

Israel-Hamas war

Netanyahu says 'nobody' will stop Israel including Hague court

Defiant premier marks 100 days since start of war against Hamas as relatives of hostages stage mass rally and 'solidarity strike'



Israelis hold pictures of hostages held by Hamas as they take part in a '100 days of hell' rally in Tel Aviv on Saturday night calling for their release © Abir Sultan/EPA-EFE/Shutterstock

Neri Zilber in Tel Aviv YESTERDAY

Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to continue Israel's war in Gaza "until total victory" as he marked 100 days of conflict against Hamas, with pressure on his government mounting through protests at home and criticism abroad.

Speaking at a press conference on Saturday evening, Israel's prime minister defiantly brushed aside calls for a ceasefire and blasted [South Africa's allegations](#) that Israel is committing genocide in Gaza, brought at The Hague-based International Court of Justice.

"Nobody will stop us — not The Hague, not the [Iranian-led] axis of evil and not anybody else," Netanyahu said.

"The hypocritical onslaught at The Hague against the state of the Jews that arose from the ashes of the Holocaust . . . is a moral low point in the history of nations," he added.

Despite the combative stance taken by the long-serving Israeli premier, international and domestic pressure is growing on his government to stop the [war in Gaza](#), at least temporarily, and secure the safe return of the remaining Israeli hostages.

Josep Borrell, the EU's foreign policy chief who is visiting Egypt, called on Sunday for the fighting be halted in order to better address the "massive" humanitarian needs

...ing ... to better address the massive humanitarian needs inside the devastated Palestinian enclave and “organise the release of the [Israeli] hostages”.

Borrell also hinted that if conditions worsened inside Gaza, which international aid groups have called a humanitarian “disaster”, much of the enclave’s more than 2mn residents “will not have any other solution than to try to escape the trap” by fleeing into Egypt.

More than 23,000 Palestinians have been killed so far in Gaza, according to health officials in the Hamas-controlled territory, with about 85 per cent of residents displaced from their homes and UN officials warning that “famine is around the corner”.

“The massive death, destruction, displacement, hunger, loss and grief of the last 100 days are staining our shared humanity,” Philippe Lazzarini, commissioner-general of the UNRWA, the main UN relief agency in Gaza, said on Saturday night.

“The crisis in Gaza is a man-made disaster compounded by dehumanising language and the use of food, water and fuel as instruments of war,” he added.

At least 1,200 Israelis were killed during Hamas’s initial October 7 attack that sparked the war, with 240 taken hostage, according to Israeli officials.

Relatives of the Israeli hostages staged a mass rally in Tel Aviv on Saturday night, drawing tens of thousands of people, to mark “100 days of hell” since the Hamas assault and called on Netanyahu to do whatever was necessary to secure the release of the captives.

The demonstration continued overnight for a full 24 hours, including a 100-minute “solidarity strike” on Sunday morning by the Histadrut national labour union, academic institutions and various private sector companies.

Demands from hostages’ relatives to completely stop the war in order to facilitate a comprehensive release deal with Hamas have grown more vociferous in recent weeks. Large parts of the media and even opposition politicians have come out in support, arguing that the safe return of more than 130 Israelis still in captivity had to take precedence over the government’s mission to “destroy” Hamas.

Gabriela Leimberg, who was released from Hamas captivity in late November as part of a previous hostage deal, said in testimony broadcast at the rally: “I cannot imagine how we can continue to exist and think that we will move on as a society and state

without returning all the hostages as soon as possible.”

The Netanyahu government and Israeli security establishment continue to insist, as they have from the start of the war, that only the application of ever more military pressure on Hamas will enable the release of the remaining hostages.

Herzi Halevi, Israel’s military chief, said in a press conference on Saturday night that in order to “achieve real results we must continue to operate in enemy territory” and that Hamas’s demands for a complete halt to the fighting were “extortion attempts”.

“The Hamas leadership pins its hopes on a ceasefire and is convinced that this moment is near,” Halevi said, adding that the war “will take a long time” and that “patience is both necessary and essential”.

Two Israeli civilians were killed in northern Israel on Sunday, after an anti-tank missile was fired from across the border in Lebanon. This came several hours after Israel’s military said it killed three militants who were attempting to cross into Israel from Lebanon.

Israel has been trading near-daily fire with Lebanon’s Iran-backed militant group Hizbollah since October, raising concerns that its war against Hamas will spill over into a full-blown regional conflict.

In a speech on Sunday, Hizbollah’s leader Hassan Nasrallah said that his group would not stop fighting until a full cessation of hostilities in Gaza. “We have been asked to stop the fighting to prevent Israel from waging a war against Lebanon. These threats have been ineffective over the past 100 days and will never be effective,” Nasrallah said.

Additional reporting by Heba Saleh in Cairo and Raya Jalabi in Beirut

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