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Haaretz | Opinion

# The Israeli Left's Support for the Gaza War Serves the Interests of Netanyahu, Far-right

Sunday 17 March 2024, by [MICHAELI Yarden](#) (Date first published: 24 January 2024).

*An Israeli soldier stands near a building being bulldozed by Israeli troops, in Gaza Strip's Khan Yunes, last week. Credit: Tomer Appelbaum*

The fighting in the Gaza Strip is working against goals that are important to the public, and crucial to the maintenance of the social contract in Israel. It hinders the return of the hostages while they are still alive, the restoration of security for civilians and the rehabilitation of the communities that have been evacuated.

This is happening because the true goals of the leaders of the war are [hidden behind a smokescreen](#). Even people in the leadership and the defense establishment are aware of this reality, but for the most part they don't talk about it out loud.

On January 17, security affairs journalist Ronen Bergman wrote on Ynet: "Only in whispers are they talking in the Israel Defense Forces and the intelligence community about the possibility that more than once have hostages been killed or murdered by Hamas, in circumstances directly connected to the [military] maneuver that is supposed to rescue them."

Minister Gadi Eisenkot, a member of the war cabinet, admitted that "it is impossible to bring back the captives alive in the near future without a deal," but he is the only senior official who is saying this openly.

*Protesters demanding a hostage release deal at Hostage Square in Tel Aviv on Wednesday. Credit: Itay Ron*

With regard to the military threat, too, there is a gap between what is being said quietly and the statements that are for public consumption. On January 1, Raviv Drucker quoted a senior figure involved in managing the war: "We have already achieved the real goal. There is no threat from the south... Now is the time to move northwards."

"This war has no purpose and no future," a source who participates in cabinet and government meetings told Haaretz's Gidi Weitz, and added that quite possibly Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will refuse a deal to bring back the hostages under the conditions proposed by Hamas, because "at that very moment Itamar Ben-Gvir will leave the coalition and it will fall apart."

The recognition that the war has ended its usefulness and has no achievable aims is beginning to cause cracks in the lie, "Together we will win," but the obvious conclusion - a demand to end it - is still taboo among [large segments of the public](#). Despite the change in mood in the wake of the deaths of more hostages, there is hardly anyone in the opposition calling for an end to the war. The public is not even discussing the matter of principle: In what way is continuing the war preferable to ending it?

*Destruction from Israeli aerial bombardment is seen in Gaza City in October. Credit: Adel Hana /AP*

The only ones who have goals to achieve as long as Israel remains on the same track are extreme rightists like Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, author of the [“decisive plan” to defeat the Palestinians](#), and National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, disciple of racist ideologue Meir Kahane. Neither of them is a member of the war cabinet, but they have influence on its policy because of the trap in which Netanyahu is caught. Ben-Gvir has already taken the trouble to emphasize publicly that if it is decided to stop the war, he will leave the government.

The patriotism of good people, which burst out in the wake of the murder of some 1,200 Israelis on October 7 – a true, sincere and necessary desire to defend Israel by force and a need to explain its position in the international arena – is now being exploited to advance the aspirations of people who are pushing Israel from one disaster to the next.

Most of all, not demanding an end to the war serves Netanyahu’s personal interests, and those of extremists who are prepared to pay with the blood of hostages and soldiers to cause Palestinians to vanish from sight. The longer the IDF remains in Gaza, the more the Israeli position is eroded and war at a lower intensity becomes the status quo. This intermediate situation is liable to go on for years, as we learned from two decades in Lebanon.

*Protesters in Tel Aviv a week ago. The sign reads “Elections now!” Credit: Moti Milrod*

Ending the war is not a victory for Hamas, even if the terror organization says it is, as it is expected to do. Hamas has suffered a harsh blow, and many parts of the Gaza Strip have been destroyed. Ending the war will make it possible to begin to rehabilitate the border areas that were evacuated.

Ending the war will also enable a thorough investigation of the [October 7 debacle](#), the demand for an accounting from those responsible for it and progress towards repairing the Israeli system so that the debacle does not happen again. It is important to remember that the main reason for the massacre is not Hamas’ capability but rather Israel’s neglect along the border. The fighting inside the Gaza Strip has demonstrated the IDF’s superiority on the battlefield.

Around Netanyahu there are already people who are opening their eyes and acknowledging the reality, but it cannot be expected that they will be the people to propel a public struggle, which would cause them to lose power. Therefore, the responsibility lies with the left and the center. The days of the judicial coup prove that in Israel there is a large public that knows how to demonstrate and make significant demands, and stopping the coup legislation showed that this public has the power to shape reality.

Now it needs to raise several demands: ending the war, striving at the greatest possible speed for a deal to release the hostages, the resignation of the government and investigation of the debacle. The alternative is the strengthening of the rightist regime and perpetuation of the Israeli presence in the Gaza Strip. Currently, the security and diplomatic reality is being reshaped. The center-left must wake up. Enough with serving the interests of the extreme right and Netanyahu.

**Yarden Michaeli**

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**P.S.**

• Haaretz. Jan 24, 2024::

<https://www.haaretz.com/opinion/2024-01-24/ty-article-opinion/.premium/israels-center-left-is-still-serving-netanyahus-reign-by-not-collapsing-the-government/0000018d-3d03-dc44-a5bf-bdb703010000>