



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.

Seventh week of the war

A Regional Perspective

Dr. Roei Kibrik, Director of Research, Mitvim

Nov. 24 marked the start of a new phase in the Gaza war with the entry into force of a deal for the release of Israeli hostages in return for a pause in IDF attacks. The lull provided Hamas and Israel with time to regroup and plan their next military maneuvers, while allowing other involved parties to try to advance political moves.

The Arab countries of the region devoted the time to efforts to extend the temporary ceasefire in order to launch a broad political process based on the two-state solution and the Arab Peace Initiative. These guidelines underpinned the talks among Arab leaders and were also presented to UN Security Council representatives by a joint delegation of the Arab League and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. The same guidelines were also adopted to a large extent by the United States and Western countries, as presented in the speeches of various leaders, although President Biden's emphasis remained on US support for Israeli military action to topple Hamas as long as it is proportionate and serves to shape the day after.

Along with their diplomatic efforts, Arab states focused on advancing stepped up humanitarian aid through which they demonstrated their commitment to the Palestinian cause. Concern over humanitarian aid and pressure on Israel to allow it has also been America's way of demonstrating its commitment to the liberal world order it leads.

In mediating the hostage release negotiations, Qatar is now reaping its investments over the years in Gaza and Hamas. It has become the sole go-between for effective communications with Hamas, and therefore the main port of call for the United States, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Israel and others. From a country besieged and boycotted by its neighbors, Qatar has become a major and confident player. Egypt's geographical location and control of the Rafah

crossing also provided it with an opportunity to position itself as a significant player, both in terms of humanitarian aid for Gaza and of facilitating the release of hostages.

The countries of the region, as well as Europe and the United States, continued to focus on efforts to prevent the war from spilling over to other fronts, especially Lebanon, the West Bank and the Red Sea. In Lebanon, unwritten rules were formulated defining the nature and threshold of mutual aggression that stops short of all-out war. Hezbollah also adhered to the temporary lull achieved for Gaza. The United States, with its naval attack groups, provided a deterrent in this arena. The situation in the West Bank continued to deteriorate due to the severe economic damage caused by its disconnection from the Israeli economy, the political damage caused by the perceived Hamas success achieved through terrorism, and the lack of legitimacy for Mahmoud Abbas and his rule. Settler violence fueled tensions, posing further risk of an additional front and prompting countries of the region and beyond to apply pressure on the Israeli government to deal with extremist settlers.

Unlike Hezbollah, the Houthis did not adhere to the Israel-Hamas deal, continuing their missile and drone attacks targeting Israel and intensifying the threat to international shipping. Its naval attacks in the Red and Arabia Seas have fueled concerns over the safety of global trade and over the expansion of the war beyond Gaza's borders. In facing the threat of the Houthis (and Iran), Israel enjoys strong backing from the countries of the region and the West.

A US Perspective

Nadav Tamir, J Street, Mitvim Board Member

Senior Biden Administration officials insisted that the temporary ceasefire for the release of hostages would not put an end to the fighting against Hamas, underscoring the position articulated by the president since Oct. 7 that Hamas could not be allowed to retain control of the Gaza Strip. However, top US officials argued that the hostages release and the desire to bring about additional ones may curb IDF activity in the southern part of the Gaza Strip once fighting will have resumed. Administration officials also said that while the US would not pressure Israel to agree to a permanent ceasefire, it is increasingly concerned about Israel's plans for southern Gaza.

It was the United States, much more than Israel, that pushed for the hostages deal with Hamas. President Biden helped cement the deal through the CIA, with the help of the Qataris, displaying unusual personal involvement. The White House goal was to take advantage of the lull in fighting to obtain the release of additional hostages beyond the initial 50 which the two sides agreed upon. Although the US has openly opposed a "comprehensive ceasefire" on the grounds that it would leave Hamas in charge, demanding only "humanitarian pauses," it will find it difficult to justify a resumption of fighting if faced with the possibility of another deal. In other words, while the US welcomed the ceasefire-for-hostages deal, its limited time span was also a drawback in terms of the goal of releasing as many hostages as possible at this point.

These goals, as articulated by top administration officials from the onset of the war, included the goal to prevent the spread of the fighting into direct and full confrontations between Israel and Hezbollah, which is backed by Iran. The temporary cessation of the fighting did not eliminate this goal; if anything, it highlighted the potential for escalation once fighting resumed and the risk to Biden's domestic and international standing, given his continued staunch support for Israel.

Briefly interrupting his Thanksgiving holiday in Nantucket, Biden outlined his vision for the temporary ceasefire: "We expect more hostages to be released tomorrow and more the day after and more the day after that. Over the next few days, we expect that dozens of hostages will be returned to their families. We also remember all those who are still being held and renew our commitment to work for their release as well," he said. Asked whether he expected Hamas to uphold the deal, Biden said, "I don't trust Hamas to do anything right. I only trust Hamas to respond to pressure." His comments appear to suggest that the US would back surgical IDF operations and a limited fighting force on the ground in Gaza to complete the mission, but would oppose a comprehensive operation in the southern Gaza Strip and the occupation of Khan Yunis or Rafah, where most of the Hamas leadership and Israeli hostages are believed to be.

It therefore follows that the United States will demand that Israel redefine its ultimate goal of "toppling Hamas." The United States has already been demanding answers from Israel about the "day after" the fighting, making clear that it opposed any extended IDF presence in the enclave and that it prefers that the Palestinian Authority takes control over the Gaza strip, as a prelude to a long-term two-state solution. The growing gaps between the Biden Administration's positions and those of the Israeli government could lead to confrontation.

An Egyptian Perspective

Prof. Elie Podeh, Hebrew University, Mitvim Board Member

Egypt continued to play a central role in the war on three main levels. First, in negotiating the exchange of Israeli and Palestinian prisoners. Egypt's role in the secret negotiations is not clear enough, but Hamas has repeatedly thanked both Qatar and Egypt for their important role. The Egyptian media also emphasized Egypt's part, alongside that of Qatar and the United States, in the negotiations. The fact that the Israeli abductees are transferred through the Egyptian Rafah crossing allows Egypt to highlight its role and contribution. On the second level, Egypt emphasizes its contribution to the war with regard to the humanitarian aid passing through Rafah. Following the temporary ceasefire agreement, about 200 trucks passed through the crossing every day, taking advantage of Egypt's geographical proximity to emphasize its humanitarian contribution to the war.

Finally, Egypt also continued to invest considerable diplomatic efforts to promote a short-term ceasefire and a solution to the Palestinian problem in the long term. On Nov. 22, President el-Sisi met with Jordan's King Abdullah. The next day, Foreign Secretary Sameh Shoukry met with the new British Foreign Secretary David Cameron. Biden also spoke with el-Sisi (23.11) and thanked him for Egypt's contribution as well as his "leadership and partnership." In this conversation, the American president also expressed his opposition to the uprooting of Palestinians from Gaza, a position that el-Sisi takes pains to repeat over and over again in all his statements.

The Egyptian foreign minister also took part in meetings of the Ministerial Committee formed by last month's Joint Arab-Islamic Summit, alongside the foreign ministers of Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Palestine, Turkey, Indonesia, Nigeria, and the chairman of the Arab League. The group has traveled, inter alia, to France, the UK, China and Russia to promote a ceasefire.

El-Sisi's insistence on highlighting his country's role stems both from a measure of competition with Qatar and its central role, and a desire to score points ahead of the presidential elections scheduled for the first half of December. Although his re-election is not in doubt, el-Sisi has an interest in projecting an image of authority and leadership.

A European Perspective

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

Following meetings in the Middle East during the sixth week of the war, the EU's High Representative for Common Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, highlighted the need for urgent assistance to alleviate the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip. He presented the two-state solution as the only path which would guarantee security and peace for Israel and the Palestinians. Sharing these conclusions with the European Parliament (22.11), Borrell noted that while the EU had often discussed the two-state solution for the past 30 years, it had done little to achieve it. He therefore intends to present the Foreign Affairs Council in mid-December with a resolution on the EU's commitment to the two-state solution. Its exact wording, details and timing are likely to be the subject of debate within the Council. Given the Israeli government's opposition to such a statement, some member states are likely to try to soften and even veto the wording of a resolution that Israel deems too far-reaching.

On a visit to Israel (24.11), Britain's new and experienced foreign minister David Cameron did not explicitly mention the two-state solution, but did say, "we are working on a long-term political solution to this crisis." During his visit to the Palestinian Authority, he sounded a warning about settler violence in the West Bank. Biden has issued a similar warning, with the US said to be considering withholding visas from extremist settlers. Cameron added that he had spoken to his colleagues in the Palestinian Authority about training, capacity building and other help.

Spain's prime minister Sanchez formed a new left-wing government last week and pledged in his coalition agreements to recognize a Palestinian state. Spain holds the presidency of the Council of the European Union until the end of December, and it is unlikely to be able and promote such a move during the Gaza war. Belgium assumes the six-month Council presidency in January, and the joint visit of the Spanish and Belgian prime ministers to Israel and the Rafah Crossing (24.11) could suggest a passing of the baton on this issue.

It would take just one EU member state to veto the recognition of a Palestinian state, with Hungary, Austria, and the Czech Republic likely candidates. Therefore, such a resolution is more likely at a national rather than EU level. If the Spanish government recognizes a Palestinian state, Belgium, Malta, and other EU members may join in, creating a political drift that the Israeli government will find difficult to stem (certainly the Netanyahu government, which refuses to discuss the idea and even to set a political objective for the war).

Sanchez is also promoting an international peace conference, a measure supported by the European Council as well as the Arab League and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. Sanchez said establishing a Palestinian state in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem was the appropriate solution. The idea for such a conference was opposed by the United States. Sanchez proposed the Nov. 27-28 Union for the Mediterranean (UFM) foreign ministers' summit as an ideal venue to launch a dialogue between Israel's foreign minister and his Palestinian counterpart. Israel did not attend the event.

The election victory (22.11) by Geert Wilders, head of the Dutch far-right PVV party that promotes anti-Muslim, anti-immigration and anti-European positions, sent shockwaves through Europe. Among his controversial positions, Wilders has stated that Jordan is Palestine and called for the Palestinians to move there. It is unclear to what extent, if any,

Wilders' triumph was influenced by the Hamas terrorist attacks on Israel and the war in Gaza, but the extreme and Islamophobic right in Europe clearly sees an "opportunity" in these developments. That is why Marine Le Pen marched in Paris (12.11) against anti-Semitism, more as a display of Islamophobia than of true solidarity with the Jews. The rise of Germany's far-right AFD party also raises concern among moderate centrist European politicians about the influence of the Hamas-Israel war on European politics.

A Saudi Arabian Perspective

Shiri Fein-Grossman, Forum Dvorah

The ministerial committee in charge of the extraordinary joint Arab-Islamic summit, headed by Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al-Saud, visited the capitals of the Security Council permanent members. The first stop was Beijing, possibly in an attempt to send a message to the United States, or to appease China following visits by its senior officials to Riyadh and Washington in recent weeks. According to a Saudi foreign ministry announcement, the committee also included the foreign ministers of Jordan, Egypt, Qatar, Turkey, Indonesia, Nigeria, the Palestinian Authority, as well as the secretaries general of the Arab League and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. The stated purpose of the visits to Beijing, Moscow, London and Paris was to pressure the permanent Security Council members to advance a ceasefire. With the implementation of the hostages-for-ceasefire deal, the group amended its message to call for a permanent ceasefire, not a temporary one. Upon his return home, the Saudi foreign minister spoke with his American counterpart Secretary Blinken.

Even before the tour, the Saudi foreign minister met with the EU's foreign minister Borrell on the sidelines of the Manama Dialogue in Bahrain. Concurrently with the tour, virtual meetings were held of the G20 and BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) to which Saudi Arabia was recently invited, along with five other countries (Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Ethiopia, Argentina, and Iran). The BRICS virtual summit was convened in an extraordinary special session in light of the war in Gaza. Saudi Arabia was represented by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, who according to a report in Arab News said "there is no way to achieve security and stability in Palestine except through the implementation of international decisions related to a two-state solution", as well as demanded for "an immediate halt to Israeli military operations in Gaza". The other leaders strongly condemned Israel and accused it of war crimes. This flurry of diplomatic activity has not advanced significant political steps.

Saudi media, meanwhile, [reported](#) that Iran helped Hamas plan the Oct. 7 attack in order to scuttle normalization between Saudi Arabia and Israel, and then abandoned Hamas to fight alone. At the same time, Saudi Arabia along with other Arab countries continued providing humanitarian aid to Gaza, sending more than 20 cargo planes and two cargo ships with thousands of tons of equipment.

A Jordanian Perspective

Prof. Ronen Yitzhak, Western Galilee Academic College

King Abdullah, Prime Minister Bisher Khasawneh, and Foreign Minister Ayman Al-Safadi engaged in intensive lobbying for a ceasefire and increased humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip. Al-Safadi participated (20.11) in a summit of Arab and Muslim foreign ministers in China, which called for an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and increased humanitarian

aid. After meeting with the foreign ministers of Slovenia and Portugal (25.11), Al-Safadi said the pause in fighting implemented the day before "is a step to ensure the end of the war."

King Abdullah visited Egypt briefly (22.11) to meet with President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi. The leaders condemned the IDF's actions in the Gaza Strip and rejected Israel's "collective punishment" of its residents. They called for a political solution to end the violence and reiterated their opposition to the uprooting of Palestinians from their land. In an interview (21.11) on Al-Arabiya Television, Khasawneh stressed the urgent need for a political process, attacked Israel for the crimes he accused it of committing in Gaza, and condemned it for preventing a renewed political process in the Middle East. He hinted at the risk to his country's peace agreement with Israel and emphasized that the expulsion of Palestinians from the Gaza Strip was a "red line" which Jordan would "use all means" to prevent.

His remarks require two clarifications. First, the peace agreement between the countries is not in any danger. Although its abrogation is wishful thinking on the part of many in Jordan, the Jordanian government is not interested in such a move, viewing the peace with Israel as a guarantee of its stability and security. Second, the expulsion of Palestinians from Gaza is a real concern in Jordan, which fears a precedent for the displacement of Palestinians from the West Bank and their deportation to Jordan. Such a "red line" could indeed risk the peace agreement between the countries.

Jordanian Crown Prince Hussein bin Abdullah flew to el-Arish (20.11) to oversee preparations for the opening of a Jordanian field hospital in Khan Younis, which Israel has approved in order to ease the medical crisis in Gaza. This follows the injury of seven staff members of a Jordanian field hospital in southwestern Gaza City during Israeli military activity in the area (15.11), which King Abdullah condemned as a "heinous crime" committed by Israel. Jordan is also opening a hospital in Nablus these days, the first in a series of Jordanian hospitals and possibly additional civilian facilities throughout the West Bank designed to deepen its involvement in the area.

In popular solidarity with the residents of Gaza, the Jordanian government, in cooperation with the United Nations Children's International Emergency Fund (UNICEF), provided humanitarian aid to the children of Gaza (25.11). The Jordanian army transferred the airborne supplies to el-Arish, from where the Egyptian Red Crescent was tasked with distributing it to the children of the enclave. In the meantime, the official Hashemite charitable organization continued to raise funds for Gaza's residents, calling on Jordanians to donate cash or blankets, tents, water, food and clothing.

A Red Sea Perspective

Dr. Moshe Terdiman, guest contributor, Mitvim

Developments in the Red Sea arena are of grave concern for countries of the region and beyond, for three main reasons. **The first** is the Houthis' launch of cruise missiles, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and surface-to-surface missiles at Israel. These began on Oct. 19, when the US military announced that one of its destroyers in the Red Sea had intercepted cruise missiles and drones directed at Israel. The ensuing attacks have been intercepted by American ships, Saudi Arabia, the Israeli Air Force and Israeli air defenses. A small number of drones and cruise missiles fell in the Sinai (Taba and Nuweiba) as well as Jordanian territory.

The second concern is the threat to Red Sea shipping by Israel and other countries. The Houthis have repeatedly threatened (on their Telegram channels) to attack Israeli-flagged

ships, ships operated by Israeli companies, and Israeli-owned ships. They have also warned merchant seamen to stay away from work on Israeli ships. On Nov. 19, the Houthis hijacked the *Galaxy Leader*, which they claimed was an Israeli cargo vessel. The British-owned ship operated by a Japanese company with 25 crew members on board was released (24.11) at the start of the humanitarian pause in Gaza. At the same time (23.11 and 24.11), an Israeli cargo ship owned by Israeli shipping magnate Idan Ofer, the *CMA CGM Symi* sailing under a Maltese flag, was attacked in the Arabian Sea by an Iranian *Shahed-136* UAV, sustaining damage but no casualties. The hijacking of the *Galaxy Leader* and the attack on the *Symi* marked the opening of another front against Israel, which includes both the Red Sea and the western Indian Ocean. In a further development of this joint Iranian-Houthi war at sea, gunmen boarded the *Central Park* in the Gulf of Aden (26.11). The chemical-carrying tanker, flying a Liberian flag, is operated by *Zodiac*, a UK-based shipping company owned by Israeli billionaire Eyal Ofer. The US Navy foiled the hijacking. Iran was probably behind this attack since the Houthis do not control the Yemeni coast bordering the Gulf of Aden.

The third concern is the threat to US forces deployed in the Red Sea. On Nov. 2, Houthi Political Bureau member Mohammed Ali al-Houthi threatened US aircraft carriers in the Red Sea, saying they were within range of his organization's missiles. The next day, Mohammed al-Bakhiti, a member of the Houthi political bureau, said, "We are glad that the US Navy is approaching our shores because that way we will be able to attack it." The Houthis made good on their threats (8.11), shooting down an American MQ9 drone that it said was flying in its airspace.

It is important to note in this context that the United States tried to dissuade the Houthis from joining the fighting alongside the resistance axis against Israel. According to a report (16.11) in Hamas-affiliated Lebanese media, sources in Yemen reported that the United States had presented the Houthis with several inducements in return for sitting out the fighting, including the payment of salaries in Sanaa, a lifting of the naval blockade, and opening the international airport to all countries. The Houthi leader reportedly refused the offers. Following the hijacking of the *Galaxy Leader*, the Biden Administration is exploring the return of the Houthis to the list of terrorist organizations, from which it removed them in 2021 to facilitate the transfer of humanitarian aid to Yemen.

On the other side of the Red Sea, Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud said in an interview (14.11) with Saudi media that his country recognizes Israel's right to exist as a state while allowing the Palestinians to exist as a state within the framework of a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This extraordinary statement followed Somali Prime Minister Hamza Abdi's controversial statement (2.11) supporting Hamas, declaring his intention to provide it with aid, rejecting its designation as a terrorist organization, and scolding Western countries for their alleged silence on the war in Gaza. He also called for fighting Israel just as the Somali government is fighting the *Al-Shabab* terrorist organization, prompting questions in Western countries about Somalia's position on terrorism.

Djibouti, for its part, joined a group of countries that submitted a request (19.11) to the International Criminal Court in The Hague to investigate the situation in Israel, Gaza and the Palestinian Authority. Djibouti also serves as a base for a number of countries to monitor developments in the Gaza war and mount rescue missions for their citizens from Israel. For example, three Japanese military planes took off from Japan to Djibouti on Oct. 14 in preparation for removing Japanese citizens from Israel if they could not leave on a commercial flight from Tel Aviv to Dubai.

A Lebanese Perspective

Eitan Ishai, Hebrew University, guest contributor Mitvim

As part of its attempt to save the Hamas regime in Gaza, Hezbollah, in cooperation and coordination with the Iranians, continued to implement a policy of attrition towards Israel. Its purpose is to put pressure on the Americans and their allies to impose a ceasefire on Israel in Gaza, removing the threat of a regional war feared by both Hezbollah and Iran. In the days leading up to the Israel-Hamas ceasefire deal, Hezbollah and Palestinian organizations continued to launch rockets, mortar shells, anti-tank missiles and drones at Israel's north, stopping just below the threshold of all-out war.

Israel, for its part, continued its aggressive response. Hezbollah admitted to the deaths of 84 of its operatives, but that number is believed to have topped 100. Israel also assassinated (22.11) Sarraj Raed, a Radwan Force commander and the son of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese parliament, as well as the deputy commander of Hamas' military wing in Lebanon, Khalil Kharaz, the day before.

The assassination prompted intensified Hezbollah response, including the firing of two heavy-warhead Burqan missiles at Biranit where the IDF's Galilee Division is headquartered. Although there were no casualties, the missiles caused extensive damage to the outpost, and Hezbollah propaganda highlighted the images to deflect accusations that it was not doing enough to help the Palestinians. Israel, for its part, also took to the media battlefield, with an IDF spokesperson mocking Hezbollah in Arabic after about 20 rockets it launched towards Israel landed in Lebanese territory and damaged several villages.

Hezbollah declared that it would be bound by the ceasefire in Gaza, and pledged that it would stop hostilities as long as Israel did so, but Nasrallah was expected to renew attacks on Israel once fighting resumed in Gaza, although he would prefer not to do so.

Public opinion in Lebanon, for the most part, continued to strongly oppose war with Israel, as reflected in op-eds in the Lebanese press attacking Hezbollah, underscoring the damage its policy has already caused, and warning of the high price Lebanon may pay if the Shiite organization does not cease its hostilities. One interesting accusation leveled at Hezbollah pointed out that contrary to its claims that it serves as a deterrent against Israeli attack on Lebanon, it is playing into Israel's hands and encouraging it to attack. If Hezbollah drags Israel into war, Israel will not only wreak destruction on Lebanon, but will also gain legitimacy and international support for doing so, the critics argued.

The media have also focused on the severe economic damage caused by the war. In addition to the fact that tens of thousands of residents of southern Lebanon have left their homes and moved north, the intense exchanges of fire along the border have caused heavy damage to fields and farms. The olive harvest, one of the main sectors of the southern economy, was severely damaged, along with other crops that were almost completely destroyed as a result of the fighting or the growers' inability to harvest them. Tourism has also been significantly undermined after an encouraging increase last summer. With Christmas and the New Year in the offing, there is concern in Lebanon that continued fighting will mean irreparable damage to the tourist season.

Lebanon marked its 80th Independence Day this week, with many Lebanese describing the festivities as a mockery given that their country seems to be anything but independent.

A Moroccan Perspective

Einat Levi, Policy Fellow, Mitvim

Foreign media reported this week (23.11) that Moroccan King Mohammed VI would visit Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. The visit, which was timed for the beginning of the Israel-Hamas ceasefire, was expected to deal with the Gaza war and Morocco's relations with these two countries, but was postponed. At the same time, humanitarian aid from Morocco to the Gaza Strip continued, with two Moroccan army planes landing at el-Arish airport (22.11) bringing 25 tons of food, water and medical equipment.

This past week marked a turning point in Moroccan public opinion with the denunciation of Hamas and one of its top leaders Khaled Mashaal, who caused an uproar at a solidarity meeting (19.11) with Palestine hosted by the Movement for Unity and Reform linked to the Islamic Justice and Development Party. Addressing participants at the National Theater in Rabat, Mashaal urged the Moroccan people to oppose their country's peace agreement with Israel, calling it "a mistake that must be corrected" and arguing that that severing relations with Israel "would be real support for Palestine which will create pressure on Israel and its allies." Mashaal's direct appeal to the Moroccan people to oppose the king's policy was perceived as an attempt to undermine the monarch's relationship with his people, the stability of the kingdom, and solidarity, which is one of Morocco's most prized values. The reactions were not long in coming, and social networks condemned Hamas and even compared him to French President Macron, who in the wake of the September 2023 earthquake addressed the Moroccan people directly after Morocco refused to accept aid from France. The Justice and Development Party and its leader Bankirane were also condemned for providing Mashaal with the stage that generated such embarrassment.

Nonetheless, expressions of opposition to ties with Israel and support for the Palestinians continued in the public arena. An online petition (22.11) signed by various parties, including former ministers, academics, writers, lawyers, and others, called on authorities to close the liaison offices in Rabat and Tel Aviv, claiming that this connection encourages Israeli aggression against the Palestinians. Marches were organized (26.11) in support of the Palestinians in Tangier and Casablanca, attended by tens of thousands. "The people want to overthrow normalization," "Marching to Jerusalem, martyrs by the millions" and "The people want to liberate Palestine" were some of the slogans expressed by protesters. In addition, a campaign was recently launched to boycott Israeli products, as well as foreign food chains, companies and restaurants that support Israel, including Starbucks, McDonald's, Burger King, Coca-Cola, Carrefour and Puma. However, to the chagrin of the boycotters, the chains launched attractive promotions that attracted even more customers than usual.

The spotlight in Morocco was also directed at the delays in the evacuation of Moroccan citizens in Gaza. According to the Moroccan embassy in Ramallah, 797 Moroccan citizens have asked to be evacuated and while some have managed to leave, others are in danger due to the ongoing war. Families on the evacuation lists arrived in the Rafah crossing and waited for days for permission to cross into Egypt, risking their lives, but were forced to return into Gaza. Israel could assist with this humanitarian issue to the extent possible within the framework of the existing mechanisms for evacuating citizens of foreign countries during the fighting.