

WAR

Ukraine and Gaza: two crises in search of peacemakers

WORLD

16_09_2025



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The latest news from the two main battlefronts, Ukraine and Gaza, is not encouraging for those hoping for a ceasefire.

On the Ukrainian front, the incident involving drones that violated Polish airspace on

10 September, for which Russia is being blamed, has caused an immediate surge in tension. Poland's marginal involvement in military operations directly implicates NATO, which has launched Operation Sentinel East in response. Italy has contributed two fighter jets to this operation, which aims to defend the Alliance's eastern flank. Russia continues to deny any attack or provocation against Poland, instead accusing the West of fabricating incidents to divert attention from the dire economic situation in Western Europe, as stated by Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova. Dmitry Peskov, spokesman for Russian President Vladimir Putin, said that "NATO is at war with Russia; this is obvious and requires no further proof. NATO is in fact involved in this war, providing both indirect and direct support to the Kiev regime".

However, Russia has launched major joint military exercises with Belarus –

Zapad (West) 2025 – close to the Polish border. Moscow and Minsk claim that the exercises are purely defensive and aimed at strengthening the security of Russia and Belarus against possible external attacks. However, the Polish government is very wary and continues to express concern over what it calls 'aggression' by drones. Although the exercises are unusually transparent, with many journalists and observers from 23 countries present, including from the United States and Turkey, they could also be interpreted as a message to Europe, showing Russian-Belarusian power to discourage European countries from taking military action.

Meanwhile, on the Middle East front, the Israeli army has launched a final

attack on Gaza using warplanes, artillery, and drones. This attack was prepared over several days, and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu appears to have received the green light from the administration of US President Donald Trump. Trump was represented in Jerusalem yesterday by Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who held a joint press conference with Netanyahu after a lengthy meeting. During the press conference, Netanyahu said that further targeted attacks against Hamas leaders 'wherever they may be' could not be ruled out. This is clearly a reference to last week's surprise attack in Dubai, which targeted Hamas leaders who had gathered there for negotiations that have been ongoing for months. However, the outcome is viewed with extreme pessimism, as if Hamas 'plays' with Israeli hostages and the conditions for a ceasefire and Israel tries to target the negotiators, the chances of even a truce are minimal.

What do these two crises have in common? Not only do none of the parties involved intend to seek a peace agreement, but other states are also being tempted to become directly involved in the conflict. This is the case with European countries on the Ukrainian front. Bellicose statements from European government leaders, the European

Union (EU) and NATO are moving in this direction, defying reality. Italian Defence Minister, Guido Crosetto, has abruptly pointed this out: 'We are not ready for a Russian attack or an attack by another nation. I have been saying this for some time'.

Even Trump's initiative, which raised hopes after the 15 August summit with Putin in Alaska, seems to have amounted to nothing. We have gone from a possible face-to-face meeting between Putin and the Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelensky, in the presence of Trump, which was hoped for by the end of August, to Trump's statement yesterday that 'there is an unfathomable hatred between Putin and Zelensky', making a face-to-face meeting unlikely.

In the Middle East, Trump is also a key figure, but this time he is not attempting to facilitate dialogue between the parties; rather, he is supporting Netanyahu's initiative to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by eliminating the Palestinian presence in Gaza and the West Bank. This would blow up the 'Abraham Accords', the flagship of Trump's previous administration's diplomacy.

The Israeli right-wing project, which seeks to displace the inhabitants of Gaza and the West Bank, is identical to that of Hamas in its desire to eliminate the Jewish presence in the Holy Land. These are two forces that desire and pursue mutual annihilation — an impossible dialogue. Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, rightly said in recent days that 'talking about peace now does not make much sense; it is unrealistic', adding: 'At this moment, we need to talk about a ceasefire, about the cessation of hostilities'. But even this minimal goal seems very far away today.

Wars have always existed, even in the last 80 years, and the Middle East itself is proof of this. Today's crisis is the legacy of past decades' crises. What is different from the past is the apparent lack of peacemakers: leaders or charismatic figures who recognise the human, social and economic consequences of war and are willing to do whatever it takes to stop the fighting. These leaders would seek to reconcile the interests of those involved rather than exacerbate them.

As for the rest of us, the most concrete thing we can do is pray to the Lord to inspire such people and open the hearts of those blinded by the illusion that problems can be solved by war and the elimination of others.