



U.K., France and Canada warn of 'concrete' steps over war in Gaza

Rawan Suleiman, Liza Rozovsky and Bar Peleg

Leaders of the U.K., France, and Canada issued a joint statement Monday sharply criticizing Israel's actions in Gaza and its settlement expansion in the West Bank, warning that targeted sanctions and other concrete measures could follow.

In the statement, they wrote that they "strongly oppose the expansion of Israel's military operations in Gaza," and called on Israel to stop its operations and work with the UN to restore delivery of humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip. The three leaders wrote that the Israeli government's "denial of essential humanitarian assistance" to Gaza civilians risks breaching international law.

"Israel suffered a heinous attack on October 7. We have always supported Israel's right to defend Israelis against terrorism," they wrote. "But this escalation is wholly disproportionate."

"We will not stand by while the Netanyahu government pursues these egregious actions," they stated. "If Israel does not cease the renewed military offensive and lift its restrictions on humanitarian aid, we will take further concrete actions in response."

The leaders of U.K., France and Canada stated their support of the efforts led by the U.S., Qatar and Egypt to secure an immediate cease-fire in Gaza.

The Washington Post reported on Monday that a person familiar with the discussions taking place in Israel's cabinet said that pressure



A wounded girl receiving treatment at Al-Awda Hospital at the Nuseirat refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip, after an Israeli attack, Sunday.

Eyad Baba/AFP

exerted by U.S. President Donald Trump on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has been increasing in recent days.

According to the report, the source said that "Trump's people are letting Israel know, 'We will abandon you if you do not end this war.'"

Also Monday, the IDF issued an immediate evacuation order to residents in several areas in northern Gaza, including Khan Yunis, Abasan al-Kabira and Bani Suheila, stating that it would begin "an unprecedented attack to eliminate the capacities of terror

groups in this area."

The statement by Avichay Adraee, the IDF Spokesperson in Arabic, ordered residents to evacuate west towards al-Mawasi area, and designated all of Khan Yunis Governate as a "dangerous fighting zone."

The army has not operated

expansively on the ground in Khan Yunis since April 2024.

The military announced on Monday that its air force struck more than 160 targets across Gaza over the previous 24 hours. The Israel Air Force struck dozens of targets in Khan Yunis in northern Gaza, including Nasser

Hospital and a school for displaced children near the hospital, according to Palestinian media reports. These reports say six were killed.

An Israeli force dressed in women's clothing raided the Khan Yunis home of a

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Criminal stupidity and sheer incompetence

Even the most ardent supporters of Israel's right-wing government had to concede on Monday that this band of bunglers would make even the Fools of Chelm blush. The government's handling of humanitarian aid to Gaza has been a textbook case of charlatanism colliding with sheer incompetence: zero strategy resulting in maximum damage, followed by a grand retreat marked by childish videos and statements from our so-called policymakers.

Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich had vowed less than a month ago, "Over my dead body will another grain of humanitarian aid enter Gaza." Yet on Monday, he bent over backward to justify why aid now had to be allowed in.

Or take Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who, just two and a half months ago, halted all aid to Gaza, arguing that "Hamas doesn't agree to the Witkoff cease-fire framework and will attack." On Monday, however, Netanyahu declared that there was no choice but to allow aid in, citing fears of mass starvation and claiming that "pro-Israel U.S. senators" were pressuring him to do so.

How many times did Netanyahu run circles around the Biden administration and Democratic lawmakers who had asked him to do the same? How proudly he boasted that sometimes a prime minister "must say 'no,' even to our U.S. allies."

Israeli politics has never been known for its sophistication, yet there were times when prime ministers kept it from interfering in policy de-

cisions and national security matters. Under Netanyahu, especially in recent years, politics, coalition dynamics and personal survival have taken precedence – everything else comes second. Blindly, he rushed headfirst into a political catastrophe because ministers Smotrich and Ben-Gvir demand it and threaten to dissolve the government.

The decision to halt humanitarian aid to Gaza was made by Israel's security cabinet on March 2, based on the assumption that the

PM soothes right's fears

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new U.S. administration would be indifferent to the horrific consequences. Yet it turns out that even President Trump – "a humanist," as described by special envoy Steve Witkoff – is appalled by what he sees in Gaza.

Ultra-right-wing Secretary of State Marco Rubio called Netanyahu three times within 24 hours concerning the aid. And, of course, there are the so-called friendly U.S. senators – all right-wing and supportive, but evidently not as bloodthirsty as the extreme messianic right-wing members of the Netanyahu's government. U.S. Vice President J.D. Vance, who was already packed and ready to visit Israel as a consolation for Trump's recent no-show, canceled his trip, likely due

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First five humanitarian aid trucks since March enter Gaza Strip

Jonathan Lis and Bar Peleg

The first five trucks containing humanitarian aid entered the Gaza Strip since Israel closed the border in March, passing through the Kerem Shalom crossing on Monday, the military announced.

According to the statement, the trucks, which

included baby food, were allowed entry following a "thorough security inspection by personnel from the Defense Ministry's Crossing Points Authority." No other trucks have been scheduled to enter.

The entry follows Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's announcement on the renewal of humanitarian aid to parts of Gaza.

National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir said that the decision to restore humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip was "made in a hurry," and that his request to vote on it was refused, because "they knew I had a majority to overturn this vote."

A senior official told

Haaretz that Netanyahu's decision was "a temporary step for one week" until humanitarian aid distribution centers can be completed.

United Nations aid chief Tom Fletcher said the aid was "a drop in the ocean of what is urgently needed, and significantly more aid must

be allowed into Gaza, starting tomorrow morning."

A Western diplomat who spoke with Haaretz, harshly criticized the planned humanitarian aid distribution mechanism being established in Gaza.

According to the diplomat, Israel is set to close

400 distribution points in Gaza and replace them with four or five large hubs, of which he said three or four are still under construction. "There will be six thousand people who will come to collect food from one hub," he said. "Each center will serve 460,000 people. That's like

the entire population of Tel Aviv!" he said. "There is no way this will work."

Comparing the planned mechanism to previous ones established in Iraq and Afghanistan, the source said that "the idea of food distributed through military compounds run by private firms is 'absolute madness.' If you walk at night with a load like that, you'll never get home."

The source said he doesn't think the mechanism will work. "I desperately hope they don't make that mistake. It would be awful," he concluded.

A joint statement released by 22 foreign ministries and three senior EU officers, acting as humanitarian aid donors for the Gaza Strip,

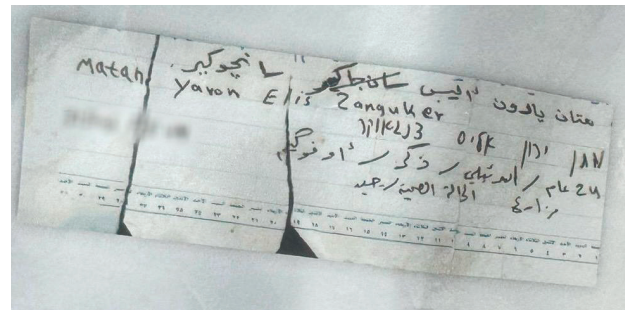
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A sign of life

Mother of Matan Zangauker received note in his handwriting

Bar Peleg

Einav Zangauker, the mother of the hostage Matan Zangauker, received a note last November in his handwriting from January of 2024. It was found in an underground space where hostages who were later killed had been held. It contains



The note written by Matan Zangauker in three languages.

personal details in Hebrew and Arabic about Matan, his medical condition, which was then defined as "good," and his designation as a "farmer" (meaning a civilian).

His mother immediately recognized the handwriting of her son, who knew Arabic before he was captured. The assessment is that the note is of the type written by other hostages as well. The Israeli military also believes that

there were senior Hamas officials in the rooms near where the note was found. A few months later, the authorities believe, hostages who were being held in the space were killed. The location was a large underground compound that included a room where senior Hamas officials are believed to have stayed.

"For nearly 600 days, I have been warning that the military pressure leads to hostages' deaths. Matan was saved by a miracle," Einav Zangauker told Haaretz. "He could have been killed or murdered as a result of the military pressure. We cannot continue to gamble with fate. The Israeli government needs to put a comprehensive agreement on the table for ending the war

and returning all the hostages. The war has claimed the lives of too many hostages and heroic soldiers."

Last week, after the release of hostage Edan Alexander, Einav Zangauker received the first sign of life relating to her son since Hamas released a video of him in December. Matan had spoken of very harsh conditions and that hostages were suffering from skin diseases and living with rats and spiders around them. She believed that it is clear that Matan's fate could have been like that of the hostages who have died or been murdered in captivity.

"We're living without food, without drink, without medicine, without soap," her son said in the video. He also said that the guards had orders to shoot hostages if the Israeli army approached. "We're very afraid, my friends and I are very fearful for our lives. We are dying every day a thousand times," he said.

The first sign of life from Matan Zangauker came from Yocheved Lifshitz after she was returned in November 2023 in the first hostage exchange deal. Since then, Matan has been moved

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HAARETZ

Online now

IDF calling up PTSD patients

At least two of them have taken their own lives

Gazans share quest to survive

Diary entry: 'If we die, at the very least, let us die full'



Bashar Taleb/AFP

haaretz.com

PM and his government gambled on Romania's far right and lost big time

Amir Tibon

The list of winners in Romania's presidential election, which took place on Sunday, is quite long. It starts with the country's incoming president and current Bucharest mayor, Nicusor Dan, who ran on a pro-European platform and defeated far-right candidate George Simion, a supporter of Russia, enemy of Ukraine and fervent critic of the European Union. Dan's upset victory, therefore, is also a big win for the EU, for Ukraine and for NATO.

The list of losers in this election, which garnered a great deal of attention and concern across the continent, includes Simion himself and his most important ally, the Russian government of Vladimir Putin. But sadly, it also includes another foreign government – the Israeli one, led by Benjamin Netanyahu and Israel's far-right parties.

This government, ever since its rise to power in late 2022, had placed a dangerous and cynical gamble on Romania's antisemitic, Holocaust-denying far right, in the name of narrow political interests. That gamble



Romania's newly elected president Nicusor Dan, center, on Sunday.

Andreea Alexandru/AP

ended up as a major failure on Sunday, and there are reasons to worry that in the long run, it has caused significant damage to Israel's relationship with Romania, a country considered to be relatively supportive of Israel and not often involved in diplomatic pressure toward Jerusalem.

The Netanyahu government's blatant interference in Romanian politics began in early 2023, when Likud

politician Eli Cohen was appointed Foreign Minister. Cohen, a political lightweight with no previous diplomatic experience, was convinced by influential far-right figures in Israel – all of them affiliated with the settlement movement – to reexamine his ministry's skeptic position toward Romania's far-right Alliance for the Union of Romanians (AUR).

Before Cohen's appointment, Israel had a clear

position of boycotting AUR, due to the party's glorification of Romanian political and military leaders who took part in the mass murder and persecution of the country's Jewish population during the Holocaust. Senior members of AUR have also, on multiple occasions, denied Romania's role in the Holocaust or the dimensions of the mass murder of Jews

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