Palestine.

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Though a positive step, a ceasefire does not equal "peace."



After 11 days of severely lopsided violence, Israel and Hamas called a ceasefire beginning last week on Friday. The violence comes after 248 people, including 66 children, were killed in Gaza. Thousands more lost their homes. Gaza lost its COVID-19 testing laboratory and several of its top doctors—which public health experts fear will catalyze another wave of COVID-1901055-2/fulltext).

Less violence is always a good thing—but we cannot mistake less violence for peace. Indeed, on the very first day of ceasefire, Israeli police raided the Al-Aqsa mosque, the exact same act of aggression that kicked off the violence two weeks prior. Those same officers used live rounds against unarmed protestors in communities across the West Bank. According to the Red Crescent, 97 Palestinians were injured. No, a ceasefire is not the same as peace.

Israel is destroying the two-state solution it claims to support.

Peace isn't just the end of violence, peace must also preclude future violence. Indeed, the implied consensus framework for peace—and the one that people like President Biden publicly proclaim despite obvious evidence that it is being hijacked—has usually rested on the notion of a "two-state solution." That means a Palestinian separate from Israel on land

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currently held or occupied by Israel. For decades, the borders and rights afforded such a Palestinian state have been the subject of intense negotiation. But by stalling these negotiations, and using that time to perpetuate a campaign of Palestinian displacement and settlement on the land that is supposed to become a Palestinian state, Israeli nationalist extremists have deliberately used the sceptre of a two-state solution to actively destroy the very solution they say they support.

Throughout Benjamin Netanyahu's 12 years in power he has done just that. He has feigned public support for a two-state solution while stalling negotiations and deliberately—and quietly—executing a campaign of ethnic cleansing from the areas that would supposedly become the Palestinian state. He has facilitated the establishment of Israeli settlements in occupied Palestinian territory and displaced Palestinians from it, all in contravention to international law.

Last summer, Netanyahu's government announced plans to annex parts of the West Bank. Indeed, the plan was so egregious, even the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC)—Israel's staunchest ally—couldn't back it. Though the government technically backed off the plan in its treaty with the UAE, its *de facto* annexation through settlements continues.

Netanyahu's government couldn't care less about the two-state solution—and President Biden knows it. Or at least he should. Just as then-Vice President Biden was due to visit Israel in 2010 to restart peace talks, Netanyahu's government approved 1,600 new settlement units in East Jerusalem—occupied Palestinian territory—deliberately thumbing their nose at the Obama administration. This year, just as President-elect Biden was due to take office, Netanyahu's government approved 800 more settlement units in the West Bank.

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Now Netanyahu is doubling down. Currently facing corruption charges, he must stay in power to stay out of jail. And despite four elections in two years, he's been unable to form a stable government. The ultra-nationalist minority intent on expelling the Palestinians is critical to any potential governing coalition he could form. So now, he's doing all he can to pull national policy in that direction. The past two weeks of conflict have been Netanyahu's gamble that initiating a conflict by deliberately provoking Palestinians in Jerusalem and then "projecting strength" in Gaza could build just enough support in the upcoming historic fifth election to keep himself in power—and out of jail.

Meanwhile, the Biden's administration continues to "support a two-state solution"—though their proclamations of "unwavering" support for Israel in the face of ethnic displacement and the construction of settlements proves that support exists only for one of the two states.

The one-state dilemma.

There is, of course, an alternative to the two-state solution—a one-state solution, which would grant Palestinians full rights in the current Israeli state. But the thing Israeli hardliners fear more than a Palestinian state is Palestinian suffrage. Though figures are hard to certify, estimates suggest that there are already more Palestinians in Israel and the occupied territories than there are Jews.

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On the one hand, giving them equal rights would require full suffrage—and that would mean handing them democratic power. On the other, annexing the occupied territories while denying them suffrage would mean formally embracing the apartheid that is the *de facto* status quo.

Instead, Israel is feigning support for a two-state solution while executing a deliberate campaign of settlements on land that would be part of the Palestinian state. Israel is trying to have its cake and eat it too. It is sustaining apartheid in all but name, and avoids having to give Palestinians any land or any rights.

And President Biden's willful neglect of this is tantamount to backing it. When President Biden claims "unwavering" support for Israel, he is, indeed, offering unwavering support to this status quo, which rests on the dehumanization of the Palestinian people who get neither rights or land. Claiming to support a two-state solution while supporting a regime that is actively destroying it isn't supporting a two-state solution, it's perpetuating a two-tiered society—freedom and democracy for Israelis, occupation and apartheid for Palestinians.

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