

# CEASE FIRE: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON THE DANGER OF ISRAEL TURNING GAZA INTO AN OPEN PRISON ON FIRE

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November 08, 2023 12:10 am | Updated 02:01 am IST

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Israel's bombing of Gaza is [entering its second month](#), and the tiny Mediterranean strip of 2.3 million people has been turned into what the UN has called [a "graveyard for thousands of children"](#) and "a living hell for everyone else". According to the Gaza Health Ministry, at least 10,000 people, many of them women and children, have been killed in Israel's onslaught, which began after [Hamas's October 7 cross-border raid](#), killing at least 1,400 Israelis. Israel's attack has also displaced some 1.5 million people. Israel ordered more than a million Gazans to move south and then continued to bomb the enclave. High-rises have been levelled and northern Gaza's neighbourhoods turned into rubble. Refugee camps, schools, hospitals and ambulances are not being spared, which led to frantic calls from the UN Secretary-General António Guterres for a ceasefire and respect for international humanitarian laws. According to the UN, 89 UN aid workers were among those killed in Gaza in four weeks, the highest "in any comparable period in the history of our organisation". The war has also triggered massive protests across the world, especially in the Arab street. But Israel's Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, has rejected calls for even a humanitarian pause, let alone a ceasefire.

Israeli troops have now encircled Gaza city, a densely populated Hamas stronghold, and are involved in street battles with militants. The objective appears to be to topple the Hamas government, kill its commanders, destroy its military infrastructure and rescue the hostages seized by Hamas on October 7. In the past, Israel had taken quick victories against conventional armies in the region, but its track record in asymmetric wars is mixed. It has lost at least 30 soldiers, and once the fighting enters Gaza city, it is expected to be bloodier. If Israel presses on, turning the rest of Gaza into an open prison on fire, it can have disastrous consequences for West Asia. Yemen's Houthis have already launched attacks against Israel. The Israeli-Lebanese border remains tense with Hezbollah saying all "options are open". The only country that can rein Israel in is its patron, the U.S. But unfortunately, the Biden administration, despite all its rhetoric about rights and a rules-based order, is yet to act. This is an opportunity for the U.S. to show the moral leadership which it always preaches about. It should tell Israel, and use pressure if needed, that it cannot continue to kill Palestinian civilians in the name of its right to defend itself. Israel must be made to cease fire immediately.

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