

Call a ceasefire!

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The long war in Ukraine has been put quietly to one side by the press, public media and politicians even though a relentless battle continues. That conflict precipitated by a much larger country invading a smaller has become a stalemate war of attrition and gone off the front pages.

Ukraine has been eclipsed by the new conflict started by the horrendous and brutal attack by Hamas into Israel with the death of over 1400 innocent civilians, old and young and the taking of over 200 hostages. In turn it is hardly necessary to rehearse the consequent intense reprisals that have seen ceaseless bombing and military incursion into Gaza (often described as the largest open-air prison in the world) by Israel as it executes its intention to destroy Hamas.

This brutal saga will likely continue until the various Western nations, principally the United States with, amongst others, the U.K. on its coat tails, decide it must stop ... if they are not too late by then.

In the meantime we can be rightly exasperated by political prevarication over increasingly loud calls for a ceasefireⁱ. Semantic contortions over whether the current situation should be allowed to continue prevail. These are based on distinctions over 'rights to reprisal', recognition or not of 'designated terrorist organisations', 'the risk of allowing Hamas to regroup' and more. Such obfuscation only delays any positive moves towards peace and extends the misery of thousands of innocents on both side of the conflict. Indeed any delay in a ceasefire increases the risk of a much wider conflict.ⁱⁱ

As this is being written bombs are raining down, the majority onto the people of Gaza, which is rapidly being turned into a wasteland. There are also missiles being fired indiscriminately into Israel and in both cases innocent children and people are in a hell on earth in fear of their lives.

Meanwhile, the churches have been remarkable silent or are at best joining with those politicians who play with words suggesting 'humanitarian corridors' or a 'pause' in the fighting. In turn, Church of England bishops have produced a highly nuanced response that no one will heedⁱⁱⁱ but not much else is evident. This response isn't

good enough. A ceasefire (by any name) followed by negotiation is the best and only realistic solution.

In the absence of a ceasefire ironically one of the only beneficiaries will be one Vladimir Putin whose faltering cause has been reinvigorated by rapidly emerging new and terrifying alliances.

Nicholas Henderson
5th November 2023

ⁱ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/oct/24/us-no-gaza-ceasefire-amas-hostages>

ⁱⁱ <https://time.com/6331589/israel-hezbollah-fire-strikes-lebanon-border/>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.churchofengland.org/media-and-news/press-releases/statement-house-bishops-war-gaza>