

MIDDLE EAST

Nethanyahu caught between Hamas and Israeli distrust

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While Netanyahu was responding to the decision of the Hague Court of Justice, which called for a halt to the bombing of Gaza, with massive attacks, both with armoured vehicles and with troops defended by air raids, the Hamas militia were sending a clear

and unequivocal message to the Israeli Prime Minister: their positions and their war potential, despite the massive bombardments they have suffered, is still efficient.

And so, after four months of 'silence', at lunchtime last Sunday, when families were gathered together, the Islamic movement launched a rocket attack in the direction of the capital Tel Aviv. A real challenge. A provocation, to show that the last battalions of Hamas are still operational and that the war could last a long time if Israel does not agree to end the bombing of the Strip and does not sit down at the negotiating table in a spirit of cooperation. Hamas also sent a message to the Minister of the War Cabinet, Benny Gantz, to be consistent with what he said and force the Israeli government to negotiate for a final ceasefire.

The Jewish army failed to warn the population of an attack. Sirens did not sound, nor did alarm messages appear on mobile phones for the imminent arrival of rockets from the Strip. The defence system, however, immediately went into operation and managed to shoot down three of the eight rockets launched by Hamas. The reaction of the air force was prompt. An attack in the night on the Tal as-Sultan camp, one of the eight refugee camps in the Gaza Strip, followed Israeli forces shelling of shelters housing displaced Palestinians in other areas, including Jabalia, Nuseirat and Gaza City, killing at least 160 people, according to Palestinian officials. Women and children were also among the victims.

The Israeli army confirmed the attack in Rafah, saying it targeted Hamas fighters, using 'precision weapons'. It also acknowledged that civilians were injured when fires broke out. The incident is now under investigation. General Yifat Tomer Yerushalmi, Military Prosecutor General of the Israeli Armed Forces, stated that "the details of the very serious incident are still under investigation. To date, seventy military police investigations have been opened into incidents that have raised suspicion of criminal offences," Yerushalmi added. "We take these allegations very seriously and are working to clarify them definitively."

A cry of alarm, and at the same time of denunciation, was raised by the organisation Doctors Without Borders, which said it was "horrified" by the numerous victims and many injured, particularly by what happened in Tal as-Sultan, describing it as a "deadly event", and adding that in Gaza "nowhere is safe any more". "I noticed," writes a Red Crescent worker on X, "that some bodies were charred, while many people witnessed the tremendous death of the wounded. People were burning from the burning of their tents, which had been hit by bombs from the Israeli air force. It was an intentional massacre".

"This massacre would not have been committed by the Zionists without American support and the go-ahead for the invasion of Rafah, even though this area is packed with displaced people," Hamas said in a note last Monday. The Islamist movement, in fact, holds US President Joe Biden and his administration fully responsible for the Israeli massacre in Rafah, which resulted in the deaths last Sunday of dozens of Palestinians displaced in their tents. Since last October 7, there have been 35,984 victims of this conflict, while the number of wounded far exceeds 80,000.

If Prime Minister Netanyahu and Defence Minister Gallant are firmly convinced that the ground operation in the Gaza Strip must continue, among Israelis, on the other hand, anger and grief are growing, and above all distrust towards this government that is no longer able to bring home the hostages still in the hands of Hamas. Meanwhile, demonstrations are taking place in many Israeli cities, including Beersheba and Tel Aviv, where demonstrators displayed a large sign calling Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his government a 'complete disgrace'.

"As long as the prisoners remain in Gaza, we will not remain silent," said Anti-Defamation League director Jonathan Greenblatt. "Our hearts and thoughts are constantly with them. I didn't put up these photographs (of the hostages, ed) just to come to this rally. I wear them every day." He continued: "It has been 233 days that the Israeli army has failed to bring them home. The longer the war drags on, the less chance of getting them back alive'. For Yoav Gallant, Minister of Defence, who is visiting troops stationed along the border with Egypt, the firing of rockets at Tel Aviv is proof that the operation at Rafah is even more indispensable: 'We must eliminate Hamas'.

According to an Egyptian source, talks to find an understanding will resume today in Cairo.