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Biden administration promotes bogus Gaza ceasefire talks

Amid global popular outrage at the ongoing slaughter of Palestinians by the Israeli military in Gaza, the Biden administration is posturing as the facilitator of protracted ceasefire talks, claiming falsely that negotiations are close to conclusion. Likewise, the Democratic National Convention has concluded on the same note—empty talk of a ceasefire, while maintaining full political, financial and military support for the Zionist regime and its barbaric war.



Israeli soldiers move on the top of a tank near the Israeli-Gaza border, as seen from southern Israel, Wednesday, August 21, 2024. [AP Photo/Leo Correa]

In reality, the talks over months have been a fraud from start to finish. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has repeatedly sabotaged any deal, most provocatively by authorising the assassination of Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh on July 31.

Moreover, such is the framework of the US-sponsored deal that any ceasefire will not only be temporary, but will also give the Israeli military the free-hand to continue its genocide. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who was in Israel this week, emerged from talks with Netanyahu on Monday claiming that Israel had agreed to a US proposal for a six-week cease-fire, the release of Israeli hostages and Palestinian detainees, and a withdrawal of Israeli forces from areas of Gaza.

No sooner had Blinken left than Netanyahu publicly contradicted the US official in particular declaring that an Israeli military presence would remain along the Philadelphi Corridor, a buffer zone along the border between Gaza and Egypt. Israel, which claims its troop presence is necessary to control any arms smuggling, has used its control of the crossings into Gaza to restrict entry of essential humanitarian supplies including food, medicines and medical equipment, into Gaza.

Netanyahu flatly declared on Tuesday: “I am not ready to withdraw from the Philadelphi Corridor in the face of domestic and foreign pressures. If we leave there, there will be tremendous political pressure on us not to return there—but there will be no such pressure if we stay there.”

The Israeli regime, which is intent on militarising the buffer zone, knows full well that neither Hamas nor Egypt will accept such terms. Israel had proposed building eight watchtowers along the Philadelphi Corridor, which the US had sought to wind back to two. But Egypt completely rejects the construction of any watchtowers or any permanent Israeli presence on the border.

Nevertheless, on Thursday US Ambassador to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield told the UN Security Council that a deal is “now is in sight” despite the obvious lack of agreement on key stumbling blocks, including on the Philadelphi Corridor. The notion that such matters are going to be resolved in the lead-up to a possible summit on Sunday is fanciful. A new Israeli proposal on the number of Israeli troops and military posts along the Philadelphi Corridor with Egypt is unlikely to be any more acceptable to Egypt and Hamas than the previous plan to militarise the border.

Netanyahu has made clear from the outset that he has no interest in anything other than a temporary pause to the military onslaught in Gaza and on his terms. Far right members of his government and cabinet have rejected outright any ceasefire.

The framework for a three-phase agreement announced by Biden on May 31 was supposed to bridge the unbridgeable gap between the Zionist regime’s determination to continue its genocidal war and the demands of Hamas for a permanent ceasefire and reconstruction of

Gaza. The first six-week ceasefire is theoretically to be followed by the second phase—an end to the military conflict, the withdrawal of all Israeli troops from Gaza and the release of all remaining hostages—then a third phase involving reconstruction and the final return of remains.

Just hours after Biden’s announcement, Netanyahu posted on X/Twitter that “Israel’s conditions for ending the war have not changed,” adding: “The destruction of Hamas military and governing capabilities, the freeing of all hostages and ensuring that Gaza no longer poses a threat to Israel,” he said. In the months since, Netanyahu has not altered his determination to secure what amounts to a permanent Israeli military occupation of Gaza—the watchtowers on the border with Egypt being just one aspect.

Frank Lowenstein, a negotiator on Israeli-Palestinian affairs for the Obama administration, told the *Washington Post* yesterday: “Netanyahu has been crystal clear for months that he has no interest in implementing the full three-phase cease-fire agreement that would actually end the war... Despite what he told Secretary Blinken [on Monday], it is increasingly apparent that he doesn’t even really want a temporary cease-fire and hostage release.”

In fact, the ceasefire deal, if it is eventually agreed, actually allows for Israel to ignore the final two phases and recommence its scorched earth offensive in Gaza—assuming that it does not concoct a pretext earlier to restart the genocide. The Biden administration has made absolutely clear that it will continue to back Israel to the hilt, including through the supply of the huge quantities of weapons and munitions used to transform Gaza into a wasteland.

Al Jazeera reported, based on medical sources, that Israeli troops killed another 18 Palestinians in central and southern Gaza yesterday bringing the official death toll since October 7 to at least 40,265 men, women and children. More than 93,000 others have been wounded. Israeli has again issued new orders for more evacuations that have turned virtually the entire population in Gaza into internal refugees, lacking adequate shelter, food, clean water and medical care.

An Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) report today entitled “When morphine ran out in Gaza, doctors say amputations became a ‘never-ending nightmare’” gave a glimpse of the many social horrors that have become the norm. Horrific injuries inflicted on children as a result of the Israeli military’s indiscriminate bombardment in Gaza have led to large numbers of amputations, some of which had to be carried out without anaesthetic.

The ferocity of the Israeli military operations has created “a new generation of child amputees on a scale that aid and health organisations say they are struggling to comprehend,” the article stated. According to the UN children’s agency, UNICEF, more than 1,000 children had legs amputated in the first two months of the war—that is, more than 13 children a day losing one or both legs.

US paediatrician Seema Jilani, who worked at the Al-Aqsa Hospital last December, described the traumatic conditions in which she and other doctors worked—being overwhelmed with child casualties without the necessary equipment and supplies. She said the situation was a “never-ending nightmare” that meant some of the most severely injured, including children, were often left to die as nothing could be done for them.

Hospital and medical facilities in Gaza have now been far further degraded. As the ABC reported, there are no precise figures for the number of Gazans who have lost limbs, but medical officials and aid groups expect the numbers to have soared into the thousands. This tragic toll is certain to rise, along with other deaths and injuries, as part of the US-backed Israeli genocide, regardless of any temporary ceasefire that may or may not be reached.

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