

Netanyahu uses Lebanon to unravel Trump's Iran deal

The Grayzone's Max Blumenthal and Aaron Mate on how Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu plans to escalate his country's war on Lebanon to shatter the very tenuous Memorandum Of Understanding between the US and Iran. ||| The Grayzone ||| Find more reporting at <https://thegrayzone.com> Support our original journalism at Patreon: <https://patreon.com/grayzone> Facebook: <https://facebook.com/thegrayzone> Twitter: <https://twitter.com/thegrayzonenews> Instagram: <https://instagram.com/thegrayzonenews> Minds: <https://minds.com/thegrayzone> Mastodon: <https://mastodon.social/@thegrayzone> #TheGrayzone

#Aaron Mates

What about Lebanon? Yeah, you know, Israel will do—like, now the question is, what does the deal say about Lebanon? We've heard leaks from the Iranian side that it calls on Israel to withdraw. I personally doubt that Trump will agree to that, but there must be something in there, some language addressing Lebanon, because Iran would not make a deal without including Lebanon and Israel. Now, their path to blowing up peace and restarting war is through Lebanon, where they have this goal of wiping out Hezbollah and its base of support, which is a lot of people. That's why they've displaced more than 1.5 million people and killed more than 3,000 since March, because they're trying to destroy the popular base for Hezbollah. And so that's the question that I have this week—like, what does the memorandum of understanding, if anything, say about Lebanon? And will Trump finally restrain Israel from its aggression there?

#Max

Here's U.N. Ambassador and longtime Israel lobby plant Mike Waltz on Lebanon, kind of setting the stage for what you're describing as so critical for future generations and for global stability.

#Fox News 1

Ambassador, what do you want to say about this most recent and biggest concern now—that Lebanon could become the spoiler to this broader agreement between the U.S. and Iranian diplomatic efforts? We know that Hezbollah launched projectiles and drone attacks into northern Israel over the weekend. Israel responded with its own strikes in southern Lebanon and Beirut. Where do we stand here?

#Fox News 2

Well, I think two things, Maria. Number one, we will always support Israel's right to defend itself. And Hezbollah continues to attack neighborhoods, schools, and to launch rockets indiscriminately into Israel. But importantly, for the first time, and again under this president, his leadership, the Lebanese government is sitting down in the room with the Israelis and really taking important steps to finally rid Lebanon of the cancer that is Hezbollah. The Iranians are trying to link the two. We are delinking the two and doing everything we can to support Israel's right to defend itself, but also move forward with a diplomatic process so that we can hopefully see peace in the region. And oh, by the way, Syria is an incredibly important component of this as well. And Iran is now out of Syria, too.

#Aaron Mates

That's right, because al-Qaeda is in, which you helped install with your regime change war. But, you know, there are some amazing comments in there. First of all, he says, we're trying to de-link Lebanon from the Iran deal. Well, you're the ones who've been insisting forever that Iran surrender by giving up its support for Hezbollah. So now, because Iran insists on Israel stopping attacks on Lebanon, all of a sudden Lebanon and Iran have to be de-linked, when you're the ones who've been insisting that Iran can't support Hezbollah. So Iran can't support Hezbollah, but also, by contrast, you have every right to support Israel destroying Lebanon, where Hezbollah is.

I mean, you think Iran or Hezbollah are going to go for that? It's the peak of hypocrisy. And then, of course, he refers to Hezbollah as a cancer. So what is he saying there? He's not just talking about a group of people with weapons. He's talking about a political movement that is part of the largest political bloc in the Lebanese parliament. Hezbollah is a member of that coalition that has, I don't know, 61 seats or something, 62 seats, maybe even more. They'd have more if the Lebanese vote properly reflected the population. But regardless, he's calling a huge portion of the country—half of it, I don't know, maybe less than half, maybe more than half—a cancer. You're muted, Max.

#Max

And that's to reinforce the Israeli policy, which is ethnic cleansing—to remove one million Shia Lebanese citizens from the south, which is what they've been attempting to do all since the ceasefire of 2024. This has always left out over 1,000 ceasefire violations by Israel before Hezbollah entered the fight after the start of Operation Iron Swords, attacking Iran. And then Israel's proceeding to impose a yellow line, the same yellow line that it has imposed in the Gaza Strip, where it has seized 60% of the entire Gaza Strip. And what does it do behind the yellow line? First of all, no one's allowed to cross the yellow line—you get shot if you try to go back to your home. Then they bring in D9 operators to demolish the homes.

Each D9 operator gets paid per demolished home. They blow up entire villages. And so large parts of southern Lebanon, which are the sites of so much human civilizational heritage, are being subjected to mass demolition. The city of Tyre, which is a biblical-era city, is being bombarded and destroyed

as we speak. Twenty, thirty Lebanese people are killed every day. And the point is to uproot Shia Lebanese citizens, just as Palestinians have been uprooted in Gaza and have been uprooted since the Nakba. That's why Waltz is referring to them as a cancer, and it is an attack on civilians because Israel cannot defeat Hezbollah on the battlefield and is suffering its own losses day after day, which are becoming a huge political problem for Netanyahu, but he has nothing else but this war.

Here's the other issue. Netanyahu cannot allow peace to take place because of his own legal problems. And if peace—I wouldn't call it peace—but if there's sort of an interregnum between wars, because Israel is always in a state of permanent war, Netanyahu loses and he will ultimately be unseated. His coalition will come apart. The country will start to focus on issues like the Haredi draft bill to draft the ultra-Orthodox. As before October 7th, Israel was in a sort of political civil war, and it'll go back to that state. And Netanyahu will be unseated. Netanyahu also has this problem where he needs Trump. He desperately needs Trump because of his own prosecution.

Remember, Trump sent Mike Huckabee to sit in the witness gallery supporting Benjamin Netanyahu when he was going to testify in one of his corruption trials. Trump has been putting pressure on the Israeli president, Isaac Herzog, to pardon Netanyahu, which he refuses to do to this point. And so Netanyahu needs Trump, and if Netanyahu defies Trump too strongly, that's his ass. So the war is what is postponing the inevitable for Netanyahu, and he needs this war. In Lebanon, just as in Israel, the whole Israeli military intelligence apparatus is in support of this war. And they believe they need to establish what they call a buffer zone, which is an ethnic cleansing zone, a kill zone. And here's one of the important linchpins of Netanyahu's coalition, Itamar Ben-Gvir, on the deal.

#Speaker 1

He's saying, he's addressing Netanyahu and saying, you know, the fighting isn't over — not in Gaza, not in Lebanon, not from Iran.

#Max

The fighting's not over. And he demands that Netanyahu allow Israeli soldiers to continue defending themselves in the state of Israel. We must continue to demolish homes in southern Lebanon. I'm glad he admits it.

#Speaker 1

We have to continue to displace residents in southern Lebanon.

#Max

Again, I appreciate the candor.

#Speaker 1

And then we have to kill Hezbollah.

#Max

So Netanyahu is under, even if he wanted to abide by Trump's deal, I mean, he's under so much pressure from his own right and figures who are in his coalition from a party, Otzma Yehudit, which is gaining strength among Jewish-Israeli youth because they get more fascist with the passing of time.

#Aaron Mates

One of the rare countries, if not the only country in the world, where the younger generation gets more extreme than the older ones. It's uniquely Israeli.

#Max

And so that's, I mean, I think that's the direction we're going to continue to go in — the clash between the Israeli policy of desperately trying to establish itself as a regional hegemon by pushing regime change in Iran and waging war in the region, and the American public. The gulf is going to continue to grow. And it's not just the fascists like Itamar Ben-Gvir. It's also the Israeli Zionist left. This is Yair Golan. He comes out of the old Labor Party, and he calls the deal, the memorandum of understanding, a tough morning for Israel. Israeli citizens are waking up to an agreement between the U.S. and Iran made over Israel's head. Well, how else are you going to make a deal?

And he's, you know, he's saying all of our achievements have been wiped out by this deal. And then he, of course, proceeds to blame Netanyahu. Netanyahu is good for Hamas. Netanyahu is good for Iran. Netanyahu is good for Hezbollah. Netanyahu is not good for Israel. So Netanyahu is also being pushed from the Zionist left. They're calling him weak for making this deal and presenting themselves as the stronger, more militaristic, actually more fascistic leaders of a future Israeli coalition. And it's the same thing we're going to see from Schumer and the Democrats, or a similar thing, where they're going to accuse Trump of chickening out and then making a deal that's worse than the JCPOA, at least from an Israeli perspective.