EU HEADLINES

NATIONAL PERSPECTIVES OF EUROPEAN DEBATES

From bad to worse

Amidst the international calls for ceasefire and humanitarian pause, Israeli airstrikes targeted a refugee camp while Palestinians of the West Bank face forcible expulsion and violence from radical Israeli settlers.

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Unsettling attacks

Following the appointment of right-wing extremist settler Itamar Ben-Gvir as Israel's national security minister, there has been a surge in problems in the West Bank. Palestinian shepherds have been subjected to violence and attacks by radical Israeli settlers since the beginning of the year. After the deadly attack by Hamas on Israeli civilians on October 7, the settlers shifted their focus to forcibly removing Palestinians from certain areas of the West Bank, according to reports from *Der Spiegel*. Human rights group Yesh Din has documented multiple deaths and other incidents, while the West Bank Protection Consortium states that hundreds of Palestinians have been displaced from their lands. Guy Hirschfeld of the organisation 'Looking the Occupation in the Eye' notes that the settlers now feel emboldened, a sentiment echoed by several human rights organisations. Activist and former IDF colonel Doron Meinrath expressed a bleak outlook, believing that most Israelis are no longer interested in seeking a resolution to the conflict. He suggests that extreme international pressure, particularly from the U.S., might be the only catalyst for change, as he envisions Israel continuing down the path of a one-state solution, where "one nation rules over the other".

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Press pause

Though the White House has largely refused to call for a ceasefire or to try to coerce Israel into changing its methods, even while the IDF continues to relentlessly bomb Gaza and has subsequently begun a ground invasion, U.S. President Joe Biden put a little more pressure on his ally on Wednesday. During a campaign speech, Biden was interrupted by an audience member who said, "If you care about Jewish people, as a rabbi, I need you to call for a cease-fire." As written in *The Irish Times*, the president reiterated his support for a two-state solution and almost agreed with the comment, saying "I think we need a pause" – adding to previous White House calls for humanitarian pauses, distinguished from a full ceasefire. To that end, the new U.S. ambassador to Israel will soon arrive in the region with the goal of creating a humanitarian pause. Some of the U.S.' internal narrative has begun to change due to outcry from progressive Democrats, public figures, human rights organisations, world leaders and the UN, putting more pressure on Biden and on mainstream Democrats in general. Israeli ambassador to the U.S. Michael Herzog said on Wednesday that Israel is providing water and "other types of supplies" and does not need "urging" for humanitarian aid – nonetheless, earlier this week Israel bombed a refugee camp and the death toll continues to rise.

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Back against the wall

While ambulances brought around 70 seriously injured Palestinians to Egypt, only foreigners and dual citizenship holders are on the approximately 500-person list of those authorised to leave Gaza via the newly opened Rafah crossing, reports *IDNES.cz*. According to the agreement, mediated by Qatar between Egypt, Israel, and Hamas, since Wednesday foreign nationals have been allowed to cross the border and up to 150 Egyptian ambulances were waiting to enter Gaza. The rescue work and any humanitarian operations are massively complicated due to the ongoing Israeli-imposed blockade, incessant bombardments, and repeated telecommunication cutoffs that render telephone lines, mobile phones, and Internet access inoperable which triggers a further deterioration of the humanitarian catastrophe. Joining the calls for an immediate ceasefire from Brazil and Mexico, Chile and Colombia condemned the "collective punishment" of Palestinians perpetrated by the Israeli government and announced the readiness to recall their ambassadors from the country if Israel doesn't stop violating international humanitarian law and their "massacre of Palestinians." Earlier on Tuesday, the Bolivian government severed diplomatic ties with Israel, qualifying Gaza Strip bombings as crimes against humanity.

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No remorse

The Israeli government confirmed the deliberate airstrike of the Jabalia refugee camp in the northern part of the Gaza Strip, according to *Politiken*. Although the declared target of the bombing was a Hamas commander, Ibrahim Biari, who allegedly was among the leaders behind the October 7 attack, the Israeli strike killed at least 50 people, leaving 150 injured and more buried under the rubble as stated by the Palestinian Authority Ministry of Health. While Israel claims the successful elimination of Biari and Hamas refutes the statement as "a baseless lie", eyewitnesses report the dreadful aftermath of the strike on the ground. The Norwegian doctor Mads Gilbert, who previously worked in Gaza's hospitals, asserts the higher victim toll of around 100 dead, 300 wounded, and 15 houses hit in the refugee camp. Since October 7, the Israel Defence Forces have carried out thousands of airstrikes and advanced on the ground in the northern part of the Gaza Strip, with the circulating speculations about the possible expansion of the offensive to the south of Gaza, to which millions of Palestinian civilians were ordered to evacuate.

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The European Movement International
Place du Luxembourg 2, 1050 Brussels, Belgium

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