Summary

- A week ago, the United States and Iran signed a joint memorandum of understanding.
- It is now becoming increasingly clear what was to be expected: This Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) isn't worth the paper it's written on.
- Although both sides are making one public announcement after another, they are all contradictory.
- In addition, the Lebanese and Israeli governments are also dissatisfied with the MoU and do not intend to comply with it.
- The administration of U.S. President Donald Trump is now trying to refocus public attention on Gaza.
- But even there, their new plans don't hold water.

From Sacha Wigdorovits

"The mirage is typical of the Middle East," writes Eric Gujer, editor-in-chief of the Neue Zürcher Zeitung (NZZ), in his latest weekly commentary. He continues: "The ceasefire agreement between the U.S. and Iran is just such a mirage."

This assessment is correct, as the past few days have made clear. For since the signing of the joint statement of intent in the middle of last week, virtually every message from Washington has contradicted that from Tehran—and vice versa.

This applies to Iran's nuclear disarmament—the central issue of the statement—as well as to the future use of the Strait of Hormuz, a vital shipping lane for Europe and Asia, and to the release of Iran's billions in assets frozen in the U.S. According to the U.S. government, these funds are to be used to purchase American agricultural products, a claim that Iran, in turn, denies.

Even with regard to the Lebanon issue, which also plays an important role, the MoU

is proving to be a “paper tiger.” This is because neither the government in Lebanon nor the one in Jerusalem is pleased that the MoU does not address the dissolution of the Lebanese terrorist organization or Tehran’s cessation of support for it. Both governments made this clear this week during their peace talks in Washington and also leaked this information to the media.

It is obvious that neither Lebanon nor Israel is legally bound by the memorandum between the U.S. and Iran. After all, neither country was part of the prior negotiations on the MoU—let alone a signatory to it. But it is also becoming increasingly clear that the Lebanese and Israeli governments have no intention of yielding to U.S. political pressure on the issue of Hezbollah, which is important to both of them.

Israel, in particular, has made it clear: As long as the Shiite terrorist organization backed by Tehran still exists, we will not withdraw from the buffer zone in southern Lebanon that has been established in recent months. Jerusalem also remains skeptical regarding the “pilot zones” proposed by the U.S.—that is, the areas wrested from Hezbollah by the Israeli army that are now to be handed over to the Lebanese army for administration.

The government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is likely to approve individual attempts of this kind. But it would prefer to see the Lebanese Army first demonstrate in certain areas that it is capable of—and willing to—drive out Hezbollah on its own. So far, there has been no sign of that.

That is why Jerusalem will not yield to pressure from the U.S. government to withdraw completely from Lebanon. And the Lebanese government, which also views Hezbollah as its arch-enemy, is secretly grateful to the Jewish state for this.

Stalemate in Gaza as well

The situation is virtually identical in Gaza. There, too, the U.S. has now announced changes regarding the International Coordination Committee and the International Stabilization Force (ISF). Both are central elements of U.S. President Donald Trump’s so-called “Board of Peace” initiative.

But just as in the case of the Memorandum of (Mis)Understanding with Tehran, it is clear here as well: the American plans are not moving forward. The main reason for this is the refusal of the terrorist organization Hamas to voluntarily surrender its

weapons.

Anyone who expects this to be a task for the soldiers of the International Stabilization Force is mistaken. The ISF is not supposed to be deployed in Gaza until Hamas has been disarmed, in order to restore peace and order. For this reason, just as in Lebanon, the Israeli army will not withdraw from Gaza but will remain in the security zones it occupies.

The sobering conclusion is therefore this: In the war against Iran and its vassals, Hezbollah and Hamas, the U.S. has so far achieved nothing despite all its eloquent statements—and there is no indication that this will change. After all, those who count their chickens before they’re hatched will end up losing out.

In this case, the host is Israel. It will not simply give up the military gains it has achieved since October 7, 2023, against Iran, Hamas, and Hezbollah. Not even for the sake of good relations with the U.S. And certainly not for a memorandum of understanding that was concluded over its head and without its consent—and which is therefore not legally binding on the Jewish state.

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