

Gaza will lose 'regardless of who wins Israel elections'

Author:

Tue, 2019-04-09 21:17

GAZA CITY: Palestinian analysts and experts agree that there is no difference between the strongest contenders in the Israeli elections on the Palestinian issue and the relationship with the Gaza Strip.

Even those who have previously supported the "two-state solution" agree on no independent Palestinian state but on a Palestinian "civil administration" for parts of the West Bank after the annexation of large settlement blocs to Israel and the granting of "economic facilities" to maintain calmness in Gaza Strip, and the survival of internal Palestinian division.

Hani Habib, a political analyst, said that the current Palestinian situation provides the greatest service to Israel. Therefore, in the recent rounds of limited military escalation in the Gaza Strip, Israel has shown that it is not interested in launching a broad assault that could contribute to the unification of the Palestinians.

He told Arab News that Israelis in all their political orientations have an interest in maintaining internal Palestinian division. They agree that Hamas should be weakened but not completely eliminated to ensure continued division and disagreement with Fatah and the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank.

Habib explained that the two most powerful Israeli parties in the Israeli elections, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's "Likud" and the "Blue and White" alliance led by former chief of staff Benny Gantz, agree on core issues, most notably "separating Gaza from the West Bank."

A study prepared by the Israeli National Security Center stated that Gaza appears more prominent in the Likud program than in the "Blue and White" alliance program, which focuses on the West Bank, considering that Gaza poses no serious threat to Israel and that "the political battle and the strategic threat are coming in the West Bank."

Habib added: "I think that the Blue and White Alliance, which classifies itself as a "center left," is more right-wing than the Israeli right, and adopts strict positions on foreign issues such as Iran, the annexation of settlements and the Jordan Valley to Israel and the adoption of an "economic solution" in Gaza, to prevent an "explosion of situations," and therefore recent "understandings of calm" will continue regardless of the winner of the elections.

Egypt is leading indirect talks between Hamas and the Palestinian factions in Gaza on the one hand and Israel on the other, resulting in an "undeclared calm." And the Netanyahu government has begun to implement its terms relating to easing the siege imposed on the Gaza Strip 13 years ago, in return for

stopping "coarse tools" such as firing rockets, balloons and nighttime protests.

Adnan Abu Amer, a specialist on Israeli affairs, agrees with Habib that "the military option against Gaza is postponed (for) a while, unless there are developments to be fought, as well as for Hamas and factions that do not want to go to a major military confrontation."

Abu Amer told Arab News that even Gantz, who was chief of staff during the Israeli war in 2014, realizes that "Gaza has no military solution," and the generals in his coalition are aware of "what is waiting for the Israeli army in Gaza," and also fear the "unknown future after Hamas," such as the absence of the arena in Gaza for militant groups such as Daesh and others.

Based on these convictions, he said, the parties in Israel agree that "the solution in Gaza is economic," and therefore, regardless of who wins the elections, the trend toward the signing of understandings of calm, in line with the American willingness to put forward the "deal of the century."

Abu Amer said that Israel wants to achieve economic concessions unless it can achieve the war in Gaza, while dedicating itself to the dream of an independent Palestinian state by annexing settlements in the West Bank, taking advantage of the support of US President Donald Trump.

Ibrahim Al-Madhoun, the director of the Hamas-affiliated Palestine Institute for Strategic Studies, said that Gaza is following the Israeli elections, "especially because of the recent truce understanding between Hamas and Israel ... Gaza is waiting to see how Israel will deal with it after the election results."

Al-Madhoun believes that the winner of the Israeli elections, whoever he is, will be committed to these understandings to calm the Gaza front, because there is a collective Israeli realization in the political and military institutions that any armed confrontation with Gaza will be too expensive.

There is also no major political objective in Gaza, and there is an Israeli focus at the moment on the extension of sovereignty over the West Bank, he told Arab News.



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Israelis go to polls in election, as hidden cameras banned after Arab minority complaints
Could Israel's vote be the end for Netanyahu?

[Houthi militia blocking vital cholera vaccines from entering Yemen: AP investigation](#)

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Tue, 2019-04-09 18:24

LONDON: Houthi militia have consistently prevented doses of cholera vaccine from reaching those in desperate need of treatment in Yemen, according to an

Associated Press investigation published on Tuesday.

The investigation into efforts to fight the disease in the country – the worst cholera outbreak recorded in modern times and one that medical researchers say may have been avoided if vaccines had been deployed sooner – drew on confidential documents and interviews with 29 people.

The people included aid officials and officials from health ministries run by both the Iranian-backed Houthis and the legitimate government.

Almost all of these individuals, including six relief and health officials who say the Houthis were responsible for cancellation of a 2017 vaccine shipment of half a million doses, spoke on condition of anonymity.

The 2017 shipment was unable to enter northern Yemen until May 2018 because the Houthis refused to allow the vaccines to be delivered, after spending months demanding the UN to send ambulances and medical equipment for their forces as a condition for accepting the shipment.

The investigation highlighted the fact that the cancellation of the 2017 shipment was just one of the setbacks aid agencies face in battling the cholera epidemic, which has killed nearly 3,000 Yemenis.

“The Houthis are taking advantage of UN weakness,” an aid official told the AP investigation.

“Corruption or aid diversion and all of this are because of the UN’s weak position.”

The first significant cholera outbreak came in late 2016, leading to more than 25,000 suspected cases and killing at least 129. Soon after, in April 2017, the disease erupted again, this time spreading at an even more furious pace. Within two months, more than 185,000 suspected cases and 1,200 deaths were reported.

According to the AP report, when UN officials attempted to get oral vaccines into the country to halt the spread, a number of Houthi officials claimed the vaccines were “ineffective.” □Some officials circulated messages on social media claiming that the vaccines would be harmful to children, while other Houthi leaders suggested the vaccination plan was a “plot by the US and Israel to use Yemenis as guinea pigs.”

A former Houthi Health Ministry official told AP that the concerns were just a ruse, and that the militia leaders had list of demands they wanted met in a bid to bargain with UN officials for money and equipment, he said.

(With Associated Press)



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Suspected cholera cases in Yemen spike in 2019: UNWHO launches second cholera vaccine drive in Yemen as cases surge

[Western nations call for Sudan 'transition plan'](#)

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Tue, 2019-04-09 13:21

KHARTOUM: The US, UK and Norway said Tuesday that Sudanese authorities must

now deliver a “credible plan for political transition” as anti-government protests rocked Khartoum.

“The time has come for the Sudanese authorities to respond to these popular demands in a serious and credible way,” the embassies of the three Western countries said in a joint statement in Khartoum.

“The Sudanese authorities must now respond and deliver a credible plan for this political transition,” it added as thousands of protesters massed outside the army headquarters in the capital demanding an end to President Omar Al-Bashir’s iron-fisted rule of three decades.

The three countries also called on the authorities to release all political detainees and stop using violence against “peaceful protesters.”

The protests “continue to grow and the demand for political change from the courageous and resilient people of Sudan is becoming ever clearer and more powerful,” the statement said.

“The Sudanese people are demanding a transition to a political system that is inclusive and has greater legitimacy.”

The three countries vowed to support such a political process to help resolve the economic challenges facing the country.

“This is a pivotal moment for the future of Sudan,” the statement said.

“The decisions the Sudanese authorities take now, in an inclusive dialogue, will have a dramatic impact on the lives of 40 million Sudanese people and the stability of the region.”

Sudan has been rocked by protests against Bashir’s rule since December, with angry crowds demanding the veteran leader step down.

They accuse his government of mismanaging the economy that has led to soaring food prices, and regular shortage of fuel and foreign currency.



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Heavy gunfire heard at protest in Sudan's capital – live TV Sudan protesters rally outside army HQ for first time

[Italy keeps troops in Libya despite Khalifa advance](#)

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Tue, 2019-04-09 12:02

ROME: Italy on Tuesday confirmed that it would keep its military missions in Tripoli and Misrata despite the advance of strongman Khalifa Haftar's forces on the Libyan capital.

Miasit, launched in January 2018, will "continue in order to make assistance activities in Libya more incisive and efficient", the Italian defence ministry said in a statement.

UN chief Antonio Guterres has appealed for an immediate halt to fighting in Libya after Haftar's forces claimed an airstrike on Tripoli's only functioning airport.

Thousands have fled violence in the capital city, according to the United Nations, since Haftar launched a surprise assault last week which has left dozens dead.

Italy's Bilateral Mission of Assistance and Support in Libya "supports Libyan authorities in their pacification and stabilisation activities in the country and against human trafficking, smuggling and threats to security."

No figures were provided for the current deployment but the mission has previously included around 100 troops in Tripoli and 300 in Misrata, about 200 kilometres (130 miles) to the east.

Troops from former colonial power Italy are involved in "training and technical and infrastructure assistance for Libyan security forces," in Tripoli, the statement said.

In Misrata, the troops provide security and assistance to a hospital within a military academy for the UN-backed Government of National Accord.

The oil-rich northern African country has been rocked by violent power struggles between an array of armed groups since the NATO-backed overthrow of dictator Moamer Kadhafi in 2011.

The UN-backed Government of National Accord (GNA) controls the capital, but its authority is not recognised by a parallel administration in the east of the country, backed by Haftar.



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[Tripoli hospitals report 47 dead in recent fighting](#)

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Tue, 2019-04-09 10:02

TRIPOLI/GENEVA: Health facilities near Tripoli have reported 47 people killed and 181 wounded in recent days as eastern forces seek to take Libya's capital from an internationally-recognized government, the United Nations' health body said on Tuesday.

The renewed conflict in a nation splintered since the 2011 toppling of Muammar Qaddafi also risks depleting medical supplies, the World Health Organization (WHO) warned.

The death toll – higher than that given by either side yet – appeared to be mainly fighters, although it also included some civilians including two doctors, WHO spokesman Tarik Jasarevic told a Geneva news briefing. The eastern Libyan National Army (LNA) forces of Khalifa Haftar – a former general in Qaddafi’s army – seized largely-desert southern Libya earlier this year before heading to the coastal capital this month, where they are ensconced on the south side.

The United Nations, United States, European Union and G7 block have all appealed for a cease-fire and a return to UN peace plan, but Haftar has so far not heeded them.

A warplane took out Tripoli’s only functioning airport on Monday, and the number of displaced – 3,400 at the last UN count – is mounting alongside the casualties.

The conflict threatens to disrupt oil supplies, boost migration to Europe and scupper hopes for an election to end rivalries between parallel administrations in east and west.

UN officials said they were concerned that civilians could be used as human shields or forcibly recruited to fight.

“The people of Libya have long been caught between numerous warring parties, with some of the most vulnerable suffering some of the gravest violations of their human rights,” UN Human Rights High Commissioner Michelle Bachelet said.

“I appeal to all sides to come together to avoid further senseless violence and bloodshed.”



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US pulls forces from Libya as fighting approaches capital Tripoli
UN chief issues stark Libya warning as fighting rages south of Tripoli