

# Absurdity and Criminality: Netanyahu Says Israel Will Invade Rafah “With or Without a Deal”

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Global Research, May 01, 2024

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

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*Do you negotiate for a peace deal with a threatening gun in one hand and a bomb in the other? Is this the way to pursue truce and ceasefire?*

Such questions are being asked by many concerned people all over the world in response to a very strange comment made by the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on April 30.

According to a statement from his office that has been very widely quoted in media, Netanyahu said,

“We will enter Rafah and we will eliminate Hamas’ battalions there –with or without a deal, to achieve total victory.”

This statement was made, incredibly enough, just a few hours before US Secretary of State Antony Blinken was to arrive in Israel to try to achieve a truce deal between Israel and Hamas that has been much talked about in the last few days.

In the middle of mounting protests against USA policies of massive weapons supply and diplomatic support to Israel’s aggression in Gaza that has already claimed over 34,000 lives and displaced an overwhelming majority of people of Gaza, statements made by Blinken and even President Biden himself have placed much faith in the ongoing latest proposal for truce. Blinken referred to the proposals as being ‘extraordinarily generous’ offer on the part of Israel, something at which Hamas should jump and accept (although many do not agree with this extraordinarily generous interpretation of the proposal) while, on April 29, Biden urged the leaders of Qatar and Egypt to “exert all efforts” towards securing the release of hostages held by Hamas as part of the ongoing negotiations for a Gaza ceasefire.

The reports of what this proposal involves mention a ceasefire for about 40 days in Gaza, release of about 40 or so hostages, and release of some Palestinian prisoners. This does not appear at all to be extraordinarily generous to the Palestinian side, unless the reports discussing the likely proposal have missed out some other important component.

As this writer has often stated earlier, in any such agreement, the ceasefire should be permanent. Of course even a few days' relief from the terrible daily violence would be welcome, but this by itself will not achieve much when it is known that similar or even higher aggression will continue again after a few days. The USA is publicizing such inadequate peace efforts so much now, while the much more important UN Security Council resolution for ceasefire was neglected and never implemented.

In any case the entire spirit of even this very limited truce effort was destroyed on April 30 when Netanyahu made the terrible comment that Israel will invade Rafah, with or without deal.

As Rafah is densely packed with about 1.4 million Palestinian people in a very small area, containing mostly displaced people in tents and shelters in addition to the normal population of the city, any invasion of Rafah would have terrible consequences, even if some safeguards are adopted. Air raids have already taken place, with very distressing results.

Martin Griffiths, UN Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs, has stated,

“The simple truth is that a ground operation in Rafah will be nothing short of a tragedy beyond words. No humanitarian plan can counter that.”

These strong words from the top official on humanitarian aid should not be ignored.

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres has warned that an Israeli assault on Rafah would be an “unbearable escalation” that would be “devastating” for Palestinians as well as the wider region.

Meanwhile Philippe Lazzarini, the head of the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, said on April 30 that that \$267 million in its funding was still suspended.

Another recent development which may turn out to be important was reported by Nikhil M. Babu in a leading newspaper of India ‘The Hindu’ dated May 1, 2024 ( Mr. Babu is in China at the invitation of the China Public Diplomacy Association) under the title “ Hamas, Fatah held talks in Beijing’. This report filed from Beijing informs us that representatives of Fatah and Hamas recently came to Beijing to have an “in-depth and candid” dialogue promoting Palestinian reconciliation, at the invitation of China. “The two sides fully expressed their political will of realizing reconciliation through dialogue and consultation, had discussions on many issues, and made encouraging progress.” The two sides “agreed to continue their dialogue to achieve Palestinian unity at an early date.” Both sides expressed high appreciation and thanks for China’s help.

Clearly several important developments appear to be taking place but the highest priority just now should be for all forces of peace to try to prevent the Israeli invasion of Rafah.

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