

Irrational Israel: On the ceasefire proposal and Hamas

The Hindu

Paper - II
(International Relation)

When Hamas announced on Monday evening its acceptance of a ceasefire proposal mediated by Qatar and Egypt, jubilant crowds in Rafah, the besieged town in Gaza's south where over 1.4 million people have taken refuge, took to the streets in the hope that a feared Israeli invasion would be averted. But their reprieve was short-lived as Israel immediately said the proposal "doesn't meet its core demands". Israel had already announced the evacuation of over 1,00,000 people from Rafah. A day after Hamas accepted the proposal, the Benjamin Netanyahu government sent tanks to Rafah and seized the Gaza side of the strip's border crossing with Egypt. Now, Israel is practically controlling all entry points to Gaza, and most of them remain shut. To call Gaza's existing situation a disaster would be an understatement. The Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) have killed over 34,000 Palestinians since October 7. Over 77,000 Palestinians have been wounded and nearly the entire Gaza has been displaced. Its northern and central parts are already uninhabitable. The UN says there is a "full blown famine in northern" Gaza, while a hunger crisis has spread across the enclave. Hundreds of thousands of people forced out of their homes in the north and centre, where IDF soldiers have been deployed, are now living in temporary shelters in Rafah. And the Israelis are again asking them to evacuate.

When Israel came under a gruesome attack on October 7, the world expressed its solidarity with the Jewish nation. But the way Israel has conducted its war on Gaza ever since is not different from what Hamas did to the Israelis. Mr. Netanyahu's government unleashed a collective punishment on the entire population of Gaza, with support from powerful allies in the West. But despite the disproportionate use of force against the Palestinians, Israel's military performance is a far cry from what it was known for decades ago. Israel has neither managed to defeat Hamas nor get the hostages released. If Mr. Netanyahu goes ahead with the plan to invade Rafah, he would be making a terrible mistake. If the war comes to an end, he might face challenges to his political career. But if the war goes on forever with more killings of Palestinians, the state of Israel, already isolated and facing a genocide case at the UN's top court, would be weakened further internationally. The only practical way out of this humanitarian and political calamity and moral abyss is a quick negotiated ceasefire that would see the release of all hostages and an IDF withdrawal. Even Hamas, undoubtedly a ruthless terrorist organisation that would not baulk at inflicting suffering on the very people it claims to represent, has shown a willingness to sign a deal. The question is whether Mr. Netanyahu is ready or not.

ISRAEL'S WAR ON GAZA

Gaza ceasefire proposal approved by Hamas

Al Jazeera has seen a copy of the Gaza ceasefire proposal Hamas accepted. Israel says it doesn't agree with it but will join further talks while it continues its assault on Gaza.

The three stages of the deal:

FIRST STAGE (42 days)

- Temporary cessation of hostilities
- Withdrawal of Israeli forces eastwards
- Unhindered entry of humanitarian aid
- Displaced Palestinians to return home
- Israeli planes and drones stop flying over Gaza for 10 hours a day
- Hamas releases 33 captives - women, the sick, and male civilians aged below 19 and above 50
- Israel releases 30 Palestinian prisoners for each civilian captive and 50 for every captive female soldier
- Reconstruction begins in Gaza
- Allowing at least 60,000 temporary homes and 200,000 tents in Gaza



SECOND STAGE (42 days)

- Military operations end permanently, Israel withdraws from Gaza completely
- Exchange of remaining captive Israeli men and soldiers for Palestinian prisoners

THIRD STAGE (42 days)

- Exchange of remains of captives and prisoners held by both sides
- Three-to-five-year Gaza reconstruction plan begins
- Siege of the Gaza Strip ends completely

What is the ceasefire agreement?

Phase One :

- A. 42-day ceasefire, during which Hamas would free 33 Israeli hostages, alive or dead, in return for Israel releasing 30 children and women for each released Israeli hostage, based on lists provided by Hamas according to the earliest date of detention.
- B. From the first day, entry of intensive and sufficient quantities of humanitarian aid, relief materials, and fuel would be allowed. A total 600 trucks per day, including 50 fuel trucks, of which 300 would be for northern Gaza would arrive.
- C. Hamas would release three Israeli hostages on the third day of the agreement, and then release three more hostages every seven days, prioritising women if possible, including civilians and conscripts.
- D. In the sixth week, Hamas would release all remaining civilian hostages covered by this phase. Israel would release the agreed number of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons.
- E. Israel would then partially withdraw troops from Gaza, and allow the free movement of Palestinians from south to north Gaza.
- F. Cessation of military flights over the Gaza Strip would take place for 10 hours per day and 12 hours on the day of releasing the hostages and prisoners.

Phase Two :

- A. Another 42 days with an agreement to restore a “sustainable calm” in Gaza.
- B. The complete withdrawal of most Israeli troops from Gaza.
- C. Hamas would release Israeli reservists and some soldiers in return for Israel releasing Palestinians from jail.

Phase Three :

- A. Blockade of Gaza Strip would end.
- B. Implementation of a 3-5-year plan for reconstruction of Gaza would start. Homes, civilian facilities, and infrastructure, would be rebuilt. Compensation would be given to all those affected, under the supervision of a number of countries and organisations including Egypt, Qatar, and the UN.

Expected Question for Prelims

Que. Consider the following statements with reference to the Israel-Hamas ceasefire proposal:

- 1. Qatar and Egypt are mediating in this.
- 2. Both Israel and Hamas have rejected it.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) Only 1
- (b) Only 2
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer : A

Mains Expected Question & Format

Que.: What is Israel Hamas ceasefire agreement? Discuss the stance of Israel and Hamas on this.

Answer's Approach:

- ❖ In the first part of the answer, discuss the main provisions of the Israel-Hamas ceasefire agreement.
- ❖ In the second part, discuss the stance of Israel and Hamas on this.
- ❖ Finally give a conclusion giving suggestions.

Note: - The question of the main examination given for practice is designed keeping in mind the upcoming UPSC mains examination. Therefore, to get an answer to this question, you can take the help of this source as well as other sources related to this topic.