**[Defiance and devastation](https://www.dawn.com/news/1826362/defiance-and-devastation)**

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SIX months on, Israel’s genocidal war on Gaza shows no sign of abating. With over 33,000 Palestinians killed and more than 75,000 injured by Israel’s relentless military assaults, almost two-thirds of Gaza’s infrastructure lies in ruins and 1.9 million people have been displaced. Little humanitarian assistance is reaching desperate Palestinians who face famine and catastrophic conditions amid continued bombardment by Israel. No place is safe in Gaza while raids and killings also continue in the occupied West Bank.

Israel’s latest atrocity last week was an [air strike](https://www.dawn.com/news/1825452) on foreign aid workers of an international charity delivering food in central Gaza. Despite their clearly marked vehicles the convoy was attacked and six humanitarian workers killed. This prompted widespread international condemnation, compelling Israel to claim it was “an unintended strike” and order an investigation. President Joe Biden also expressed outrage over the killings saying Israel had not done enough to protect civilian lives. This wasn’t the first time Israel targeted aid workers. They have been attacked throughout the war and innocent Palestinians flocking to aid distribution venues also killed.

At the same time, chilling details have emerged about the condition of Gaza’s largest hospital Al Shifa after the Israeli army pulled out following a two-week operation. It left behind a trail of [death and destruction](https://www.dawn.com/news/1826128) with hundreds of dead bodies found in the hospital complex and surrounding areas, where many Palestinians had sought refuge. Eye witnesses said the hospital was left in shambles with an *Al Jazeera* correspondent reporting “There is no life here. The complex is in ruins and cannot be revived.” All this being the result of Israel’s deliberate destruction of Gaza’s health sector.

By continuing its military operations, Israel has defied the will of the international community reflected in the call for a ceasefire by the [resolution adopted](https://www.dawn.com/news/1823850) by the UN Security Council (UNSC) on March 25. It was the first time in the six-month war that the Council finally demanded an immediate ceasefire albeit for the remaining period of Ramazan. This was near unanimous with 14 of 15 Council members voting in favour. The US abstained but did not veto unlike the three previous ceasefire resolutions it had vetoed. The US stance signified a tentative policy shift. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu described the US failure to cast a veto as a “clear retreat” from its previous position. However, US opposition to a ‘permanent ceasefire’ meant the ceasefire call was confined to just the month of Ramazan. Meanwhile, a remark by America’s UN ambassador that this resolution wasn’t binding evoked widespread criticism.

US frustration has been growing but Israel has continued its genocidal war on Gaza.

UN Security Council resolutions in fact constitute international law. All are binding and have to be implemented as enjoined by Article 25 of the UN Charter. This binds members to “accept and carry out the decisions of the Security Council”. True, resolutions under Chapter VII of the Charter (threats and breaches of peace) have an enforcement mechanism, including sanctions in the case of non-compliance. Those under Chapter VI (pacific settlement of disputes) don’t. Though the Gaza resolution was under the latter that doesn’t mean it doesn’t have to be enforced. UN Secretary General António Guterres made it plain that the “resolution must be implemented” and that “failure would be unforgivable”.

Israel has refused to comply with this resolution in line with its long- standing record of defying innumerable other UNSC resolutions on Palestine over the decades. It has shown utter disregard for global opinion that has for months demanded the war be brought to an end. Arguably, the US is the only country Israel would listen to and which has leverage with Tel Aviv. But in election year, the Biden administration made little effort in the past six months to mount pressure on Israel to change course.

There are signs now that this is changing. Opinion in the US has shifted significantly against Israel. The latest Gallup poll released last month found the majority of Americans disapprove of Israel’s military actions in Gaza. Disapproval among Democratic voters is even higher, at 75 per cent.

Domestic and global opinion as well as the dire situation on the ground seems to have weighed in with Washington for Biden to call, for the first time, for an immediate pause in the war. He is reported to have said this in a tense phone conversation with the Israeli prime minister last Thursday. He also warned him that US support would depend on how Tel Aviv addresses humanitarian suffering in Gaza, which he called “unacceptable”. Washington is now under mounting international pressure to halt lethal arms supplies to Israel. Recently the UN Human Rights Council also demanded a halt in military sales.

In Israel itself public protests against Netanyahu have been intensifying with calls for his resignation and early elections. Demonstrators have been demanding the government secure the release of hostages in Hamas custody. They have also demanded the war should be ended to bring hostages home. Losing support at home, Netanyahu’s government ordered an air strike on the Iranian consulate in Damascus, which killed several members of the Revolutionary Guard Corps including a commander.

This marked an obvious effort to drag Iran into a regional war. While Tehran has vowed to retaliate it has little to gain from a direct conflict, which would also shift attention away from Gaza. Iranian leaders know this is an Israeli trap to provoke Teheran into taking military action to draw in the US and pitch it against Iran. But this incident shows how Israel is escalating on every front as it has also launched missile strikes in eastern Lebanon.

With UN action having failed to halt Israel’s war on Gaza and Washington unable or unwilling to restrain Israel, the question is what have Muslim countries done to mount pressure on Israel to stop it from continuing ethnic cleansing and committing war crimes? Arab and OIC countries have been active at the UN to push for a ceasefire resolution. Egypt and Qatar, along with the US, are mediating talks in Cairo between Hamas and Israel for a durable ceasefire and release of hostages though this has yet to yield an outcome.

Still Muslim countries have fallen way short of the expectations of Muslims across the world. Nor has their response matched the catastrophic situation on the ground.

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