



A Regional-Political Perspective on the Gaza Campaign

The Gaza campaign is not a local conflict. Although the fighting is confined to a specific geographic area, it risks spreading and turning into a regional campaign that involves the United States and its regional allies in shaping the war and its aftermath. Understanding the attitudes, interests, sensitivities and capabilities of each country in the region regarding the campaign, as well as the actions each is taking, is thus of great importance. Below is a compilation by Mitvim experts outlining the regional view of the Gaza campaign as it unfolds, summing up events of the third week and offering guiding principles for Israel's regional foreign policy. For a broader view of our experts' insights, we recommend Mitvim's series of publications on the regional-political perspective on the Gaza campaign.

Fifth week of the war

A Regional Perspective

Dr. Roei Kibrik, Director of Research, Mitvim

Israel is highly skilled at bringing to bear its military-security muscle. Unfortunately, in the process of focusing attention and resources solely on this aspect of the Gaza campaign, Israel is abandoning the arena of diplomatic action. Not only is the Israeli government failing to define the war's political purpose and avoiding questions about the aftermath by its citizens and friends around the world, especially the United States, it is also failing to effectively engage in the regional political arena.

Israel has worked hard to strengthen its regional ties in the Middle East in recent years, arguing that resolving the conflict with the Palestinians is an issue that can be bypassed. It prided itself on the cooperation it was able to forge with the veteran peace states, Egypt and Jordan, and with the Gulf states, especially in light of the shared threat from Iran. However, even after this threat materialized in the form of the Oct. 7 attack by Iran's proxy, Hamas, Israel does not seem to be considering the mobilization of its newly found allies in the region for joint action against a common enemy. Its secondary efforts in this arena are focused on trying to prevent the normalization countries from severing relations, and coordinating humanitarian measures with Egypt and Jordan.

During the fifth week of the fighting, Israel continued to operate mainly independently, relying on its capabilities and significant US support. At the same time, other countries in the region engaged in significant activity in the diplomatic arena, which afforded them opportunities to strike a crucial balance between demonstrating commitment to the Palestinian cause, as demanded by their public, and preserving their interest in ties with Israel and the West. Regional leaders have been meeting each other, coordinating positions, messaging and undertaking joint actions. This was reflected in a rare Nov. 11 gathering in Riyadh of leaders

of the Arab League and Islamic countries under the auspices of Mohammed bin Salman against the backdrop of the war in Gaza.

The emergency gathering reflected several processes that are not necessarily compatible with each other. Iran took advantage of this opportunity to try to strengthen ties with Arab countries by blurring the fault line that Israel sought to deepen between Tehran and its proxies, on the one hand, and the countries of the region that aspire to stability, such as Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Egypt, on the other. Arab states that regard Iran as a threat prevented the Riyadh summit from adopting concrete measures against Israel, seeking to preserve the potential for cooperation with the Israelis after the war in Gaza. In a particularly conspicuous decision, Saudi Arabia did not discount the prospects of normalization with Israel that had been underway prior to the war, leaving such a move on the agenda. At the same time, the Arab states reaffirmed their commitment to the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative, which proposes normalization with Israel in return for implementation of a two-state solution, defining it as the agreed outline for the day after the war. The Arab states' reaffirmation of the Arab Peace Initiative, which recognizes Israel's right to exist in peace and security alongside a Palestinian state, even as Israel is aggressively attacking Gaza, is a political opportunity that Israel must embrace and act to realize. Israel must also understand that Arab leaders are increasingly constrained in avoiding harsh messages the longer the fighting rages and the more images it generates of death and destruction in Gaza.

An Egyptian Perspective

Prof. Elie Podeh, Board Member, Mitvim

Egypt continued to conduct discussions with the United States and regional officials regarding the passage of humanitarian supplies to Gaza through the Rafah crossing and negotiations for the release of Israeli abductees held by Hamas. The flurry of diplomacy included a Nov. 9 meeting between Egyptian General Intelligence Director Abbas Kamel and Hamas leaders Haniyeh and Mashaal. President al-Sisi met on Nov. 10 with the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh al-Thani, as part of the two countries' efforts to reach a deal for the exchange of Israelis held by Hamas in return for Palestinian prisoners held by Israel. Egypt and Qatar were previously involved in the release of two Israeli women kidnapped by Hamas. Al-Thani's visit to Cairo reflected the warming relations between the two states after the Arab boycott imposed on Qatar in 2017 by Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain (which lifted it in January 2021).

Sisi also took part in the extraordinary Arab (and Islamic) Nov. 11 summit in Riyadh, reiterating his country's condemnation of Israel's actions in Gaza, calling for an immediate ceasefire and opposing the uprooting of Gaza Palestinians from their land. In other statements to the media, Sisi stressed that Egypt had no intention of playing a security role in Gaza the day after the war. In so doing, he expressed a traditional Egyptian position that sees Gaza as an area under Israeli responsibility and not its own.

The war in Gaza coincides with presidential elections in Egypt, scheduled for December 1-3 (among Egyptians abroad) and December 10-12 (in Egypt). Al-Sisi, who is running for a third term, is facing three lackluster candidates, none of whom pose a real challenge. However, the timing obliges him to adopt a belligerent public stand against Israel, as well as to demonstrate commitment to the Palestinian cause in Egypt and the Arab world.

A US Perspective

Nadav Tamir, Board Member, Mitvim

The Biden Administration has increased the pressure on Israel to make a pause in the fighting in order to allow humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip, and the release of some of the abductees held by Hamas. Statements by Biden and Blinken made it clear that the administration is no longer willing to settle for sending messages directly to the Israeli government, but rather they are starting to exert public pressure, which also has the benefit of domestic political gain.

Increasing the public pressure, encouraged by the administration, stems, inter alia, from political considerations given the images of destruction in Gaza that dominate the media. More than two dozen Democratic senators sent Biden an open letter questioning Israeli policy in Gaza and calling on Israel to try harder to avoid hitting uninvolved citizens. Biden is also facing growing criticism from young voters who oppose his unequivocal support of Israel, and who demand that the Democratic Party take a much harder line against Israel's fighting in Gaza. Polls indicate a decline in Biden's popularity among voters under the age of 35. On the other hand, the president also feels obligated to Jewish voters, the vast majority of whom support the Democrats and most of whom also identify with the pro-Israel line that Biden has adopted. He is trying to juggle between continued support for Israel and at the same time put focused pressure for a humanitarian pause and reduction in civilian fatalities.

The administration is interested in carrying out a deal on the issue of Israeli abductees, even on a limited scale, especially if it includes the release of those with American citizenship. Israel, for its part, has adopted an all-or-nothing approach – unconditional freedom for all hostages.

Biden also expressed concern about the uptick in settlers violence. While Netanyahu said on Nov. 8 that he condemned the violence, which he blamed on a “handful” of radicals, the administration is expecting action, including arrests and indictments of those involved.

The Israeli government is trying to push back against American pressure, but is constrained by the significant US role in deterring Iran and Hezbollah from belligerence that would lead to full-scale war on two (or even more) fronts. Biden also enjoys leverage over Netanyahu by his increased popularity with the Israeli public, having become the first American president to land in Israel during a war time. In conclusion, the United States remains committed to supporting Israel and toppling the Hamas regime in Gaza, but the gap between the interests of the Biden Administration and the Netanyahu government is widening.

A Saudi Arabian Perspective

Shiri Fein-Grossman, Forum Dvorah

Saudi Arabia wished to host two separate summits this past weekend, one of the Arab League and the other of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. The two meetings were merged into one at the last minute, amid reports that the Arab League had failed to agree on a joint statement condemning Israel. While the concluding statement of the joint meeting did include condemnation of Israel, it did not include an actionable and fierce response against Israel. Fierce criticism immediately emerged throughout the Arab and Muslim world,

including calls for the dissolution of the Arab League. Eleven of the 22 Arab League member states wanted the statement to call for aggressive measures, such as a ban on American use of Arab territories to supply weapons to Israel, severing ties with Israel, and threatening to disrupt oil supplies to pressure Israel to stop fighting in Gaza. These aggressive measures would have also served Iran's interest in pushing the United States out of the Middle East. Thus, it's no surprise that these measures were supported by 11 countries where Iran has many levers over, such as Qatar, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and others. Four countries reportedly opposed the proposal and the rest abstained, but the vote of each participant was not made public.

The United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Egypt, Morocco, Bahrain and Sudan, all of which have normalized relations with Israel, either abstained or objected to these measures. Rather than being motivated by warm feelings for Israel, their vote was dictated by fear of Hamas and like-minded Islamist radicals and their much-needed alliance with the United States to counter Iran's belligerence via proxies. The summit also provided a venue for the first meeting in years between the leaders of Egypt and Saudi Arabia and the president of Iran. The Saudi hosting of the summit allowed Crown Prince bin Salman to set the official tone of the Arab world's leadership, and to some extent restrain the hawkish policies of radical Shi'ite Islam and the leaders of Muslim Brotherhood ideology, at the cost of a handshake and a photo op between the crown prince and Iranian President Raisi.

The bolstered US presence in the Middle East serves the interests of the Arab countries well in their attempt to defend themselves against continued Iranian aggression in the region. However, the shaky relations between leaders of these moderate Arab states undermine formulating an action plan against Iran and its persistent destabilization of the region. UAE President Mohammed bin Zayed once again refrained from attending an Arab leadership summit, sending his full brother Mansour bin Zayed, the Vice President, to Riyadh on his behalf. At the same time, tension and suspicions persist between Saudi Arabia and Egypt and Jordan over the competition for regional influence and leadership. The continued rivalry prevents a united pro-active stand against Iran, dictating instead a defensive posture almost completely dependent on the United States.

Saudi Arabia, mindful of domestic criticism of its position on the war in Gaza, is trying to appease public anger. Following the summit, Saudi aid trucks were seen for the first time (Nov. 12) heading for the Rafah crossing to enter Gaza. Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar also airdropped additional medical equipment for the Jordanian field hospital in the Gaza Strip shortly after the summit ended (Nov. 11).

Regional tensions were further inflamed by Israeli Minister Amichai Eliyahu who suggested dropping a nuclear bomb on Gaza. On Nov. 5, the Saudi foreign ministry issued a strong condemnation, saying that "Not dismissing the minister from the government immediately and sufficing with freezing his membership reflects the level of indifference in all humanitarian, moral, religious and legal standards and values in the Israeli government". The leaders of the moderate Arab states are careful to avoid meddling in domestic Israeli politics to avoid a painful boomerang effect. But they insist on constantly describing the current government as "extremely right-wing" and convey their messages on the issue through the United States in a way that once again demonstrates their dependence on the Americans and their inability to leverage their collective power to shape the reality on the ground according to their mutual interests.

A European Perspective

Dr. Maya Sion-Tzidkiyahu, Director of the Israel–Europe Relations Program, Mitvim

Following the initial week of wall-to-wall support of Israel in its war on Hamas, growing divisions emerged within the European Commission, between governments of the member states, and in public opinion. The war has been fueling identity politics and religious and ethnic divisions in Europe, and playing into the hands of extremist parties. The reporting and discussion in much of the media are superficial, providing further grist for radicalization, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia.

However, support for Israel's right to defend itself continues in the leadership of EU institutions and member states, as well as the UK, along with an emphasis on the need to increase humanitarian assistance to Gaza. French President Macron led the humanitarian aid issue, convening an international conference on Nov. 9.

Nonetheless, the vast majority of Europeans (and Americans) are agreed on one important point (as opposed to current public opinion in Israel) - the need for a political solution to this bloody conflict. In a Nov. 6 speech, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen outlined the EU's position. The first part, expressing support of Israel, was more controversial, but the latter part was agreed on by most EU member states.

The first part states that Hamas's crimes are unjustified and that Israel has the right to defend itself. Solidarity with Israel and its right to defend itself under international law and international humanitarian law continues. There is an understanding of the terrible dilemma Israel faces – defending itself against Hamas, which shields itself behind civilians. Still, the Europeans (like the Americans) underscore Israel's obligation to spare no effort in avoiding harm to civilians, arguing that such protection is essential for the day after the war.

According to von der Leyen, this pro-Israel stance provides the EU with credibility to voice criticism of Israeli measures and advance a political solution for the aftermath of the war. The EU has offered to help Israelis and Palestinians resume negotiations on a two-state solution, and has drawn up parameters for conditions on the day after the war:

- (a) the Gaza Strip is free of terrorist groups,
- (b) the Gaza Strip is not under Hamas rule,
- (c) Israel must not remain in the Gaza Strip,
- (d) Palestinians must not be uprooted from Gaza,
- (e) The siege on Gaza, which deepened poverty for the general population while allowing Hamas to grow stronger, is not sustainable economically. The EU is ready to help with the Gaza's reconstruction.

Von der Leyen's position is similar to that of President Biden, embracing Israel while holding up international humanitarian law as a moral standard for the IDF's actions, and pressing Israel to plan for the day after, which will include a solution to the Palestinian' aspirations for statehood. This view envisions a separation between Israel and the Palestinians along with broader normalization with Saudi Arabia enabling regional economic prosperity. In this respect, the work on normalization between Israel and Saudi Arabi should continue.

Regarding the war itself, the EU's efforts are focused on three points:

- (1) Increasing humanitarian assistance. Since the outbreak of hostilities, the EU has quadrupled humanitarian aid to Gaza from €25 million to €100 million. The EU is also

working on expanding entry points through Rafah, and on a possible future maritime route from Cyprus.

(2) Releasing abductees.

(3) Avoiding escalation to a regional conflict, in cooperation with the US and Arab countries.

An Iranian Perspective

Dr. Gil Murciano, CEO, Mitvim

Growing public criticism in the Arab world of Hezbollah's limited involvement in the war hones Iran's dilemma between expanding the conflict and losing strategic deterrence assets, and refraining from intervention and losing regional prestige, and possibly even the trust of its proxies. This criticism surfaced following Hezbollah Secretary General Nasrallah's relatively lukewarm speech (Nov. 3). This widening gap may have encouraged Iran's allies – Hezbollah on the Lebanese border and the Houthis in Yemen - to escalate their attacks on Israel over the past week. Hezbollah did, indeed, claim responsibility for the first time for firing rockets and anti-tank missiles at Israel (allegedly in response to the killing of Lebanese civilians), and the Houthis prided themselves on launching drones and additional surface-to-surface missiles at Israel from Yemen.

At the same time, Iran is increasingly trying to position itself as an influential political factor in the developing regional crisis, focusing on existing or potential allies of Israel – Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and India. In this context, the Iranian foreign minister reportedly held talks with his Saudi and Egyptian counterparts ahead of the scheduled Nov. 12 summit of the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in Riyadh, which President Ra'isi was due to attend. At the same time, Iran announced its willingness to provide humanitarian aid to Gaza via Egypt and began diplomatic contacts to that end. In line with its attempt to portray itself as assisting on the issue of the abductees, Iran also held direct talks with the Thai government to promote the release of Thai nationals kidnapped by Hamas from Israel on Oct. 7.

A Jordanian Perspective

Former Knesset member Ksenia Svetlova, Policy Fellow, Mitvim

As Israel's military ground offensive in Gaza expands, so does the Jordanian royal family's concern about the spread of anti-Israel demonstrations throughout the Kingdom (similar to the large demonstrations following the mass-casualty Oct. 17 explosion at Gaza's al-Ahli al-Arabi Hospital). Jordan kept up its strong condemnation of Israel this past week, having already recalled its ambassador for consultations on Oct. 31. The recall is not a precedent - Jordan did so in 2019, after Israel arrested two Jordanian citizens visiting relatives in the Palestinian Authority, and in 2015 amid growing tensions on the Temple Mount/AI-Aqsa. Nonetheless, Israeli policy makers should be greatly concerned by this move.

A shipment of medical aid to Gaza, ordered by King Abdullah, was parachuted into Gaza by the Jordanian Air Force in coordination with Israel. The king reportedly considered flying the plane himself, but the mission was carried out by the military's chief of staff. The Jordanian leadership sought to send a clear message that the king was not indifferent to the suffering of the innocents in Gaza, and was doing everything in his power to come to their aid. A CNN interview with Queen Rania, herself of Palestinian descent, served as an additional expression of the Jordanian royal family's position on the war in Gaza.

At the same time, Jordan was faced with hundreds of Iran-backed Iraqi militia members who gathered along its border in the last week of October to protest Israel's attacks in Gaza, as well as hundreds of civilians demonstrating in Baghdad and demanding to cross Jordanian territory into Gaza. Senior Jordanian officials reacted strongly against this initiative, which illustrated the danger Iran poses to Jordan, too, with its proxies explicitly challenging Jordanian territorial integrity and sovereignty.

Given the expected lengthy duration of the military campaign to topple Hamas, Israel should do all it can to prevent violence with Palestinians in other arenas, especially Jerusalem. To that end, it must fully adhere to the status quo arrangements at the city's Muslim holy sites and rein in the hotheads in its government to avoid sparking riots in Jerusalem and the West Bank and further eroding relations with Jordan. Israel should continue to coordinate humanitarian efforts with Jordan to allow it to aid Gaza to the best of its ability to alleviate the suffering of civilians there.

A UAE Perspective

Dr. Moran Zaga, Policy and Research Fellow, Mitvim

The UAE continued to push for a ceasefire and a quick end to the war through diplomatic channels, including a direct channel with the US, and its status as a temporary member of the UN Security Council. The UAE has yet to adopt diplomatic measures against Israel, except for issuing a few statements of condemnation. Unlike Bahrain, where parliament vote to recall the ambassador to Israel and suspend economic and diplomatic ties, there is still no Emirati decision on changing the status of the embassy or ambassadors. At the same time, the UAE is increasing humanitarian aid to the Palestinians and working to establish a field hospital in the Gaza Strip. Five planeloads of medical equipment that have landed in Cairo are expected to enter the Gaza Strip through the Rafah crossing, in coordination with Israel.

President Mohammed bin Zayed hosted the Emir of Qatar and a top-level delegation at his palace on Nov. 9. The lavish welcome and formal statements attested to the UAE's desire to warm relations with Qatar and set aside the tensions of recent years between the two countries. This rapprochement will make it difficult for Israel to isolate Qatar and undermine its legitimacy once hostage release negotiations are over. At the same time, the UAE has participated in recent weeks in all regional efforts and meetings held in Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, adhering to its policy of seeking regional reconciliation without taking sides. It remains to be seen whether the Emirates can maintain this policy in the face of a prolonged Israeli-Hamas war.

A Turkish Perspective

Dr. Nimrod Goren, President of Mitvim and Senior Fellow for Israeli Affairs at the Middle East Institute

Turkey's decision to recall its ambassador from Tel Aviv marked another stage in the escalation of Erdoğan's confrontational and hostile approach towards Israel since the early days of the Israel-Hamas war. So far, Turkey has not formally downgraded its relations with Israel or announced a halt to significant cooperation. Moreover, Erdoğan has stated that ties with Israel cannot be severed completely, and that his intelligence chief Kalın is holding talks

with Israeli and Palestinian counterparts. In addition, Egypt, Turkey and Israel have reportedly set up a joint coordination mechanism for evacuating wounded Palestinians from the Gaza Strip.

However, as has been proven in past crises between the two countries, a return to the ambassadorial representation level after such recalls might take time. In the absence of ambassadors, the fabric of relations is damaged as is Israel's confidence in its ability to maintain a proper relationship with Erdoğan over time. Meanwhile, Erdoğan continued his relationship with Hamas, and the Palestinian media reported that he was scheduled to meet with Haniyeh in Turkey. The Turkish president also met with his Iranian counterpart at an economic summit in Uzbekistan, where he called for increased pressure on Israel to stop its attacks in the Gaza Strip.

US Secretary of State Blinken arrived in Turkey as part of his visit to the region, after skipping Ankara on his previous visit. Blinken discussed with Turkey's Foreign Minister Fidan the need to prevent the war from spilling over into other arenas and the importance of protecting civilians and providing humanitarian aid. The differences in positions between Turkey and the West regarding the war in Gaza, especially Erdoğan's position that refuses to define Hamas as a terrorist organization, overshadowed Blinken's visit and led to diplomatic tensions between Turkey and the European Union.

The EU's progress report issued earlier this month on Turkey's candidacy for membership stated that the country's support for the Hamas terrorist organization is in stark contrast to the EU's approach. The Turkish Foreign Ministry responded by attacking the EU, saying it stands on the wrong side of history and supports the massacre of civilians.

Thus, despite Erdoğan's forceful speeches – including at the emergency Arab-Islamic summit in Saudi Arabia – Turkey is once again excluded from major diplomatic moves taking place during the fighting in Gaza, especially on the issue of hostage release in which Egypt, Qatar and the US once again took the lead.

A Hellenic Alliance Perspective

Former Ambassador Michael Harari, Policy Fellow, Mitvim

The growing criticism in the international arena of the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip has not spared Israel's close friends. Greek Prime Minister Mitsotakis said in an interview aired Nov. 9 on the Politico podcast that its allies must mirror the "painful truth" to Israel about its "aggressive" military response. He stressed that while Israel has every right to defend itself, how it does so is of great importance. He added that he was speaking as a friend, noting that friends sometimes have to tell each other the hard truth. He added that it is also important to think about the day after and about a political solution.

Cyprus continued to present its initiative for a maritime corridor to the Gaza Strip, with President Christodoulides addressing this issue at length at a Nov. 9 conference hosted by France in Paris to discuss aid for Gaza. Mitsotakis said his country would be willing to participate in the operation of a maritime corridor.

The criticism, so far mainly from Athens, should not surprise Israel given the increasingly apparent destruction in the Gaza Strip. Advancing the idea of a future maritime corridor, more relevant to the day after, helps Greece and Cyprus illustrate the constructive role they

can play down the road. In doing so, they might be able to deflect, even slightly, the growing criticism at home.

Regarding energy issues, the Cypriot energy minister assessed that the war in Gaza and the harsh Turkish response enhance the prospects of an export alternative that Israel is examining, namely a pipeline to Cyprus and a liquefaction facility on the island.

A Lebanese Perspective

Eitan Ishai, Department of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies, Hebrew University

The fifth week of the war saw an escalation on the part of Hezbollah and growing intensity of its attacks on Israel, albeit without deviating from the red lines set by Israel for all-out war. This week was largely overshadowed by Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah's Nov. 3 speech, which prompted grave concerns among those opposed to expanding the conflict, along with high hopes among those who want to see Hezbollah launch an all-out war against Israel to aid Hamas.

Nasrallah expressed Hezbollah's support for the Palestinians and his organization's active and important contribution to the fighting against Israel, but his speech was also intended to allay fears that he would drag Lebanon into a war resulting in unprecedented destruction of his country. For now, he appeared to prefer internal Lebanese interests and his image as the "defender of Lebanon". In another speech on the occasion of Martyrs' Day, Nasrallah repeated the message that Hezbollah would continue to demonstrate solidarity with the resistance in Gaza, but did not announce plans to expand the conflict.

Fear of an expanded conflict is shared by Lebanese officials and civil society alike, including most Shiites, thousands of whom live in southern Lebanon and have already begun to leave their homes and move north for fear of a possible escalation.

On the other hand, Nasrallah came in for virulent criticism in the Arab world, accusing him of abandoning the Palestinians to their fate. It therefore seems that the relative escalation along the border was designed, inter alia, to ward off these harsh accusations.

This week's escalation included the launch of rockets, mortar shells, anti-tank missiles and drones at Israel. Hezbollah is increasingly using drones, partly due to Israel's impressive success in locating and thwarting most of the anti-tank squads that Hezbollah hoped would exact a high price from Israel. On Nov. 6, Hamas's branch in Lebanon also fired a rocket barrage at the Israeli suburbs north of Haifa, the farthest range since the beginning of the Gaza war.

In addition to increasing the quantity and frequency of its attacks, Hezbollah debut the use of Burqan rockets, short-range projectiles equipped with heavy warheads of 100-500 kg. Although the rockets fired at IDF outposts landed in open spaces without causing any damage, their very use sent a message that Hezbollah is ready for escalation. Indeed, the organization was quick to publicize the use of the new weapon.

Hezbollah has also been active abroad. Brazilian authorities, acting in cooperation with the Mossad, reportedly detained members of a Hezbollah squad planning to carry out attacks against Jewish and Israeli targets throughout the country. Hezbollah has sought in the past to strike Israeli or Jewish targets in regions far from the main arena of conflict. It is known to have extensive infrastructure in South America.

Since the start of the Gaza war, Hezbollah attacks have killed nine Israelis (six of them soldiers), as well as dozens of Hezbollah operatives. Despite the handful of Israeli civilian fatalities, Hezbollah appears to be trying to walk a fine line between all-out war and limited attacks on IDF targets along the border that have the added advantage, from Hezbollah's perspective, of diverting attention and assets from the main arena in Gaza. This reflects Hezbollah's dilemma and its need to maneuver between its desire not to enter an all-out war and drag all of Lebanon with it, alongside the need to deal with the accusations leveled at it by its critics and maintain its image as a leader of the resistance to Israel and the struggle for the liberation of Palestine. Therefore, even when Nasrallah tries to "stretch the rope," in his view, this is done according to the "rules of the game." On the one hand, Burqan rockets were fired for the first time, but on the other hand, activity continued to be demarcated to the known line of contact and to military targets only.

While Israelis might view some of Hezbollah's attacks as harsh belligerence, Hezbollah does not see itself as violating the rules of the "game" and strives for deniability where possible. Thus, the rocket fire toward Haifa was carried out by a small Palestinian faction in Lebanon identified with Hamas, albeit with Hezbollah's consent. Nasrallah also regards the attempted attack in Brazil as falling into a gray area – with the connection not too vague to prove Hezbollah's commitment to the struggle against Israel, but sufficiently removed to avoid plunging the sides into all-out war.

A Moroccan Perspective

Einat Levi, Policy Fellow, Mitvim

The recent series of regional and international events related to Gaza has provided greater insight into Morocco's official stance on the conflict. During an international humanitarian conference in Paris on November 9, Fouad Yazur, the Director General of the Moroccan Foreign Ministry, affirmed Morocco's support for peace and the restoration of stability in the region. At the sixth annual Paris Forum for Peace the following day, André Azoulay, senior advisor to King Mohammed VI, represented Morocco. On November 11, at the emergency summit of the Arab League and the OIC in Riyadh, Moroccan Prime Minister Aziz Akhannouch expressed strong support for the Palestinians. He called for an end to the war based on a two-state solution, emphasized the importance of strengthening Mahmoud Abbas and the Palestinian Authority as key partners for a political solution, and urged the establishment of viable regional security mechanisms in accordance with international law.

Beyond the agreements reached in Riyadh, the disagreements that emerged there reflected Morocco's complex domestic politics. Morocco, alongside the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Sudan, Mauritania, Jordan, Egypt, Djibouti, and other Arab and Muslim countries, objected to including certain anti-Israel demands in the conference summary. These demands ranged from preventing the passage of American military aid to Israel from US bases in the Middle East, freezing diplomatic and economic relations with Israel, threatening to use oil as leverage against Israel, banning the passage of flights to and from Israel over the airspace of Arab countries, and more. At the bottom line, Morocco and the other countries that opposed these clauses clearly chose not to harm their relations with Israel, despite the pressure exerted on them.

Anti-Israel discourse in Morocco escalated during the past week, with leaders like Abdelilah Benkirane of the Islamic Justice and Development Party criticizing Morocco's perceived insufficient support for Palestinians. Benkirane, however, refrained from directly addressing

Morocco's ties with Israel until the outbreak of the current war in Gaza. During a session of the Parliamentary Committee for Foreign Affairs and Security, Nabila Mounib, the leader of the Unified Socialist Party, questioned the Minister of Islamic Affairs about the management of four Islamic endowments by a Moroccan Jew. Based on the man's family name, Deri, she claimed he was related to influential Israeli Knesset member Aryeh Deri of the Shas party. The Israeli Deri denied the claim saying he did not even know the man. Nonetheless, her inference was an egregious attempt to score points by inciting hatred against Jews and undermining the historical and special connection that exists between Jews and Muslims in Morocco.

Two civic initiatives in Morocco and Israel were bright spots this past week. On Nov. 9, Mouna Izddine and Valerie Benjiu, Muslim and Jewish Moroccan women, issued a petition calling on authorities to take action against anti-Jewish and anti-Israel incitement, including demonstration slogans such as "Morocco is a free country, Jews out". The petition emphasized that Moroccan Jews are an inseparable part of the kingdom's civic and cultural fabric, and called on authorities to protect Morocco's multicultural character, stability and openness.

In Israel, the Hostages and Missing Families Forum, a civic movement that is dedicated to bring back the hostages held by Hamas in Gaza wrote a letter to the king of Morocco asking for his help and support for a full and reciprocal exchange of all hostages and prisoners on both sides ("all for all!"). They noted that dozens of Israelis of Moroccan descent were among the hostages, while stressing that they were appealing on behalf of all the families. The letter also emphasized the king's special status as chairman of the Jerusalem Conference and Morocco's historic role in promoting Arab-Israeli peace, as well as the great importance attributed to the value of "family unity," by both Islam and Judaism. This letter is a call for greater Moroccan involvement in the international efforts to secure the release of the hostages and eventually end the war. In this context, a Moroccan action can be also seen as an official gesture, in respect of the unique and warm civic relations between Morocco and its second largest diaspora in Israel.