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The United States Is the Main Obstacle to Peace in Palestine



U.S. Marines and IDF soldiers in joint maneuver Intrepid Maven, Feb. 28, 2023. Photo: US Marines

On June 13, Hamas responded to persistent needling by U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken over the U.S. proposal for a pause in the Israeli massacre in Gaza. The group said it has “dealt positively... with the latest proposal and all proposals to reach a cease-fire agreement.” Hamas added, by contrast, that, “while Blinken continues to talk about ‘Israel’s approval of the latest proposal, we have not heard any Israeli official voicing approval.”

The full details of the U.S. proposal have yet to be made public, but the pause in Israeli attacks and release of hostages in the first phase would reportedly lead to further negotiations for a more lasting cease-fire and the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza in the second phase. But there is no guarantee that the second round of negotiations would succeed.

As former Israeli Labor Party prime minister Ehud Barak told Israel Radio on June 3rd, “How do you think [Gaza military commander] Sinwar will react when he is told: but be quick, because we still have to kill you, after you return all the hostages?”

Meanwhile, as Hamas pointed out, Israel has not publicly accepted the terms of the latest U.S. cease-fire proposal, so it has only the word of U.S. officials that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has privately agreed to it. In public, Netanyahu still insists that he is committed to the complete destruction of Hamas and its governing authority in Gaza, and has actually stepped up Israel’s vicious attacks in central and southern Gaza.

The basic disagreement that President Joe Biden and Secretary Blinken’s smoke and mirrors cannot hide is that Hamas, like every Palestinian, wants a real end to the genocide, while the Israeli and U.S. governments do not.

Biden or Netanyahu could end the slaughter very quickly if they wanted to—Netanyahu by agreeing to a permanent cease-fire, or Biden by ending or suspending U.S. weapons deliveries to Israel. Israel could not carry out this war without U.S. military and diplomatic support. But Biden refuses to use his leverage, even though he has admitted in an interview that it was “reasonable” to conclude that Netanyahu is prolonging the war for his own political benefit.

The U.S. is still sending weapons to Israel to continue the massacre in violation of a cease-fire order by the International Court of Justice. Bipartisan U.S. leaders have invited Netanyahu to address a joint session of the U.S. Congress on July 24, even as the International Criminal Court reviews a request by its chief prosecutor for an arrest warrant for Netanyahu for war crimes, crimes against humanity and murder.

The United States seems determined to share Israel’s self-inflicted isolation from voices calling for peace from all over the world, including large majorities of countries in the UN General Assembly and Security Council.

But perhaps this is appropriate, as the United States bears a great deal of responsibility for that isolation. By its decades of unconditional support for Israel, and by using its UN Security Council veto dozens of times to shield Israel from international accountability, the United States has enabled successive Israeli governments to pursue flagrantly criminal policies and to thumb their noses at the growing outrage of people and countries across the world.

This pattern of U.S. support for Israel goes all the way back to its founding, when Zionist leaders in Palestine unleashed a well-planned operation to seize much more territory than the UN allocated to their new state in its partition plan, which the Palestinians and neighboring countries already firmly opposed.

The massacres, the bulldozed villages and the ethnic cleansing of 750,000 to a million people in the Nakba have been meticulously documented, despite an extraordinary propaganda campaign to persuade two generations of Israelis, Americans and Europeans that they never happened.

The U.S. was the first country to grant Israel de facto recognition on May 14, 1948, and played a leading role in the 1949 UN votes to recognize the new state of Israel within its illegally seized borders. President Eisenhower had the wisdom to oppose Britain, France and Israel in their war to capture the Suez Canal in 1956, but Israel's seizure of the Occupied Palestinian Territories in 1967 persuaded U.S. leaders that it could be a valuable military ally in the Middle East.

Unconditional U.S. support for Israel's illegal occupation and annexation of more and more territory over the past 57 years has corrupted Israeli politics and encouraged increasingly extreme and racist Israeli governments to keep expanding their genocidal territorial ambitions. Netanyahu's Likud party and government now fully embrace their Greater Israel plan to annex all of occupied Palestine and parts of other countries, wherever and whenever new opportunities for expansion present themselves.

Israel's de facto expansion has been facilitated by the United States' monopoly over mediation between Israel and Palestine, which it has aggressively staked out and defended against the UN and other countries. The irreconcilable contradiction between the U.S.'s conflicting roles as Israel's most powerful military ally and the principal mediator between Israel and Palestine is obvious to the whole world.

But as we see even in the midst of the genocide in Gaza, the rest of the world and the UN have failed to break this U.S. monopoly and establish legitimate, impartial mediation by the UN or neutral countries that respect the lives of Palestinians and their human and civil rights. Qatar mediated a temporary cease-fire between Israel and Hamas in November 2023, but it has since been upstaged by U.S. moves to prolong the massacre through deceptive proposals, cynical posturing and Security Council vetoes. The U.S. consistently vetoes all but its own proposals on Israel and Palestine in the UN Security Council, even when its own proposals are deliberately meaningless, ineffective or counterproductive.

The UN General Assembly is united in support of Palestine, voting almost unanimously year after year to demand an end to the Israeli occupation. A hundred and forty-four countries have recognized Palestine as a country, and only the U.S. veto denies it full UN membership. The Israeli genocide in Gaza has even shamed the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the

International Criminal Court (ICC) into suspending their ingrained pro-Western bias and pursuing cases against Israel.

One way that the nations of the world could come together to apply greater pressure on Israel to end its assault on Gaza would be a “Uniting for Peace” resolution in the UN General Assembly. This is a measure the General Assembly can take when the Security Council is prevented from acting to restore peace and security by the veto of a permanent member.

Israel has demonstrated that it is prepared to ignore cease-fire resolutions by the General Assembly and the Security Council, and an order by the ICJ, but a Uniting for Peace resolution could impose penalties on Israel for its actions, such as an arms embargo or an economic boycott. If the United States still insists on continuing its complicity in Israel’s international crimes, the General Assembly could take action against the U.S. too.

A General Assembly resolution would change the terms of the international debate and shift the focus back from Biden and Blinken’s diversionary tactics to the urgency of enforcing the lasting cease-fire that the whole world is calling for.

It is time for the United Nations and neutral countries to push Israel’s U.S. partner in genocide to the side, and for legitimate international authorities and mediators to take responsibility for enforcing international law, ending the Israeli occupation of Palestine and bringing peace to the Middle East.

Medea Benjamin and Nicolas J. S. Davies are the authors of [War in Ukraine: Making Sense of a Senseless Conflict](#), available from OR Books in November 2022.

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