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Bibi's Game Plan



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Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu may not have anticipated October 7. But the Hamas massacre that day gave him a welcome opportunity to execute a long-held Israeli plan. Its steps are to create a Greater Israel; destroy Hamas, Hezbollah and other adversaries in Iraq, Syria and Yemen; and quash Iran's budding nuclear program. Over the past 12 months, that plan has unfolded successively in four principal locations: Gaza, the West Bank (and East Jerusalem), Lebanon and now Iran.

1. Gaza.

In the wake of October 7, Netanyahu vowed to eliminate Hamas, a goal that most of his military advisors deemed unachievable. Asserting "Israel's right to defend itself," the Prime Minister and his war cabinet proceeded to level the Gaza Strip and decimate its population with relentless bombing, missile strikes and sniper attacks. With a rising death toll, now over 42,000 (not including thousands missing and presumed dead under the rubble), Gazans have

also witnessed the targeting of its journalists and health workers. Hospitals, schools and mosques have not been spared as forced evacuations have moved civilians to so-called “safe zones,” which often have become scenes of massacre with U.S.-supplied bombs and missiles. At the same time, Israel has pursued as a war tactic, a deliberate policy of starvation. The siege declared by Defense Minister Gallant at the war’s outset has largely deprived Palestinians of clean water, food, fuel, and essential medical supplies. As a result, Gazans (especially babies and children) are dying from malnutrition and related diseases. A full-scale famine descends over the land.

Meanwhile, the Biden administration has pledged unconditional support to Netanyahu and his government. While calling repeatedly for a ceasefire and the return of hostages held by Hamas, the U.S. continues to arm the IDF with lethal weapons, including two-ton bombs and missiles tipped with white phosphorous. Unconstrained militarily and diplomatically, Netanyahu refuses to stop the bombing until Hamas surrenders and returns the hostages. With an uninterrupted supply of arms, the war goes on and innocent civilians continue to die.

2. The West Bank.

Encouraged by extremist members of Netanyahu’s cabinet, whose declared intent is to ethnically cleanse non-Jews and annex the West Bank, Israeli settlers and the IDF have escalated their attacks on Palestinian towns and villages. To date they have murdered over 6,000 inhabitants and imprisoned thousands more. They have forced many residents to flee and have destroyed their homes and enterprises. In both the West Bank and East Jerusalem, Israel’s apparent aim is to force the exodus of Palestinians, as in the 1948 *Nakba*. Central to the vision of a “Greater Israel” (extending “from the river to the sea”) is a Jewish State of some seven million Jewish citizens, devoid of a similar number of Palestinian residents. As the world’s attention focuses on Gaza (and now Lebanon and Iran), residents are seeing their community infrastructure and businesses destroyed. Observers say the West Bank is beginning to look like Gaza.

3. Lebanon.

When the Israeli genocide began in Gaza, the Hezbollah militia began attacking towns in northern Israel. In solidarity with Gaza, it pledged to continue those attacks until Israel agreed to a ceasefire. With U.S. arms flowing to the IDF, Netanyahu was not about to back down. Israel’s targeted assassinations of top Hamas and Hezbollah leaders, its rigging of exploding communication devices; and its bombing and land invasion have already cost more than two thousand Lebanese lives. Hezbollah’s militia has been degraded, but it continues to

put up armed resistance. Whatever the political outcome, Israel's war on Lebanon has already caused much devastation in Beirut and elsewhere. How will this war end?

4. *Iran.*

When Netanyahu addressed a joint session of Congress in 2015, he decried the then emerging nuclear deal with Iran, insisting that America withdraw from the multiparty negotiations. Indeed, the Prime Minister has never hidden his desire to nip in the bud Iran's near ascent to nuclear power and overturn the country's theocratic government. Now, with a significant U.S. naval presence and more than 40,000 troops in the region, Netanyahu can rest assured that America will protect Israel.

Iran sought to avenge the Israeli strike on Tehran in July that killed the Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh. However, its missile barrage did little damage and killed only one person. Yet Israel has promised to retaliate. The chief of the Iranian Armed Forces then declared that if Israel does retaliate, "our response will be more forceful." A next round of retaliations would likely unleash a major war, dragging in the Americans and giving what Israeli provocations have intended all along: an excuse to destroy Iran's nuclear facilities.

Israel's ongoing wars in Gaza, the West Bank, and Lebanon are a prelude to a possible *big war* against Iran. Meanwhile, President Biden continues the flow of U.S. weapons to Israel. While discouraging (another "red line") a bombing of Iran's nuclear plants, he appears to be okay with possible strikes on Iranian oil facilities.

In short, Bibi's bloody game plan is on track— to destroy Palestinian populations in both Gaza and the West Bank and to sow fear and chaos among Lebanese civilians by bombing suspected Hezbollah sites. The IDF has degraded the military capacity of both Hamas and Hezbollah. Yet both organizations remain alive and likely to regroup and strengthen over time.

In providing essential arms to Israel, the U.S. has become complicit in both the Gaza genocide and the war crimes in the West Bank and Lebanon. Both Netanyahu and the Biden administration deserve to be held accountable for their serious violations of international law and moral norms.

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