

## **For Israel and Hamas, hard choices before talks can begin**

### **Synopsis**

*Israel's caretaker prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, has to calculate the impact of the fighting on his own political fortunes, made more complicated by the internal unrest between Jews and Israeli Arabs in numerous cities inside Israel. The crucial decision for Israel is whether "victory" requires sending ground troops into Gaza, which would extend the conflict and significantly increase the number of dead and wounded on both sides.*

As the United States and Egyptian mediators head to Israel to begin de-escalation talks, the antagonists are weighing delicate internal considerations before agreeing to discussions on ending the violence.

[...]

The violence can take a long time to subside, said **Mark Heller** of the **Institute for National Security Studies at Tel Aviv University**. "At some point Israel reminds itself that there is no way it can bring about a decisive outcome at a tolerable cost to itself," he said, "and Hamas realizes that the costs and risks to its own political viability and control over Gaza become too much."

At that point, Heller said, Hamas agrees to "what they say is always a temporary cease-fire, not a peace, and usually gets some sort of payoff, I suspect this time from the Qataris."

[...]

"This strife is an extremely disorienting and worrisome development and a matter of far greater concern, frankly, than Hamas," said Heller. "The army can take care of Hamas, but we need something to take care of Israeli society, and right now we don't have that."

*For full article:*

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