

THE PALESTINE PAPERS

Boston DSA's Bi-Weekly Newsletter on Palestine

THE WAR ABROAD: Israel poised to invade Rafah with or without hostage deal

Unless a successful deal is struck within the coming days, it would seem that an Israeli invasion of Rafah is imminent ([NYT 04.28.24](#)). However, perhaps the more appropriate way to phrase the situation is that the invasion will not be “postponed,” as Israel seems dead-set on invading Rafah, negotiated ceasefire or no.

According to the *Times* ([04.28.24](#)), “Israeli officials have said repeatedly that they plan to move into Rafah, but over the weekend, they made clear they were open to *holding off* if it meant they could secure the release of Israeli hostages taken when Hamas attacked Israel on Oct. 7,” (italics added). This sentiment was echoed in the *Wall Street Journal* ([04.28.2024](#)), as well: Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz was quoted in a televised interview as saying that “Israel would *delay* an operation in Rafah in exchange for a hostage deal,” (italics added).

The present deal calls for a three-week ceasefire and the release of approximately 500 Palestinian prisoners in return for some 20 Israeli hostages. “The handover,” the [WSJ reported](#), “would [then] be followed by a 10-week ceasefire, during which the two sides would continue talking and at least 300,000 to 400,000 Palestinians now sheltering in Rafah would be able to return to their homes elsewhere in the strip.”

Earlier this month, American officials had refused to green light a Rafah operation on the grounds that Israel was unable to provide a “credible plan” ([NYT 04.26.24](#)) to safeguard the one million civilian (i.e., non-combatants) currently sheltered there; however, in the aftermath of Iran’s response to Israel’s killing of three top commanders at the Iranian embassy in Syria, U.S. negotiators evidently hedged a compromise with Israel—don’t provoke a regional war and we’ll let you invade Rafah.

“Egyptian officials tell a Qatari outlet that the US has accepted Israel’s plan for an operation in the southern Gaza city of Rafah, in return for not carrying out a large strike in Iran in response to Tehran’s unprecedented missile and drone attack,” *The Times of Israel* reported shortly after the attack ([04.18.2024](#)).

(It seems the Iran attack provided Israel the necessary leverage in the eyes of the U.S. government and press to continue with its “[Decisive Plan](#)” of achieving a final one-state solution to the Gaza problem.)

On the other side of the table, Hamas has made clear its terms for an acceptable agreement ([WSJ 04.26.24](#))—“[a] sustainable cease-fire, the full withdrawal of occupation forces, the

unconditional return of the displaced to their homes across Gaza, comprehensive reconstruction efforts, an end to the blockade, and the provision of essential humanitarian aid”—demands, which are, as a matter of fact, supported and (even, *proscribed*) by the dictates of [international humanitarian law](#).

In fact, according to the Associated Press ([04.25.24](#)), Hamas is willing to go even further: it has stated that it would “dissolve its military wing [...] in exchange for a two-state solution.” In the same interview, it stated being open to a “five-year truce with Israel,” during which time it would disarm and become “solely a political party.” However, it also reiterated that it would only agree to those terms under the condition that a “Palestinian state was established along the pre-1967 borders.”

(Incidentally, this same top official also noted that Hamas’ desire to unify with the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian Liberation Organization. What more could a government want!)

More, evidently.

By the standards of the White House and the U.S. press, demands such as these are the reason why Hamas is the “main stumbling block” ([WSJ 04.26.24](#)) stalling negotiations, and that by insisting on such demands, Hamas is being “totally nonconstructive,” ([NYT 04.26.24](#)). Hamas, US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken told *the Guardian* ([04.29.24](#)), is now “the only thing standing between the people of Gaza and a ceasefire,” and, as a result, it should accept the “extraordinarily generous” proposal before it.

However, with no guarantees or assurances that a Rafah invasion will *not* occur once the ceasefire date is up, Hamas has no good political reason to accept the deal. Additionally, it is hard to believe that Israel’s “generous” offer is being put forth for no other reason than to defuse the [growing dissent among Israelis](#) over Netanyahu’s prosecution of the war.

Officially, the White House has [stated](#) that it would not support an offensive in Rafah until it had seen a plan to prevent harm to civilians: “We’ve said clearly, and for some time now on Rafah that, in the absence of a plan to ensure that civilians will not be harmed, we can’t support a major military operation,” Blinken said, “We have not yet seen a plan that gives us confidence that civilians can be effectively protected.”

Nevertheless, the Red Cross has [stated](#) that evacuation of civilians from Rafah is not “possible” under the current conditions due to the sheer destruction in Gaza:

“When we see the level of destruction in the middle area (of Gaza) and in the north, it’s not clear to us where people will be moved to... where they can have decent shelter and essential services. So today, with the information we have and from where we stand, we don’t see this (massive evacuation) as possible.”

[Public opinion polling among Palestinians](#): Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research
(April 15, 2024)

<i>Topic</i>	<i>Polling data</i>
Preference for who will rule Gaza after the war¹	<p><i>West Bank:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 64%: Hamas - 8%: Palestinian Authority (PA) under someone other than Abbas - 6%: PA under Abbas <p><i>Gaza Strip:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 52%: Hamas - 21%: PA under someone other than Abbas - 19%: PA under Abbas
Conflict resolution: two-state/one-state?²	<p><i>Support for two-state solution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 62%: Gaza Strip - 34%: West Bank <p><i>Support for one-state solution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 27%: Total
“Most effective” means of est. independent state and end to occupation?³	<p><i>Armed struggle:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 39%: Gaza - 51%: West Bank <p><i>Peaceful popular resistance:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 27%: Gaza - 12%: West Bank <p><i>Negotiations:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 23%: Gaza - 27%: West Bank

THE WAR AT HOME: Student protests at U.S. universities continue unabated

¹ PCPSR commentary: “Three months ago, we asked an identical question, but with a slightly different set of options to choose from. At that time, a similar percentage (60% in total; 75% in the West Bank and 38% in the Gaza Strip) selected Hamas as the party preferred by the respondents to control the Gaza Strip after the war. The change in the preferences of the Gazans, with a 14-point increase among them selecting Hamas today, is one of the most intriguing findings of the current poll,” (13).

² PCPSR commentary: “[S]upport for the two-state solution has increased significantly and support for armed struggle has dropped significantly. However, the increased support for the two-state solution, while dramatic, came only from the Gaza Strip, a 27-point increase, while remaining stable in the West Bank,” (25).

³ PCPSR commentary: “Given three choices for ending the Israeli occupation, the current findings indicate a 17-point decrease in support for armed struggle; a 5-point rise in support for negotiations; and a 5-point rise in support for non-violence. The drop in three months in support for armed struggle comes equally from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip,” (25).

University protests in solidarity with Palestinians surviving Israel’s genocidal actions in the Gaza Strip continue to crop up with no end in sight and despite overwhelmingly violent efforts from university officials, state, and municipal governments to quell them. The number of protests is [too large to review in detail](#), so here is a breakdown of some of the major protests that have occurred over the last few weeks:

- *Columbia University*: The Columbia encampments sprung up approximately three weeks ago and, as of writing (April 30, 2024), students have yet to clear out, even though they face the threat of university [suspension](#). From the get-go, the encampments prompted a disproportionate and heavy-handed response from the Shafik administration, which called in the New York City Police Department (NYPD)—a clear violation of Columbia’s constitution. Joseph Slaughter—a professor of comparative literature and human rights at Columbia—described on DemocracyNow! ([04.23.24](#)) Shafik’s clear violation of university protocol:

The president [...] has an absolute obligation — it’s spelled out very clearly — to consult with the Executive Committee of the University Senate, which includes students and faculty, before bringing any police — external police forces onto campus. [...] She approached the Executive Committee of the University Senate, asking for their permission to invite the NYPD in to shut down, to squelch the protest. *The Executive Committee — the faculty and the students on the Executive Committee voted unanimously to reject her request to bring in New York police.* She did it anyway, thus violating not only the statutes, in my opinion, certainly the long traditions of shared governance, the long traditions of protest and protections of speech on campus, as well as the compact between students, faculty and the administration, to act unilaterally, essentially throwing out the rulebook and throwing out the constitution, the statutes of the university (italics added)

As of writing, the protests and corresponding threats have escalated: a group of pro-Palestine protesters is now [facing expulsion](#) after having occupied an administrative building on campus. The protesters are part of a group entitled “Columbia University Apartheid Divest (CUAD),” and have called for three explicit demands: “divestment from Israel, disclosure of investments and assets across the university’s finances, and amnesty for students who have been suspended or otherwise punished by the university for protesting.” The fate of the protesters remains to be seen.

- *Yale University*: Yale was among one of the first universities to erect a series of encampments across its campus. Approximately a week ago, the first Yale encampment was destroyed by Yale police, resulting in the [arrest of 44 student protesters](#). However, on April 28, 2024, the Yale Daily News [reported](#) that a second encampment had been erected: “On Sunday afternoon, following a pro-Palestine rally that saw around 1,000 protesters marching through downtown New Haven and the Yale campus, around 250 pro-divestment protesters set up a new encampment with around 40 tents on Cross Campus.” The protesters are calling for the “disclosure of and divestment from holdings in military weapons manufacturing in relation to Israel’s war against Hamas in Gaza.”



Officers standing in front of Emerson alley after encampment clearing. Courtesy of Working Mass (04.26.24)

- Emerson & Northeastern Universities:* According to WBUR (04.26.24), “Boston police said they arrested more than 100 people near Emerson College overnight Wednesday as officers forcibly cleared a tent encampment. Demonstrators had set up their tents in solidarity with a broader movement by U.S. college students calling on universities to sever ties with Israel and support a ceasefire in Gaza.” (WBUR would later update this figure to 118 people). Later that week, Northeastern University (NEU) would so too would break up its solidarity encampments, but instead of concocting a false and bloated appeal to “[public safety](#)”—Wu! Wu!—NEU justified its incitement to police brutality on the grounds that it needed to protect Jewish students from Anti-Semitism. Renata Nyul—an NEU spokesperson—told the New York Times (04.27.24) that “Northeastern had made the decision to have the protesters arrested after the demonstration was ‘infiltrated by professional organizers.’ She also said that someone in the protest had said ‘kill the Jews’ the night before.” However, [footage](#) obtained by DSA’s *Working Mass* showed this pretext to be flatly false, as it was not the pro-Palestinian protesters that were shouting “kill the Jews,” but, rather, a deranged duo of pro-Israeli protesters. So much for liberal values.



Solidarity protest with Gaza at Northeastern University. Courtesy of Working Mass (04.27.24).

LEAKED STATE DEPARTMENT MEMO FINDS THAT ISRAEL LIKELY VIOLATES INTERNATIONAL LAW USING U.S. ARMS

Israel's claims that it was in line with international law were found to be "neither credible nor reliable," according to an internal State Department memo:

A joint submission from four bureaus—Democracy Human Rights & Labor; Population, Refugees and Migration; Global Criminal Justice and International Organization Affairs – raised "serious concern over non-compliance" with international humanitarian law during Israel's prosecution of the Gaza war. These included repeatedly striking protected sites and civilian infrastructure; "unconscionably high levels of civilian harm to military advantage"; taking little action to investigate violations or to hold to account those responsible for significant civilian harm and "killing humanitarian workers and journalists at an unprecedented rate." The assessment from the four bureaus also cited 11 instances of Israeli military actions the officials said, "arbitrarily restrict humanitarian aid," including rejecting entire trucks of aid due to a single "dual-use" item, "artificial" limitations on inspections as well as repeated attacks on humanitarian sites that should not be hit.

Editor's note: The italicized portion is entirely quoted from Humeyra Pamuk, "Exclusive: Some US officials say in internal memo Israel may be violating international law in Gaza," *Reuters*, April 27, 2024, which you can find [here](#).

THE LIMITS OF LIBERALISM: \$95B foreign funding bill passes, \$26.3B allocated to Israel

“With the support of nearly 80% of the chamber's lawmakers, the U.S. Senate on Tuesday [April 22, 2024] approved a sprawling foreign aid package that includes \$17 billion in unconditional military assistance for the Israeli government as it ramps up its catastrophic assault on the Gaza Strip,” *CommonDreams* reported ([04.24.24](#))

Here is the breakdown of the bill:

- Ukraine (\$60B)
 - European command operations (\$20.5B)
 - Security assistance (\$15.8B)
 - Replenish U.S. stocks (\$13.4B)
 - Forgivable economic loans (\$9.5B)
 - General expenses (\$900M)
- Israel (\$26.3B)
 - Defensive activities (\$13.0B)
 - Humanitarian aid (\$9.2B)
 - Security assistance (\$3.6B)
 - General expenses (\$600M)
- Indo-Pacific (\$8.1B)
 - Deterrence (\$5.6B)
 - Military financing (\$2.0B)
 - Shipyards (\$300M)
 - General expenses (\$300M)

The bill, which also sets the stage for [banning](#) the Chinese-owned app TikTok, received a “[Yea](#)” vote from both Senator Ed Markey and Senator Elizabeth Warren.

The vote also received a “Yea” from the following members of the House of Representatives: Richard Neal (1st District), Lori Trahan (3rd District), Jake Auchincloss (4th District), Katherine Clark (5th District) Seth Moulton (6th District), Stephen F. Lynch (8th District), and Bill Keating (9th District).

Shame! Shame! Shame!

Interested in helping out with The Palestine Papers? Email Joshua Raposa at jraposa15@gmail.com.