To save lives and swiftly end the war, Israel must intensify its attack

written by Meir Ben Shabbat | 15.12.2023

There's no question about the need to take on Hamas. There's no question about that. None. Zero. They have every right," President Joe Biden declared once again this week, in a speech he gave at a campaign event, ahead of the presidential elections.

In an attempt to deflect reports about pressure from Washington, he clarified: "We're not going to walk away from providing Israel what they need to defend themselves and to finish the job against Hamas. He later, at a fundraising event, expressed his concern about the weakening support for it from other countries of the world "following the indiscriminate bombings that occurred."

One can assume that similar messages were also conveyed by National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan who is visiting Israel, as well as the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the US Secretary of Defense, who are expected to arrive in the coming days.

There is no doubt about the sincerity of the declarations by President Biden and his people. Even if their vision regarding Gaza does not match the emerging stance in Israel, they are fully in lockstep with Jerusalem on the need to topple Hamas and destroy its military capabilities. As far as they see things, this is not only a necessary condition for launching regional change initiatives, but a moral goal in and of itself, as part of the fight against the forces of evil.

This too must be mentioned in their favor: The Biden administration's support for Israel has been expressed not only in statements and speeches, which have significant value but in concrete steps – from vetoing resolutions at the Security Council and arranging special financial assistance and supplying ammunition, to deterrent measures towards Iran and its proxies. This conduct further illustrates how important the strategic relations between the two countries are.

However, at the same time, one cannot ignore the heavy shackles that

Washington has placed by setting expectations regarding the conduct of the war, including those that are not formulated as explicit demands.

The simplest way to bring about the collapse of Hamas' rule in the shortest time and at the lowest cost in soldiers' lives is through a combination of high-intensity fighting and a tight blockade, whose role is to limit the enemy's stamina, alongside moves that will prevent Hamas elements from reassuming control through the various governmental agencies (hence the importance of damaging media infrastructure and attacking government buildings that are responsible for coordination, control, and public order, including municipal authorities).

In order to reduce the harm to the population, it would have been appropriate, from the outset, to allow its temporary exit outside the area, as has happened naturally in all the battles fought by the Americans and their allies in Iraq and Syria. However, the objection to this led to improvised alternative solutions, such as tents set up in the strip.

However the political pressure on this issue did not diminish, and as a result, humanitarian aid and fuel quantities entering the Strip have significantly increased, which in practice means that they go toward strengthening the enemy. At the same time, there was also a noticeable reduction in the intensity of the fighting on the part of Israel and a shift to more pinpointed strikes. All this is happening while Hamas has recovered slightly and reared its head following the temporary respite and while it holds hostages, knowing that they serve as the guarantee from a deadly blow.

A combination of reduced combat intensity with increased humanitarian aid could prolong the duration of fighting, certainly, if we add to this the morale Hamas can draw from the harm it has inflicted on our forces, the political pressure on Israel, and the bargaining chips it holds. Israel could then find itself slipping into a protracted quagmire, which will necessarily also increase the risk to our soldiers.

In order to avoid this, and as long as there is legitimacy for Israel's action, it is advisable to conduct the fighting with high intensity, similar to that which characterized the first stage of the war. This will make it possible to increase the effectiveness of efforts to topple Hamas. It will also boost the chances for the release of the captives, just like such action helped bring about the first hostage deal. In any case, in its absence, the pressure on Hamas will also decrease on this

issue. The IDF and Shin Bet should also take into account considerations regarding the security of the captives.

The continuation of fighting at later stages, after the collapse of Hamas rule, can be done at reduced intensity. The need and legitimacy for this will continue to exist as part of the prolonged effort to destroy all of Hamas' military capabilities.

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