And Palestinians have all the rights to achieve their national goals of dignity, freedom and independence, self sovereignty,” Naim said. “Leaving these fascist leaders in Israel, they will destabilize not only the situation here, but the situation in the whole region. Because day after day, they are converting this political conflict into a religious conflict.”

*

Click the share button below to email/forward this article to your friends and colleagues. Follow us on [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#) and subscribe to our [Telegram Channel](#). Feel free to repost and share widely Global Research articles.

[One Month Before Global Research’s Anniversary](#)

Featured image is from Drop Site

The original source of this article is [Drop Site](#)
Copyright © [Jeremy Scahill](#), [Drop Site](#), 2024

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Jeremy Scahill](#)

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca
www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca