

Israel-Hamas war

Joe Biden defies pressure to give Israel deadline to end Gaza war

US president says campaign will end when militant group no longer has capacity to carry out 'horrific' attacks

Felicia Schwartz in Washington and **Mehul Srivastava** in Tel Aviv 2 HOURS AGO

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US President Joe Biden warns Israel against occupying Gaza © Reuters

President Joe Biden signalled that the US had not given Israel a timeframe to conclude its campaign against Hamas, despite mounting pressure from international allies, officials in his administration and members of the Democratic party to press Israel to rein in its operation in Gaza.

[Biden](#) said Israel's war against the Islamist militant group would end "when Hamas no longer maintains the capacity to murder, abuse and just do horrific things" to Israel.

"How long it's going to last, I don't know," Biden said on Wednesday after [meeting his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping](#) outside San Francisco.

Hours after the Israeli military raided al-Shifa hospital, the largest healthcare facility in the Gaza Strip, the UN Security Council passed a resolution calling for urgent and extended humanitarian pauses "for a sufficient number of days" to allow aid to enter the besieged enclave. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vehemently opposed proposals for a pause in fighting.

The US, UK and Russia abstained, after Moscow tried to change the language to a ceasefire. [Gilead Erdan](#), Israel's envoy to the UN, said the security council resolution

ceasefire. Ghaui Briqani, Israel's envoy to the UN, said the security council resolution was “disconnected from reality and is meaningless”, in a statement on social media. “Israel will continue to act until Hamas is destroyed and the hostages are returned.”

Israel declared [war](#) against Hamas after the group launched a surprise attack from Gaza on October 7 that killed 1,200 people across southern Israel, according to Israeli officials. It has vowed to oust the armed group from the Palestinian territory. On Thursday, it carried out an air strike at a compound it described as the home of Ismail Haniyeh, a Hamas leader now living in Qatar. The house, located in al-Shati refugee camp, had already been bulldozed weeks ago by troops.

The assault on Gaza has killed more than 11,000 people, according to Palestinian officials, and hospitals have [gradually ceased operating](#) as Israeli forces have advanced deeper into the coastal enclave and restricted shipments of fuel, water and food. Health officials have not been able to update death tolls since the weekend, and say at least 3,000 people are still buried under the rubble.

Israel's military [entered al-Shifa](#) earlier in what it called a “targeted” operation to find Hamas weapons and infrastructure. The raid was continuing on Thursday, according to two Palestinians, who said Israeli forces were still surrounding the hospital and preventing people from leaving.

Doctors and patients sheltered on higher floors while soldiers inspected the magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) department, detained several Palestinians and took several away for further questioning, some with visible bruises and wounds, said two people at the hospital.



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In a video released by the Israel Defense Forces, the army displayed roughly a dozen AK-47 rifles, a handful of hand grenades and radios, and a laptop displaying a picture of a hostage as evidence of the hospital being a major command and control headquarters of Hamas.

It also described the discovery of a spindle of CD-ROMs as an intelligence haul — the discs are commonly used to transfer the results of MRIs at al-Shifa. More raids to investigate the rest of the hospital are expected. Israel contends that the hospital sits on top of an underground network of tunnels that house the group's command centres. Hamas has denied the claims, describing them as an Israeli excuse to take over the hospital.

“One thing has been established . . . Hamas does have headquarters, weapons, materiel below this hospital and I suspect others,” Biden said, referring to al-Shifa,

Biden drew a distinction between Hamas, which he said has vowed to attack Israel “again and again”, and the IDF, which he said was acting with deliberation.

“The IDF . . . acknowledges they have an obligation to use as much caution as they can in going after their targets, it’s not like they’re rushing into the hospital knocking down doors and pulling people aside and shooting people indiscriminately,” Biden said.

The Palestinians described a short gunfight at the hospital’s entrance. Armoured personnel carriers then demolished a wall to allow Israeli soldiers into the compound, they added.

The US president also indicated there was progress in talks among Qatar, Hamas, Israel and others to release some of the hostages held by Hamas, which according to Israel number more than 200.

Biden suggested Israel had already agreed to a pause in the fighting as part of that effort but backtracked and said he was “getting into too much detail”.

“I am mildly hopeful,” Biden said.

While Israel has agreed to pauses of several hours each day, Washington is pressing to extend them to a few days in order to allow more humanitarian assistance to enter the besieged strip and hostages to leave.

US officials said they believed as many as 10 American citizens were among the hostages held by Hamas.

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