

# GAZA IN FLAMES: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON ISRAEL'S EXPANDING OFFENSIVE

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Two months after Israel launched its attack on Gaza following  [Hamas's October 7 cross-border raid](#)  in which some 1,200 Israelis were killed, the tiny Palestinian enclave, with razed buildings, a maze of rubble and unprecedented human suffering, looks battered beyond repair. But the war is far from over. Over 1.7 million of Gaza's 2.3 million people have been forced out of their homes; some 16,000 Palestinians have been killed, and tens of thousands more wounded. Israel has taken over parts of northern Gaza and pushed its population towards the south. And now, the Israeli forces are  [expanding the offensive towards the south](#) , particularly targeting Khan Younis, a city of 4,00,000 people in normal times that has seen its population more than double since the war. The widening offensive has displaced more Gazans who are now forced into a sliver of territory in Rafah, on the Egyptian border. Israel, which has witnessed mounting international criticism, seems unfazed by the unfolding humanitarian tragedy. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says Israel will continue the war until its goals are met — primarily the dismantling of Hamas.

When Israel stormed the al-Shifa hospital in northern Gaza, its claim was that a Hamas command centre was located in underground bunkers. Weeks after raiding the enclave's largest medical facility, Israel is yet to provide any proof that it was a command centre. Now, the IDF claims that top Hamas leaders, including Yahya Sinwar, are based in southern Gaza. The world did nothing when Israel turned northern Gaza into what the UN called a "graveyard of children". It should not be allowed to repeat the same in the south. The war has already exposed tensions in America's support for Israel's war. Secretary of State Antony Blinken travelled to Israel last week and reportedly told the war cabinet that the conflict should end in days not in months. Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin warned Israel against civilian casualties, saying "if you drive civilians into the arms of the enemy, you replace a tactical victory with a strategic defeat". But these warnings are not enough. The U.S. continues to send aid to Israel and President Joe Biden still refuses to call for a ceasefire. The violence has already triggered regional tensions with Hezbollah firing rockets into Israel and the latter retaliating, and the Houthis of Yemen launching drones and missiles towards Israel, which are mostly being intercepted by American systems. An end to the violence in Gaza has become imperative for regional stability. Israel is unlikely to pause the offensive on its own. But the U.S. and other major regional powers should press Israel and Hamas to restart negotiations to find a lasting ceasefire and the release of hostages.

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