

Israel-Hamas war

Benjamin Netanyahu's allies attack Kamala Harris over ceasefire call

Israeli ministers hit out at US vice-president, with one saying 'no halt to the war, Madame Candidate'



Kamala Harris with Benjamin Netanyahu before their meeting at the White House on Thursday © AP

James Shotter in Jerusalem 12 HOURS AGO

Benjamin Netanyahu's far-right allies hit out at Kamala Harris on Friday after the US vice-president called for an end to the Israel-Hamas war and expressed concern over the suffering of Palestinians in Gaza.

[Harris](#), the presumptive Democrat presidential candidate, met the Israeli prime minister on Thursday during his visit to the US, and said afterwards that while she had “an unwavering commitment to Israel” and its right to defend itself, “how it does so matters”.

“To everyone who has been calling for a ceasefire and to everyone who yearns for peace: I see you and I hear you. Let’s get the deal done,” she said, adding that she would “not be silent” about the scale of the suffering in Gaza, which involved “the death of far too many innocent civilians”.

Bezalet Smotrich, Israel's far-right finance minister, responded on Friday with a sharp riposte to her comments, which had a tougher tone towards Israel than those of US President Joe Biden, who abandoned his re-election campaign earlier this week.

Smotrich said that Harris's remarks amounted to capitulation to Hamas and “revealed . . . what I have been saying for weeks” about a deal being pushed by the

US to end the war and free the Israeli hostages still being held in Gaza.

“What is really behind a deal [is] surrendering to [Hamas military leader Yahya] Sinwar, ending the war in a way that would allow Hamas to rebuild and giving up on most of the hostages in Hamas captivity,” he wrote on X. “Do not fall into this trap!”

Meanwhile, Itamar Ben-Gvir, Israel’s ultranationalist national security minister, wrote: “There will be no halt to the war, Madame Candidate.”

In May, Biden set out a three-stage plan for ending the fighting in Gaza and freeing the roughly 115 Israeli hostages still held by Hamas in the enclave after the militant group’s October 7 attack on Israel that ignited [the war](#).

However, talks have been gridlocked for months due to fundamental gaps between Israel and Hamas over the proposal, including Netanyahu’s refusal to permanently end the war before Israel has destroyed Hamas.

An Israeli delegation was meant to travel to Doha on Thursday for renewed negotiations on the deal, which is being brokered by US, Egyptian and Qatari mediators. However, the talks were delayed after the Israeli delegation did not travel. They are now expected to take place next week.

Despite the delay, US officials say a deal remains possible. “It’s reaching a point that we believe a deal is closable and it’s time to move to close that agreement,” a senior US administration official said ahead of Netanyahu’s meeting with Harris, adding that both Israel and Hamas had to take steps that would allow for the deal to be implemented.

About half of congressional Democrats skipped Netanyahu’s speech to Congress on Wednesday, in which he reiterated that Israel would not stop until it had achieved “total victory” over Hamas.

After her meeting with Netanyahu, Harris said it was important not to “look away” from the “tragedies” in Gaza. “What has happened in Gaza over the past nine months is devastating. The images of dead children and desperate, hungry people fleeing for safety, sometimes displaced for the second, third or fourth time,” she said.

Additional reporting: Felicia Schwartz in Washington

[Copyright](#) The Financial Times Limited 2024. All rights reserved.
