



Written by [Angeline Tan](#) on January 3, 2024

Israel Says Gaza War Will Not End in 2024, Declines Hostage Deal With Hamas

Israel will continue to wage war in Gaza throughout 2024, Israel Defense Forces (IDF) spokesman Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari declared in a statement on December 31.

Characterizing a strategic shift to what he termed as the “smart” management of IDF troops, Hagari disclosed that five reserve brigades were being taken out of combat, purportedly to reinvigorate the Israeli economy as Israel prepares for a prolonged conflict.

“The goals of the war require lengthy fighting, and we are prepared accordingly,” he said, justifying that sending the reservists back home “will result in considerable relief for the economy, and will allow them to gain strength for operations next year, and the fighting will continue and we will need them.”

The IDF spokesman’s prediction followed similar remarks from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who cautioned during a press conference on December 30 that there were still “many more months” of fighting.

Notably, the Israeli government has categorically dismissed international pleas for a ceasefire amid the rising death toll in Gaza, where its AI-enhanced bombing campaign has led to more than 21,800 Palestinian deaths since the surprise attack on October 7 by the terrorist group Hamas, based on figures from Gaza’s Health Ministry. Another 56,000 have been gravely injured, while 85 percent of the enclave’s approximately 2.3 million residents have been displaced.

The United States has consistently backed Israel throughout the present stage of the conflict, including by vetoing UN Security Council resolutions demanding a ceasefire. Nonetheless, even Washington has had disagreements with Israel over Gaza’s future.

While Netanyahu has insisted that Gaza remain under Israeli control after the war, the United States has called for Gaza to be run by the Palestinian Authority as a move toward a two-state solution. The Palestinian Authority, which governs the West Bank, formerly oversaw Gaza before Hamas took power following elections in 2007.

For its end, Israel opposes Palestinian statehood, and Netanyahu has openly boasted of his role in averting it during various rounds of peace talks over the years.

On December 31, Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich proposed that the government “encourage



AP Images
Benjamin Netanyahu meets with Israeli soldiers



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migration” of Palestinians out of Gaza and reestablish the Jewish settlements that were dismantled there in 2005. In an interview with Army Radio, the minister stated that “the entire discussion about ‘the day after’ would be completely different” if 90 percent of the enclave’s Arab inhabitants would just leave.

Although an official with Netanyahu’s office subsequently informed the Associated Press that “contrary to false allegations, Israel does not seek to displace the population in Gaza,” but only looks to “enable those individuals who wish to leave to do so,” a government document leaked recently urged for the mass relocation of all of the territory’s residents to Egypt’s Sinai Peninsula — a plan that raised eyebrows among Palestinians and Egyptians alike.

Meanwhile, citing sources, left-wing news outlet Axios reported on January 1 that Israel has declined a new hostage deal suggested by Hamas that would have established a long-term ceasefire, along with the gradual withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza.

The proposal was made to Israel through Qatari and Egyptian mediators on December 31, based on two Israeli officials and another source acquainted with the matter.

Hamas reportedly suggested ceasing hostilities in three stages. Each stage is reported to include a pause in the fighting for more than a month in exchange for the freeing of hostages held by the group. In the first stage, Israel would have started withdrawing its forces from Gaza in exchange for the liberation of around 40 hostages. The deal would have also likely involved Israel releasing an unspecified number of Palestinian prisoners, the report read.

According to the terms of the reported deal, once the third stage is enforced, both sides would end the war, which has been ongoing since early October, while Hamas would free captured Israeli soldiers.

The Israeli war cabinet explored the proposal, but concluded that it was unacceptable, according to the article. One Israeli official told Axios that the overture was “totally off base and we asked the mediators to try and produce a more acceptable proposal.” However, the outlet’s sources said the proposal indicated that Hamas was ready to negotiate.

In late December, a Hamas delegation went to Cairo to discuss an Egyptian proposal to cease hostilities. Several media reports indicated that, besides an extendable ceasefire and the release of hostages held by Hamas and Palestinian prisoners, the proposal also entailed the creation of a technocratic government in the enclave after a dialogue with all Palestinian factions.

The Israeli military campaign was triggered by a Hamas assault on October 7 that killed at least 1,200 and abducted around 240 people. Since then, the sides have managed to negotiate the release of around 100 captives held in Gaza in exchange for Israel freeing 240 Palestinians, while agreeing to a week-long ceasefire. The truce crumbled as both sides accused each other of breaching the agreement.

On his end, Netanyahu has said Israel will persist in its military operation against Hamas until the group is defeated, Gaza is totally “demilitarized,” and its inhabitants “deradicalized.”

Netanyahu also highlighted the need for a buffer zone along Gaza’s perimeter, with Israeli security officials supervising goods entering from Egypt.

Israel’s approach to dealing with Hamas has thus far drawn criticism from the United Nations and international humanitarian organizations. Its European and U.S. allies have recently urged for more efforts to safeguard civilian lives.

In an [opinion piece](#) for the *Wall Street Journal* published on Christmas Day, Netanyahu wrote that



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“ Hamas must be destroyed, Gaza must be demilitarized, and Palestinian society must be deradicalized.” These are the “ three prerequisites for peace between Israel and its Palestinian neighbors in Gaza,” the prime minister contended.

Based on the official Israeli government’s perspective, only the complete collapse of Hamas’ military capabilities, as well as its political power structures in Gaza, could ensure that the tragic events of October 7 would not happen again.

The Israeli leader proceeded to claim that the IDF had been operating “ in full compliance with international law,” slamming Hamas militants for using “ Palestinian civilians as human shields.” Netanyahu called on the international community to place the blame for any Palestinian casualties solely on Hamas.

Additionally, Netanyahu voiced doubts over the Palestinian Authority’s ability to demilitarize and deradicalize Gaza, elaborating that “ for the foreseeable future Israel will have to retain overriding security responsibility” over the enclave.

Recently, the head of the Hamas political bureau, Ismail Haniyeh, stated that the terrorist group was open to negotiations with Israel as long as the latter agreed to the establishment of an “ independent [Palestinian] state with Jerusalem as its capital.”

Conversely, Netanyahu reinforced that his government would not “ repeat the mistake of Oslo” — a 1993 peace accord that established a roadmap for a sovereign Palestinian state.



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