[**After the ceasefire**](https://www.dawn.com/news/1625164/after-the-ceasefire)

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ON Friday, relentless Israeli bombardment of Gaza and the Hamas firing of rockets on Israel finally stopped. In the 11 days that passed before the ceasefire Hamas fired over 4,000 rockets at Israeli cities killing 12 people in Israel, while in Gaza around 250 civilians were killed and some 1,900 injured. Hamas says 20 of its fighters were killed. Israel claims that the number was at least 130. The Americans claimed that they were fully engaged, with officials from the president down to his personal envoy exchanging over 80 calls or arranging personal meetings. On every occasion Israel’s right to defend itself against a ‘terrorist organisation’ was part of the message.

The ceasefire was unconditional but where did this leave the prospect of a two-state solution and of recognition of the rights of the Palestinians in East Jerusalem?

When the ceasefire was declared President Biden made a three-minute appearance to claim credit for having arranged the ceasefire. This was a short speech. He refused to take questions but made the following points:

Israel’s right to defend itself has always been part of the US message.

“The United States fully support Israel’s right to defend itself against indiscriminate rocket attacks from Hamas and other Gaza-based terrorist groups….”

“…[T]he Palestinians and Israelis equally deserve to live safely and securely, and enjoy equal measures of freedom, prosperity and democracy.”

“…[W]e remain committed to working with the United Nations and other international stakeholders to provide rapid humanitarian assistance… . We will do this in full partnership with the Palestinian Authority — not Hamas, the Authority — in a manner that does not permit Hamas to simply restock its military arsenal.”

What he did not say is that the US would push for the two-state solution that had been the main point that Biden made during his campaign and subsequently.

Many in Israel recall Biden’s admiration for Netanyahu and their decades-long friendship. It would be wrong to suggest that Biden’s policy would be influenced by this but he does have to recognise that rather than being ousted from office and prosecuted for corruption Netanyahu has got a fresh lease of life. If elections are called, he would once again win with the help of his extreme right-wing supporters for whom a two-state solution is anathema. Netanyahu, once a lukewarm supporter of the two-state solution, is now intent on getting a one-Jewish state solution.

Marwan Muasher, a former Jordanian diplomat, deeply involved in past Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, has now said, “the Oslo framework is done” and that while “I’m a two-stater by training. I’m a one-stater by reality”. It seems Biden also accepts this as the new reality, and therefore wants to turn his attention and his limited political leverage in a deeply polarised American polity to the confrontation/cooperation he is set upon with Russia and China.

Ironically, Rashida Tlaib, the only Palestinian in the US House of Representatives, has advocated a one-state solution based on the premise that in such a state the Arabs will soon be more numerous than the Israelis and it would then be a Palestinian rather than a Jewish state. What she does not take into account is that with Israel still in charge the Palestinians would be pushed out into Jordan which Israelis both extreme and moderate believe is where the Palestinians belong.

The Americans have been generous with assistance. Biden restored funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency and has promised further funding for this organisation that looks after the refugees in Palestine. The US will also provide, as President Biden has said, large sums in association with the EU and some Arab states notably Qatar and the UAE for the rehabilitation of parts of East Jeru­s­a­­­lem. Perhaps the Israelis will hold off on the displacement of Palestinians in Shaikh Jarrah (given the strength of the Israeli extremists this too is problematic) but there can be no illusions about the ultimate result.

As a former Israeli ambassador to the US, Michael Oren has said, “For many Israelis this time, they’re increasingly telling themselves: once we’ve started, we might as well keep going to the end.” And of course, the end is ‘Ersatz Israel’ encompassing all of the West Bank.

Currently, Egypt is sending delegations to Israel, Hamas and the Arab countries as part of its mediatory mission, but will this eventually lead to President Fattah al-Sisi being asked to assume responsibility for the approximately 336 square kilometres Gaza Strip and its estimated two million population? This too is a question that will need to be addressed.

How strong will the Palestinian resistance be? How will the ‘Arab street’ react? All one can say is that more turbulence, more violence lies ahead and that there is little prospect now of a two-state solution being pursued, let alone achieved.

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