

Opinion **The FT View**

The west's shameful silence on Gaza

The US and European allies should do more to restrain Benjamin Netanyahu

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For two months, Israel has blocked the delivery of all aid into the Gaza Strip, where there are rising child malnutrition rates and warnings of starvation have grown louder © Abdel Kareem/AP

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After 19 months of conflict that has killed tens of thousands of Palestinians and drawn accusations of war crimes against Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu is once more preparing to escalate Israel's offensive in Gaza. The [latest plan](#) puts Israel on course for full occupation of the Palestinian territory and would drive Gazans into ever-narrowing pockets of the shattered strip. It would lead to more intensive bombing and Israeli forces clearing and holding territory, while destroying what few structures remain in Gaza.

This would be a disaster for 2.2mn Gazans who have already endured unfathomable suffering. Each new offensive makes it harder not to suspect that the ultimate goal of Netanyahu's far-right coalition is to ensure Gaza is uninhabitable and drive Palestinians from their land. For two months, Israel has blocked delivery of all aid into the strip. Child malnutrition rates are rising, the few functioning hospitals are running out of medicine, and [warnings of starvation](#) and disease are growing louder.

Yet the US and European countries that tout Israel as an ally that shares their values have issued barely a word of condemnation. They should be ashamed of their silence, and stop enabling Netanyahu to act with impunity.

In brief remarks on Sunday, Donald Trump acknowledged Gazans were "starving",

and suggested Washington would help get [food into the strip](#). But, so far, the US president has only emboldened Netanyahu.

Trump returned to the White House promising to end the [war in Gaza](#) after his team helped broker a January ceasefire between Israel and Hamas. Under the deal, Hamas agreed to free hostages in phases, while Israel was to withdraw from Gaza and the foes were to reach a permanent ceasefire.

But within weeks of the truce taking hold, Trump announced an outlandish plan for Gaza to be emptied of Palestinians and taken over by the US. In March, Israel collapsed the ceasefire as it sought to change the terms of the deal, with Washington's backing.

Senior Israeli officials have since said they are implementing Trump's plan to transfer Palestinians out of Gaza. On Monday, far-right finance minister Bezalel Smotrich said: "We are finally going to occupy the Gaza Strip."

Netanyahu insists an expanded offensive is necessary to destroy Hamas and free the 59 remaining hostages. The reality is that the prime minister has never articulated a clear plan since Hamas's October 7 2023 attack killed 1,200 people and triggered the war. Instead, he repeats his maximalist mantra of "total victory" while seeking to placate his extremist allies to ensure the survival of his governing coalition.

But Israel is also paying a price for his actions. The expanded offensive would imperil the lives of the hostages, further undermine Israel's tarnished standing and deepen domestic divisions.

Israel has briefed that the expanded operation would not begin until after Trump's [visit to the Gulf](#) next week, saying there is a "window" for Hamas to release hostages in return for a temporary truce. Arab leaders are infuriated by Netanyahu's relentless pursuit of conflict in Gaza yet they will fete Trump at lavish ceremonies with promises of multibillion-dollar investments and arms deals.

Trump will put the onus on Hamas when speaking to his Gulf hosts. The group's murderous October 7 attack is what triggered the Israeli offensive. Gulf states agree that its continued stranglehold on Gaza is a factor prolonging the war. But they must stand up to Trump and convince him to pressure Netanyahu to end the killing, lift the siege and return to talks.

The global tumult triggered by Trump has already distracted attention from the catastrophe in Gaza. Yet the longer it goes on, the more those who remain silent or cowed from speaking out will be complicit.

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