

The Aftermath of the Aggression on Gaza Possible Future Scenarios

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Introduction

In the past six years, Israel has launched three wars on the Gaza Strip in the context of a continued stifling siege. This siege has always had the same stated goals: preventing the flow of arms and military equipment to Hamas, preventing smuggling of weaponry into Gaza, and guarantees from Hamas to cease rocket fire. In reality, any strategic expert, knowledgeable of comprehensive facts related to the military capacities of Israel and the huge gap between the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) and armed Palestinian factions in the Gaza Strip, cannot easily answer the question on whether Israel is capable of resolving the matter in military terms or if Israel has other goals and objectives beyond the siege, which it does not disclose, but instead it invokes the flimsy security argument. If so, what are these goals? Will Israel be able to achieve these goals through its recent operation, entitled Operation Protective Edge, or will it again fail to achieve its stated goals? Based on that, what are the expected scenarios of this unprecedented war in its ferocity, the magnitude of its devastation, and the number of civilian casualties, which have exceeded 2,000 martyrs and more than ten thousand injuries, many of whom will suffer permanent disabilities?

Panorama of the Event

One week after the outbreak of the war on July 8, 2014, Egypt announced an initiative for an immediate ceasefire to be followed directly by meetings at the negotiation table to discuss the demands of the two parties. The Palestinian factions rejected the initiative because it did not respond to their demands, especially on the lifting of the siege on the Gaza Strip. In response to this rejection, Israel committed a horrific massacre in the neighborhood of al-Shajaeya, followed by two more massacres in Beit Hanoun and Khuza'a. The result was the

displacement of half a million people. They sought to seek refuge in the central Gaza Strip, which was clearly unable to absorb this massive influx of displaced refugees.

August 1, 2014 saw the arrival of a unified Palestinian delegation that represented a wide spectrum of Palestinian factions to Cairo to start negotiating through the Egyptian mediator, and there was an agreement by the parties on a 72 hours truce. However, Israel violated the truce on the pretext of the abduction of an Israeli soldier and committed a massacre in Rafah which led to the killing of at least 150 people. Later on, the falsehood of this argument, with

Israel's acknowledgment, was proved. The message was clear: Israel does not want to negotiate, especially with a unified Palestinian delegation representing a unified Palestinian voice.

On August 6, 2014, a 72 hours humanitarian truce was reached during which indirect negotiations between the two parties under the auspices of Egypt started. The truce period ended without progress and the Israeli attacks on the Gaza Strip were re-launched again until a new 72 hours truce was reached during which negotiations were resumed. A final Egyptian paper was presented and the delegations were asked to return back to their leaders and consult with them, giving them a five days truce period. When this period ended, the cease-fire was resumed for another 24 additional hours for responses from the two parties on the Egyptian paper. It is clear that we have two scenarios where each has multiple possibilities: The first is either a halt of the aggression by reaching an agreement with a minimum ceiling of a long term truce and a maximum of meeting some of the humanitarian demands, while delaying the other demands and issues, or not reaching an agreement such as a one sided cease-fire by Israel. The second is a continued attack with a maximum ceiling of sporadic shooting or a strafing attack which creates new facts on the ground.

Dilemma of Gaza

Israel succeeded in deluding the world that it has withdrawn from the Gaza Strip, within the so-called unilateral Disengagement plan of 2005. In fact, Israel had only redeployed its forces and continued to control the border crossings and ports of the Gaza Strip. In reality, it continued its occupation and freed itself from its obligations as an occupier. Israel has cited bogus pretexts to keep its control and blockade on the Gaza Strip. For Israel, it thought that it had solved half of the problem by getting rid of the Gaza Strip through separation and disengagement. However, it wanted to continue to be part of the scene to later on decide on the fate of the Gaza Strip, and this constitutes the other half of the dilemma.

The Gaza Strip is a Dilemma for Israel

Anyone who follows-up on strategic reports, political studies, and newspaper articles on the subject of the Gaza Strip can reach the following conclusion that the Israeli stance, which is almost agreed upon among the elite circles (informed and educated people): yes, Israel can occupy Gaza in a short period of time and it can disarm the resistance forces, arrest them, or even kill them. However, this is not the real problem. The problem is not even in the high number of civilian deaths and it is not because Israel fears the expected wrath of the international community. The real problem is what can Israel do on the next day if it decides to reoccupy Gaza? What would it do with Gaza? Israel does not want to put Gaza again under its control after the Disengagement. It does not want it to be a part of a Palestinian state within the June 4, 1967 borders and it cannot leave it to explode in the face of Israel. It wants it to "just sink into the sea," the wish of Rabin (the former Israeli Prime Minister who signed Oslo agreement in 1993) or to be pushed to neighbors, also known as the regional solution. This is despite the fact that many, amongst Israelis, Palestinians, Arabs, and also international players, are convinced that this will not permanently solve the problem of Gaza; however, in any case, this regional solution remains the best solution.

The Israeli dilemma of Gaza lies in its very small area, its high population density, the lack of resources, and pressures resulting from these factors. The majority of people in the Gaza Strip are refugees who see the remnants of their homes with their naked eyes and this is fueling their determination to struggle to return to their houses. As Israel practically refuses the two-state solution, and it does not want to re-occupy the Gaza Strip, it is only logical that it seeks to find other solutions. Israel believes that the solution to this dilemma is to be found in Egypt.

In the context of dealing with this dilemma after the unilateral disengagement, Israel has launched three wars carrying suggestive strategic and security connotations: Operation Cast Lead (2008), Operation Pillar of Defense

(2012), and Operation Protective Edge (2014). Among the most common features of the three wars, in addition to the fact that they all carried the same goals and almost the same declared pretexts, is that the three wars have mainly targeted civilians to displace them. They all came under different political Egyptian situations: the Mubarak regime, the rule of the Muslim Brotherhood, and the new Egyptian leadership in the wake of the June 30, 2013 uprising. As for what makes the recent war different is that it came while the region is witnessing bloody conflicts, mainly with fanatical Islamist groups like ISIS, that could lead to the creation of sectarian and religious entities or to a full-blown war by all other parties against them.

Israel is a strategic partner in the fragmentation of the region project which is sought by the USA. It exercises its share of the project through the consolidation of segregation and isolation of the Palestinian territories occupied in 1967. The most recent Israeli aggression, Operation Protective Edge, is an extension of Israel's fragmentation policy and its push towards the "regional solution" of the Palestinian question (meaning the attachment of Gaza to part of Sinai Peninsula and establishing a mini-state). It is a step on the road towards consolidating the separation of the West Bank and deciding the fate of each of them individually and thus put an end to all paths leading to national reconciliation and the formation of a consensus government. It also aims at pressuring the new Egyptian leadership in order to extract a similar position to the position of deposed President Mohamed Morsi in the aftermath of the Operation Pillar of Defense on the Gaza Strip.

Israel is not Succeeding in Dealing with the Gaza Dilemma

Israel has succeeded in separating the Gaza Strip, and in creating an unbearable humanitarian situation inside it, but it has not yet succeeded in getting rid of it altogether. There are a number of reasons, the most important one being the Egyptian opposition, which will be elaborated on in this context.

During Hosni Mubarak's regime (1981-2011), Israel was hesitant to cause him a lot of political pressure, hence it refrained from pushing its agenda too heavily on the president. As a result, it limited its assaults to "shock" attacks to put Gaza on the edge. However, during the rule of the Muslim Brotherhood, President Mohamed Morsi (2013) quickly dealt with the Gaza Strip as if he is personally its protector. In the presidential palace, he personally supervised the signing of the ceasefire agreement and he sent his prime minister to visit the Gaza Strip with a clear rejection of the presence of the Palestinian president.

In its recent war, Israel responded to the clear Egyptian rejection of the regional solution and its insistence on the existence of a unified Palestinian delegation to negotiate, by committing horrific massacres, especially in Rafah, which is adjacent to the Egyptian border, which was seen by observers as a blatant message to the Egyptian leadership. Of course, Israel will not let things reach the level of strained relations between the two countries and at this time a compromise solution which forces Egypt to become more responsible for what is happening in the Gaza Strip would be enough for Israel. This is what drives some observers to believe that sooner or later, this ambiguous and complicated situation in the Gaza Strip and its possible implications, will be a major cause for rolling tensions in the relations between the two countries.

Immediate Political Context of the Recent War

In the wake of the failed end of April 2014 negotiations and the United States Secretary of State John Kerry's initiative, the Palestinian president launched a new political program that has formed the features of a new national strategy. The pillars of this program are the signing of applications to join some international bodies and conventions, rejecting the return to absurd negotiations as long as Israel continues its stubbornness, signing the agreement on the application of the terms of national reconciliation provisions, and the

formation of a national consensus government.

Israel's response was expected to be swift. Observers believe that this new program has to a large extent raised the concerns of Netanyahu's government. The sources of concern for Israel are: the fact that the reconciliation will block the road of the Israeli strategy aimed at determining the fate of the occupied Palestinian territories in 1967 separately within its vision of a regional solution. The second concern, contrary to Israel's claim, is the fear that Hamas gets closer to the President's platform. If this happens, there is a risk of the development of a new national strategy which is capable of overcoming the failures of the negotiation process, which would rationalize the resistance within a broader concept of popular resistance as agreed upon between President Abbas and Khaled Meshaal, the head of the political bureau of Hamas movement. The events that have followed proved that this "concern" has quickly turned into a policy which has been translated into practices in the West Bank and then in the Gaza Strip. Israel failed when they accused Mahmoud Abbas of terrorism because of his agreement with Hamas by claiming the kidnapping of three Israeli teenagers. Events developed very quickly, contrary to the desire of the right wing government, towards an unprecedented popular uprising and international outcry. For these reasons, some observers believe that Israel has quickly launched its aggression on the Gaza Strip, not only to distract public attention from what is going on in the West Bank, but also to put an end to any chances of unity and success of reconciliation on the ground.

Nature of the Aggression

Netanyahu's government was betting to achieve some of the aforementioned aims in the first week of the war. However, it was shocked when the armed factions rejected the cease-fire on the basis of "a truce against a truce" without lifting the siege on Gaza. With the absence of a quick Egyptian response to the events, it therefore decided to continue its aggression on the basis of "what does not come with might comes with more might."

It was perhaps the first time ever that Israel used indiscriminate artillery shelling on such a large scale. It committed crimes with the aim of uprooting and displacing one third of the people of Gaza Strip through collective massacres against unarmed civilians in al-Shajaeya, Khuza'a, Beit Hanoun, and Rafah. A displaced woman who had lost five members of her family said "we did not believe them when they called our mobile phones and our land lines and warned us to leave. We thought that this is part of their psychological warfare which was also promoted by local radio stations." The woman cried and added "19 members of the family, children, old, and disabled, were obliged to stay in one house and to move around its corners in panic to avoid the munitions' fragments every time we hear the terrifying and deafening explosion of munitions." She concluded, saying "when we realized that we will all inevitably die if we stay longer, we decided to go out under a hail of bombardment. Running in all directions, to escape rockets, we lost each other. Fourteen of us were taken to the al-Shifa hospital and the remaining members, who sought shelter at one of our relative's house, were all killed when this house was demolished over their heads"⁽ⁱ⁾.

Israel launched its six week assault in two phases: the first aimed at luring armed groups to incite it by killing six fighters from the al-Qassam Brigades in Rafah and it continued to target some of the wanted members and blow up their houses under the "houses of leaders" slogan after warning people living in these houses by a drone rocket, and by giving them five minutes to leave the house. In many cases, houses were shelled by F-16 planes without any prior warning and as a result, 80 families were all exterminated. The second phase consisted of a ground war, which is in no way an accurate term because military vehicles and soldiers did not penetrate into the Gaza Strip except for limited distances or for specific purposes relying on fire intensity from a distance. Israel applied its infamous "Dahiya Doctrine" (Beirut's southern suburb which has been subjected to huge destruction during the 2006 war), by putting pressure on the resistance factions to stop their operations on the one hand, and on the Egyptian leadership on the other hand, to play a greater role in containing the situation in

the Gaza Strip on a strategic term. The current stage is the stage of a humanitarian truce, intermittent shooting, and indirect negotiations in Cairo brokered by Egypt.

Scenarios and Possibilities

The war has not yet ended. While stalled negotiations are still going on in Cairo, Gaza residents continue with their difficult lives under conditions of uncertainty, anxiety, and severe deterioration in their humanitarian conditions. Thousands of families have returned to their areas only to find rubble and about 150,000 people became homeless. The infrastructure including streets, roads, public utilities, mosques, water systems, electricity, and sanitation has become almost completely destroyed. In addition, there is another danger of environmental pollution resulting from the remnants of shells and ammunition, the rotting corpses, the piling of garbage of all kinds, and the spread of infectious odors. Thousands of breadwinners, farmers, shopkeepers, livestock breeders, fishermen, workers, and owners of small industrial installations, not to mention service workers, have lost their sources of income and livelihoods.

It has become clear that the Gaza Strip is no longer a safe and dignified place for living unless the following conditions are fulfilled. First, the return of security and stability by the immediate halt of the aggression. Second, enabling the national consensus government to perform its roles. Third, lifting the blockade, opening the crossings, and allowing the entry of necessary supplies, including humanitarian aid and construction materials. Fourth, the allocation of sufficient resources and reaching a flexible and transparent mechanism for the reconstruction of Gaza. The starting points which bear the highest priority are to secure housing for displaced people, the restoration of basic infrastructure, and providing urgent alternatives for families who have lost their livelihood. All of this, of course, depends on the near future scenarios which are determined by the stances of concerned parties.

The First Scenario: End to the Aggression

First Possibility: The Cairo negotiations reach an agreement on ending the aggression which responds to some of the demands of the two parties. The elements of this agreement are: a long-term truce, the return of the Palestinian Authority, the recognition of a national consensus government, the opening of the Rafah crossing border, Israel's facilitation of the movement of people and goods to and from the Gaza Strip through the crossings linking Israel and the Gaza Strip, a buffer zone, with a restricted access along the border with a depth ranging between 100 to 300m and an agreement on a mechanism for the reconstruction of Gaza under international supervision and international community's commitment to fund this reconstruction process.

Issues of a port, airport, and safe passage between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank shall be postponed under this scenario. We expect that Israel will demand the full disarming of the Gaza Strip in return for agreeing on these terms. Moreover, Israel will not welcome this scenario; it will strongly oppose it and put impossible conditions in order to evade it. For its turn, Hamas, which is effectively in control of the administration of Gaza, is now feeling the ecstasy of victory and will not want to give up all its gains to the Palestinian Authority. If it is forced to accept this solution, for one reason or another, it will create obstacles during the implementation and it will not agree to hand over security affairs to the Palestinian Authority. Egypt strongly supports this solution, especially since it saves it from lots of the political pressure caused by the aggression, its mediation and its problems with Hamas, which it considers as an extension of the mother Muslim Brotherhood movement. It is expected that while the US will support this scenario it will not put pressure on Israel to accept it.

Second Possibility: The Cairo negotiations fail in reaching an agreement which responds to all or some of the demands. Cairo pressures parties, assisted by influential regional and international forces, to sign a permanent ceasefire agreement, i.e. a long term truce of

10 years. Israel might agree to this, as well as Hamas. Egypt will consider this as a chance to open a discussion on the unresolved issues and the demands of the two parties later on by diplomatic means, away from the roar of cannons and the death of the victims. The Palestinian Authority will not reject that, but it will not be happy about it and this will further complicate internal matters and create a big chaos with economic, social, and humanitarian dimensions and it will disable the chances of achieving reconciliation and the enabling of the national consensus government to take control on the ground in the administration of the government and society.

Third Possibility: The aggression stops with a unilateral declaration by Israel to cease its operations and Hamas abides by the undeclared truce and continues to celebrate its victories. By doing so, Israel will not be obliged to sign an agreement with the Palestinian Authority which guarantees the unity of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip according to Oslo agreement, releases itself from any obligations or consequences caused by its aggression, keeps the lead in its hand, continues to blackmail the new Egyptian leadership and to pressure it through the continued unilateral Hamas's rule of the Gaza Strip and it can offer some humanitarian facilities. At a later stage, and with the establishment of security, Israel may discuss, via Turkey and Qatar, the issue of limited reconstruction and the opening of a sea port. Egypt will feel disappointed, but it will not be able to prevent this scenario. It will continue to close the Rafah crossing and hold Hamas responsible for the failure of negotiations. In its turn, the Palestinian Authority will not be happy with this solution, although it will be unable to refuse the halt of operations, which is a priority for the people and for a big sector of the Palestinians even if it is a unilateral act without reaching an agreement. Some of the Palestinian factions will view this as a battlefield achievement which will be followed by other battles in the future. The US will announce its support and call all parties to provide the needed facilities to deal with the deteriorating humanitarian situation.

Second Scenario: Aggression Continues

First Possibility: Cairo announces the failure of negotiations or one or both parties withdraw. The cycle of violence returns back again, but at a low level of fighting. Israel does not resort to a land war and shelling unless it is forced to do so and only when it wants to chase wanted persons or to respond to rocket attacks from the Gaza Strip. Hamas will not resort to escalation and it will try to hold back other armed factions. It will not oppose the national consensus government administration of the Gaza Strip affairs, but it will not actually abandon its control of it. Israel will not provide any facilities and it will put as the condition for Palestinians full obedience of the truce in order to do so. Egypt will continue its efforts to bring the parties to the negotiating table. The Turkish-Qatari axis may get involved and find a kind of a settlement. This will either lead to a comprehensive and lasting ceasefire similar to the third possibility of the first scenario, or things might deteriorate until they reach the edge of a full-blown war.

Second Possibility: A full-blown war, but its chances are very meager for several reasons: namely the response of the international community, Israel's desire not to strain relations with Egypt right now which might lead to the cancellation of the Camp David Accords, and the internal Israeli situation which is not desirous for a full-scale war. However, there is the possibility of increased pressure by the rightists in Netanyahu's government, who are calling for the re-occupation of Gaza, especially if the resistance factions continue to launch rockets attacks on Israeli cities which will raise Israeli ire. Some say that this is the most probable outcome because Israel was able to displace half a million Palestinians without being exposed to large losses and without any reaction from the international community to restrain or punish it. What would prevent Israel from continuing this uprooting and displacement policy to include the majority of the Gaza Strip population and force everyone, especially Egypt and the international community, to confront new facts?

Political Repercussions of these Scenarios

By this, we mean the direct and indirect impact of the war after it comes to an end on the general political scene; the fate of the Palestinian Authority and the scope of its mandate and functions, especially in the Gaza Strip, the political settlement path, and the future of negotiations which have been suspended in April 2014, the political future of Hamas and its anticipated role and its regional relations especially with the Muslim Brotherhood, the fate of the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, the two-state solution, and Egypt's regional role and its position on the Palestinian issue. Regarding partial issues, such as the opening the crossings and reopening of the "safe passage" between Gaza and the West Bank, and the port and the airport, if some of them are not resolved from a purely humanitarian perspective, under international or regional auspices, their future will necessarily depend on the political situation resulting from the war and its aftermath in accordance with the following possibilities.

First: In Case the War Stops

First Possibility: The war stops by reaching an agreement. If a cease-fire agreement is signed between the two sides under the auspices of Egypt, it is expected that the Palestinian Authority will return through the consensus government to administer the affairs of the government and the society in the Gaza Strip. Hamas will not oppose this, but it will demand a greater share in the government under the banner of political partnership. This will make its relations with the Muslim Brotherhood movement and with the Qatari-Turkish axis fade away. After a while, the US will call the Palestinians and the Israelis to resume negotiations, which will not lead to decisive results. The two-state solution will continue to be the approach put on the table and Israel will continue to strip it of its contents immediately by demanding a Jewish State in return for its recognition of a demilitarized and severely restricted Palestinian state. Egypt will feel that it has made an accomplishment, as the

feelings of entrapment in its relations with the Gaza Strip will disappear and it will get in the way of the pro-Muslim Brothers Qatari-Turkish axis. The ceiling of this possibility may reach a situation where the US obliges all parties to agree on a final solution, which is closer to the Israeli vision and which does not achieve the legitimate aspirations and ambitions of the Palestinians. The strength of this possibility stems from the following facts. Israel failed in its war in achieving its strategic objectives and therefore it was forced to sign the agreement under the Egyptian auspices and US pressure. This possibility enjoys US approval to a large extent in the sense that it is consistent with its strategic vision for the future of the region. The Qatari-Turkish axis does not have strong cards that can preclude this possibility, even if it succeeds temporarily in hindering it. Finally, this possibility is widely accepted on a large regional and international scale (Saudi Arabia, UAE, Russia, China, etc).

Second Possibility: In case the war stops without an agreement, such as a unilateral Israeli end of operations. The direct political result is the reproduction of the political scene which has prevailed before the aggression with many disempowerment and confusion dynamics. The Gaza Strip will continue to be under the rule of the victorious Hamas and this means the failure of the reconciliation and the stumbling of the consensus government which would only perform an operational and humanitarian role. The Qatari-Turkish axis will become stronger and the Muslim Brotherhood will gain a new momentum which would compensate it for its successive failures in the region. This scenario delivers a deathblow to the two-state solution and its chances, consolidates separation, and weakens the legitimacy of the Palestinian Authority making it very vulnerable. The maximum ceiling of this possibility is the creation of a "mini-state". The strength of this possibility's momentum stems from the Israeli vision and will and from the desire among a large number of Hamas' members. Lastly, this possibility reflects the de-facto realities and it does not need agreements or negotiations. This will necessarily imply that Abbas is irrelevant and Israel will resort to collecting the price in the West Bank by implying further control and

further geo-political fragmentation within. This will push the president to leave the scene in one way or the other, leaving behind a self-rule of a new kind of permanent authority under occupation, or things may roll down to reach the level of dissolving the authority. The strength of this possibility lies in the fact that Israel keeps the control of the situation as it already had failed Abbas's negotiations approach. Simultaneously, it gives a severe blow to Hamas' military resistance approach without having to pay the price and without being exposed to any pressure from any party. Israel will continue the disengagement policy, impose a *fait accompli*, and follow the deterrence strategy. It will perhaps use this policy in its official relations with Arab neighbors, specifically Egypt and Jordan, to open a new horizon for the regional solution.

Second: In Case the War Continues

Third Possibility: This is the continuation of the war in one way or the other like intermittent fire and with it, no war, no peace situation, or a full-blown war. On the political level, the continuation of the war means mounting tension in the relations between Egypt and Israel since the latter had bombed and inflicted huge damage on the Palestinian side of the Rafah crossing sending a clear message to the former. The continuation of the war also means Israel's refusal of the return of the Palestinian Authority to the Gaza Strip and its desire to keep it in a state of anxiety and instability, and without defining it, delay the decision on its fate until the picture on how the situation will evolve after the complete end of the war becomes clearer. Israel might reach a stage where it decides to get rid of the Gaza dilemma once and for all or to turn a blind eye on announcing a "mini-state in Gaza." On the Palestinian side, the president may appeal to the Security Council and demand an end to the war and international forces, or as a further step, he may resort to the International Criminal Court. He may also be forced to dissolve the authority. This situation will exacerbate internal conflicts within Hamas. In a possible step,

Hamas might announce a "mini-state in Gaza," backed by the Turkish-Qatari axis to be open to the world through a sea lane. Egypt will greatly suffer if the war continues and it may gradually be tempted to a kind of diplomatic confrontation with Israel. This will deteriorate the security situation in the Sinai, which Egypt fears. Some believe that the Camp David Accords between Israel and Egypt will become jeopardized. Israel might replace these accords with the "disengagement" principle, impose facts on the ground and the use of deterrence power. The West Bank would face a state of tension and escalation which could lead to the application of the convergence plan, where it might be isolated and pressured, with some changes that would allow Israel to impose its vision and conditions of its understanding of the regional solution and which makes it win recognition as a Jewish State.

Fourth Possibility: It is likely that Israel would accept a long-term truce, the return of the Palestinian Authority, and an Egyptian and international commitment in case it is convinced that there are serious efforts to disarm factions in Gaza or in case there is serious pressure practiced by the US on Israel, including the change of the current right-wing government in return for worthy promises on the West Bank, bilateral negotiations under US auspices, and financial compensation. We can say that this is the enforcement of the international will in the application of the "two-state solution," which may not necessarily reach to the level of justice for the Palestinians, but it may save them from more horrors and bad consequences in light of a destabilized region where there is a conflict on re-arranging it between a number of regional and international powers with intersecting and colliding interests.

However, this author argues that as long as Israel is in charge, despite obstacles and difficulties that it encounters, internal political and partisan interests will play a decisive role in the continuation or the stoppage of the war and its subsequent utilization in both cases. If Israel wants to renew its attacks it will find justifications and excuses and if it decides to stop the war it will find justifications and it will seek to get the price and maximize it in both cases. The rightists will pressure Netanyahu to

continue the attacks and will Netanyahu feel that he did not accomplish what he wanted. His political future is in jeopardy. The Israelis do not want to enter into an agreement with a Palestinian delegation representing the Palestinian unity government, led by President Abbas, and at the same time, Israel does not want to cause more political problems for the Egyptians for fear of strained relations between the two parties. There is no doubt that Israel will not risk angering US President Barack Obama. Therefore, as long as the regional solution to the dilemma of Gaza is not acceptable at this time, Israel will not allow the return of the Palestinian Authority to Gaza to restore the unity of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. It will opt to keep Gaza on the edge, licking its wounds while Hamas continues to actually control it.

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The production of this paper was completed during the last two weeks of August 2014, while the aggression was still in action.

⁽ⁱⁱ⁾ *During a video conference at the World Peace Center. The speaker was invited as one of the affected citizens of Gaza.*

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