

To End the War in Gaza, Pressure Hamas' Sponsors, Not Israel

written by Arsen Ostrovsky | 06.09.2024

It has often been said that the definition of insanity is “doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.” That maxim can aptly describe the international community’s approach to the current ceasefire—hostage negotiations between Israel and Hamas.

This past week, we received the devastating news of six hostages being executed in cold blood by Hamas in captivity. One of those murdered was 23-year-old American-Israeli Hersh Goldberg-Polin, whose family’s plight touched so many around the world.

Yet inexplicably, as some of the hostages were still being buried, instead of unleashing fury at Hamas and their state sponsors, the international community chose to raise the pressure on the Jewish State.

President Joe Biden, for example, chose this moment to claim that Prime Minister Netanyahu was not doing enough to secure a hostage deal, while in an unconscionable act of betrayal, Britain chose to adopt a partial arms embargo against Israel.

Even in his wildest dreams, Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar, could never have imagined this!

Time and time again, Israel has offered unprecedented strategic and security concessions to free the remaining hostages and achieve a pause in hostilities, yet the one constant has been Hamas intransigence and rejectionism—and the international community’s lack of moral backbone to hold them accountable.

The fact of the matter is, Israel has responded positively to every international proposal since November last year, including the most recent framework that President Biden submitted on May 31, as well as “the final bridging proposal: put forward on Aug. 16. In his visit to Israel and the region on Aug. 19, Secretary of State Blinken even confirmed that Netanyahu accepted the bridging proposal and that “it’s now incumbent on Hamas to do the same.”

Hamas made their response clear—with bullet holes to the heads of the six hostages, including Hersh.

Yet, like clockwork, the international community instead chose to single out Netanyahu and Israel, for opprobrium.

It is hardly surprising therefore, that Hamas continues to reject every proposal put before them, when they know they can sit on their laurels and wait for the international community to up the pressure on Israel. By focusing its attention on Israel, the U.S. is empowering Hamas and removing any incentive for the terror group to compromise or reach a deal.

If the international community, led by the U.S., wants to actually advance a hostage deal, they could do so by demanding that American allies such as Qatar and Turkey use all of the levers at their disposal to pressure Hamas into accepting a deal.

Hamas operates extensive financial and business networks out of Qatar and Turkey, while its leaders live in luxurious accommodations in Doha. Qatar's Al Jazeera media empire is Hamas' primary outlet for its propaganda, not only inciting terror, but undermining moderate governments interested in Middle East peace. Turkey has given senior Hamas leaders Turkish passports in order to facilitate their travel around the world.

Perhaps if the international community spent a fraction of the energy they do on pressuring Israel to make further concessions, to instead applying unyielding pressure on Hamas and their state sponsors, primarily Qatar, Turkey, and of course Iran, we could have already reached a deal and saved countless lives.

The U.S. must show Doha and Ankara that there is a costly price to pay for failing to pressure Hamas, which knowingly-executed a U.S. citizen in cold blood. There are numerous steps that the Biden administration and Congress can take. Congress should demand regular reports on any and all entities providing material support to Hamas in Qatar and Turkey (as well as in additional countries such as Malaysia, Algeria, Egypt and Lebanon), in order to examine their eligibility for sanctions. Sanctions should also be placed on Qatar's Al Jazeera for its terror support.

The U.S. should demand that the Qatari and Turkish governments extradite

Hamas leaders involved in the murder of US citizens, especially following the Justice Department's announcement this week of terrorism charges against senior Hamas leaders. The U.S. could also take steps to make it easier for private victims of terror to bring lawsuits against all countries which have provided support to Hamas. If Qatar fails to take swift action to force Hamas to accept a deal, Doha should lose its status as a major U.S. non-NATO ally, which Biden granted it in 2022.

The international community, and especially the U.S., now faces a choice. It can continue its rhetoric against Hamas while focusing real pressure on Israel. Or it can act to truly increase the chances of a deal, by placing unyielding pressure on Hamas and its state sponsors. Only the latter can save the lives of the hostages being held in Gaza, while ensuring security for Israel and a future of stability in the Middle East.

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