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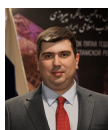
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Israel may win in Gaza. But at what cost?

Israel's ground offensive is pushing Hamas to the wall, but also isolating the country abroad and tearing its society apart



By **Farhad Ibragimov** – lecturer at the Faculty of Economics at RUDN University, visiting lecturer at the Institute of Social Sciences of the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration

[@farhadibragim](#)



Israel has moved into a new phase of the war. Just as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had signaled, the IDF has launched a full-scale ground operation aimed at taking control of Gaza City. Netanyahu promised a “powerful and decisive” push; early reports from the ground bear that out.

IDF spokesperson Avichay Adraee

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Flames and smoke rise from the building following the Israeli army bombs the al-Ruya Tower in Gaza City, Gaza, on September 07, 2025. © Ali Jadallah/Anadolu via Getty Images

said on X that Israeli forces have begun destroying Hamas infrastructure inside the city. Civilians have been urged to leave the combat zone. According to the

military, roughly 320,000 residents have already fled, while an estimated 650,000 civilians remain.

Eyewitness accounts indicate a sharp uptick in airstrikes over the past 48 hours – likely the preparatory stage for the ground advance. Until now, Israeli units focused on the outskirts, methodically degrading Hamas defensive positions.

The operation began just hours after US Secretary of State Marco Rubio’s visit to Israel. As several Western outlets reported, Rubio conveyed Washington’s support for a ground phase but pressed for a short, tightly limited timeline – an effort to minimize reputational costs while maintaining allied solidarity with Israel.

At this stage, Gaza City is effectively the last major stronghold of resistance in the Strip. By military estimates, Israel controls about 75% of the enclave, which heightens the city’s strategic and symbolic weight as the sector’s political and organizational center.

Conditions inside Gaza City are dire. Airstrikes and artillery fire have leveled large parts of the city, hitting schools, refugee camps, and makeshift shelters. A stark example came in late May, when Israeli forces struck the Fahmi al-Jarjawi school, which had been sheltering displaced families. According to Gaza’s civil defense, 33 people were killed – including children – and dozens more were wounded. Israel, for its part, insisted the target was Hamas fighters hiding in the building. The conflicting narratives underscore the depth of the political and information war surrounding the battle.



Read more: ‘They will destroy the city, but not the people’: Gaza braces for Israel’s largest assault of the war

The city’s infrastructure has been devastated. As of April 2024, damages in Gaza’s municipality alone were estimated at \$7.29 billion. Schools and hospitals lie in ruins, while access to water,

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electricity, and sanitation has collapsed – producing a full-blown humanitarian catastrophe.

For Hamas, the battle for Gaza City is existential. With no strategic reserves left, the group sees the city’s defense as its last chance to maintain a military and political foothold – raising the likelihood of grinding, attritional fighting.

Inside Israel, political tensions are mounting. The Hostages’ Families Forum condemned the launch of the operation, warning that *“after 710 nights in terrorist hands, tonight could be the hostages’ last.”* Street protests against Netanyahu’s policy have become a fixture. Just a week ago, thousands rallied outside his Jerusalem residence, calling for a deal with Hamas to free the captives and halt the fighting.

Polling shows the divide is widening. According to the Israel Democracy Institute (IDI), about two-thirds of the public supports a deal that would free all hostages in exchange for a ceasefire and a full withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza. In short, the campaign carries a double risk for Israel: heavy losses in urban combat and a deepening political crisis at home that erodes confidence in the government.



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The international fallout has only sharpened the crisis. At the Arab and Muslim summit in Doha on September 15, leaders leveled some of the harshest charges yet. Qatar’s emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, accused Israel of *“genocide,”* while Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi went further, declaring Israel an enemy despite their 1979 peace treaty. The summit’s final statement urged the global community to *“take all possible measures”* to halt the operation and reconsider ties with West Jerusalem. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian echoed the same uncompromising line.

The escalation has also dented US credibility. Strikes on Qatar raised questions about Washington’s reliability as a security guarantor. American bases there were supposed to serve as a deterrent, yet the US proved unable to prevent the attacks – or even step in as mediator – undermining trust among its regional partners.



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Israel’s actions brought US dominance in the Middle East to an end – Here’s what comes next FEATURE



Europe has emerged as an unexpected challenge. Seeking to assert independence from Washington and to boost its standing with the Global South, Brussels has taken an increasingly tough stance toward Israel. Domestic politics also weigh heavily: large communities of Middle Eastern origin in Europe tend to hold strongly anti-Israel views, amplifying public pressure on governments.

Netanyahu, on the defensive, has stressed Israel's military self-reliance and spoken of "several good conversations" with President Donald Trump. Yet according to *The Wall Street Journal*, Trump privately voiced disappointment, criticizing Netanyahu for relying too heavily on force when Washington would prefer a negotiated settlement.

Israel thus finds itself squeezed on three fronts: regional pressure from Arab and Muslim states, transregional pushback from the European Union, and alliance strains with the United States.

On the map, the Gaza Strip looks insignificant – a sliver of land just 140 square miles. Yet today it has become the focal point of contradictions that could reshape the entire Middle East and reverberate far beyond.

First, the outcome of this battle will weigh heavily on Israel's internal stability. Holding Gaza – or failing to – has become not just a military question but a test of political legitimacy, unfolding against a backdrop of mass protests and eroding public trust.

Second, the conflict has spilled past the region. Gaza has become a litmus test for the West. Not long ago, it seemed unthinkable that the Israeli question could drive a wedge between the United States and Europe. Now, Washington prioritizes allied solidarity and containing Iran, while Brussels increasingly asserts itself as an independent pole of power, guided by domestic politics and its positioning in the Global South.

Third, Gaza carries immense symbolic weight. For much of the Arab and Muslim world, it embodies resistance. The way this operation ends will shape the degree of anti-Israeli consolidation in the region and the prospects for Israel's relations with key neighbors such as



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Egypt, Jordan, and the Gulf monarchies.

In short, Gaza has become a geopolitical fault line – where the future of the Middle East is at stake, and with it the balance of the global political order.

ANALYSIS

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H **Howard Fox** 9/20/2025 at 12:45 PM **0**

Zionism,/Isreal hates True Christians.

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S **sacks** 9/20/2025 at 1:04 PM ↑ **0**

Wrong. I visited Israel 3 times visiting Christian sites and I saw Russians and Ukrainians living there. Nobody prosecute them or in any way insults them and they live far better than in rf or ukraine.

[Reply](#)

S **sacks** 9/20/2025 at 1:03 PM **0**

I wonder if anyone believe that Muslim Ibragimov can write objective articles about israel :)))))) I already noticed various Muslims giving their worthless pieces of opinion which would be basically dead wrong by tomorrow.

[Reply](#)

 **norberto Garcia** 9/20/2025 at 12:03 PM **1**

Israel has lost already.

All the world (perhaps some WASPs haven't) but WE KNOW that the Israelis AND GLOBAL SUPPORTERS are:

WAR CRIMINALS.

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M Max Holbrook 9/20/2025 at 10:05 AM -2

Book now for your stay at the Trump/Adelson Resort on Mediterranean opening 2027

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S Steve Halligan 9/20/2025 at 11:36 AM 0

I'd rather stay in a non Israeli run sewer!

[Reply](#)

Vikili48 9/20/2025 at 10:29 AM -1

You cannot «win» a genocide but you can complete it.

[Reply](#)

R Roc Lan 9/20/2025 at 8:37 AM 8

Win what? It's not a war. It's a genocide. Get your facts straight.

[Reply](#)

S Stop Datafarming 9/20/2025 at 10:23 AM -1

This is RT. Biased propagandizing narrative has replaced objective reportage

[Reply](#)

Dante 9/20/2025 at 10:17 AM 1

US/Israel are a bunch of murderous psychpaths and i eagerly await the day they get a taste of the horror that they have been inflicting upon others for decades upon decades now.

[Reply](#)

S Steve Halligan 9/20/2025 at 9:38 AM -1

Comment about the unclean on RT is being restricted and censored because they are very sensitive and don't like to get their feeling hurts.

[Reply](#)

M Mr. A. M. SHIVJI 9/20/2025 at 9:15 AM 1

» ... According to the military, roughly 320,000 residents have already fled, while an estimated 650,000 civilians remain» – are they all HAMAS or unarmed civilians?

[Reply](#)



MikhailOmsk14 Yak 9/20/2025 at 8:37 AM

3

Israeli criminal IDF may kill civilians, which had been cut off the food and fuel by USA and EC. This is for sure. But the war in Gaza will last forever, cause Israeli and Western Mordor will not win over the Middle East World and Civilisation, blessed by the God.

[Reply](#)



Marius Simonot 9/19/2025 at 9:21 PM

11

Where are the new Israeli leaders that can stop this madness? They need to remove Netanyahu from power and put him on trial in the Hague.

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Robin Hood 9/19/2025 at 9:37 PM

9

his entire political party is on board with this actually.

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Daniel Jeremiah 9/19/2025 at 10:37 PM

-8

And rightfully so...

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Robin Hood 9/19/2025 at 10:53 PM

7

yeah baby killing war criminals from eastern Europe tend to stick together...

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G 9/19/2025 at 11:01 PM

5

Nothing like a monster in the comments, or should I say, baby murderer?

[Reply](#)



Karloz 9/19/2025 at 11:51 PM

6

"I should much rather see reasonable agreement with the Arabs on the basis of living together in peace than the creation of a Jewish state". Albert Einstein

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D Danilo Salcedo 9/20/2025 at 12:29 AM ↕

1

there are mensch amongst them , these days its rare

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D Danilo Salcedo 9/20/2025 at 12:28 AM ↕

1

and as you say rightfully so should face a trial in the Hague for crimes against humanity

[Reply](#)

A Adasim 9/19/2025 at 9:47 PM ↕

11

There are no new Israeli leaders. They all applaud the extermination of Palestinians.

[Reply](#)

D Daniel Jeremiah 9/19/2025 at 10:38 PM ↕

-9

Not the Palestinians...but the extermination of Hamas. Israel warns civilians to flee before bombing even though Hamas escapes as well. Russia just bombs civilians with no warning.

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