

# War is peace, freedom is slavery, ignorance is strength

## The first three months of Donald Trump's "Comprehensive Gaza Peace Plan"

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Trucks carrying humanitarian aid wait to cross into Gaza from Egypt through Rafah. Photo by Eskinder Debebe/UN.

On September 29, 2025, standing beside Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in the White House, Donald Trump announced his 20-point [Comprehensive Gaza Peace Plan](#) to the world. Over the next few days the US president put heavy pressure on Hamas to sign up to his deal, [threatening](#) that Israel "would have my full backing to finish the job" of destroying the group if they didn't.

Though neither Hamas nor any other Palestinian organization had been involved in drawing up Trump's 20 points, Hamas [signed an agreement](#) with Israel at noon on October 9 to implement the first phase of the plan, which came into effect the next day.

This agreement—which, let us be absolutely clear, is all that Israel and Hamas have signed up to so far—committed both sides to a ceasefire in Gaza, following which Israel would withdraw its forces to an agreed-upon "yellow line" and "not

return to areas it has withdrawn from, as long as Hamas fully implements the agreement.”

In the 72 hours following the IDF withdrawal, all Israeli hostages in Gaza (or their remains) were to be exchanged for “250 life sentence prisoners [in Israeli jails] plus 1,700 Gazans who were detained after October 7, 2023, including all women and children detained in that context.”

“Full aid” would also “be immediately sent into the Gaza Strip... at a minimum in consistence with the January 19, 2025 [agreement](#) regarding humanitarian aid.” The latter stipulated the entry of at least 600 trucks, including 50 fuel trucks, per day.

Though this aspect of the October 9 agreement received less media attention than the release of the Israeli hostages, it was critical for the Palestinians. The world’s top authority on food supply, the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), had [declared](#) the “irrefutable” existence of famine in Gaza more than a month earlier.

## **The Sharm el-Sheikh Peace Summit**

The ceasefire officially began on October 10. Hamas released its last 20 living hostages, and Israel began to release Palestinian prisoners on October 13.

At the Sharm el-Sheikh “Peace Summit” in Egypt that same day, Donald Trump declared that “[the war in Gaza is over](#).” His audience included over 30 world leaders, among them Mark Carney, Keir Starmer, Emmanuel Macron, Friedrich Merz, and Giorgia Meloni, as well as leaders from Turkey, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and other Middle Eastern and Muslim states and UN Secretary-General António Guterres.

The “president of peace” (as US Secretary of State Marco Rubio [baptized his boss](#)) was [praised on all sides](#). Elbows up as ever, Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney [offered](#) “congratulations to President Trump for his essential leadership” in delivering this “[historic peace plan](#)... opening a new chapter for Israelis, Palestinians, and the world.”

Their enthusiasm is comprehensible—though totally unfounded. For months, Western leaders outside the US had been facing mounting [public opposition](#) over their support for Israel’s campaign in Gaza, as well as growing concerns over

their own potential liability for complicity in what was increasingly widely being recognized as a genocide. Tensions between the US and its allies peaked when (to Israel's fury) Britain, France, Canada, Australia, and several other Western countries recognized a Palestinian state at the 80th UN General Assembly session in September in New York.

Trump's Gaza plan provided them with an off-ramp. As I [wrote at the time](#), "One can almost hear the huge collective sigh of relief that went up in Western capitals as soon as the Trump plan was announced. The cracks are papered over, the delinquent allies are back in the US fold, and our craven leaders are off the genocide hook."

## The end of the war?

The reality, however, is less rosy—as everybody present in Sharm el-Sheikh must have known.

To begin with, the October 9 agreement did not commit either Israel or Hamas to accepting the rest of Trump's 20-point plan. Hamas had always been [ready to engage](#) in prisoner exchanges—that was, after all, the reason they took hostages on October 7—Israel rather less so. Other issues have proved more intractable.

Several members of the Israeli government [stridently opposed the ceasefire](#), and Netanyahu himself likely only entered into it under pressure from Donald Trump (who was [openly campaigning](#) for a Nobel Peace Prize). Challenged by the opposition to endorse Trump's plan, Netanyahu's coalition [boycotted](#) a Knesset vote on the issue.

In the ensuing days and weeks, Israeli leaders [made it clear](#) that they remained opposed to the creation of a Palestinian state now or ever and had no intention of pulling the IDF out of Gaza anytime soon. Fifty-three percent of the strip, including almost all of its arable land, lies in the area the IDF now controls behind the [yellow line](#).

For its part, on October 24 Hamas [communicated](#) that while it was willing to "hand over the administration of the Gaza Strip to a temporary Palestinian committee composed of independent 'technocrats'" as the Trump plan envisaged, it was [not prepared to disarm](#) without serious negotiations on establishing a Palestinian state.

Like [much of what comes out of the US president's mouth](#), Trump's [statement](#) in a December 29 interview with PBS NewsHour that "Hamas pledged, they swore that they were going to disarm" is quite simply false.

Very far from the Gaza "war" being over, the thorniest issues—Israel's continuing occupation of Palestinian territories, disarmament of the Palestinian resistance, and the realization of a viable, sovereign Palestinian state—have yet to be resolved. So does the fate of Gaza's surviving civilian population of over a million people, trapped in [appalling conditions](#) between the yellow line and the sea.

Two earlier ceasefires had enabled exchanges of hostages, in November 2023 and January 2025. Israel multiply breached and finally unilaterally ended both. There was—and is—no good reason to think the outcome will be any different this time around.

## UN Security Council Resolution 2803

Notwithstanding these serious obstacles to a real peace, in a landmark resolution of November 17, which passed by a vote of 13-0 (with Russia and China abstaining), the UN Security Council [welcomed](#) Trump's plan and [endorsed](#) its key provisions.

Resolution 2803 "authorized" a "Board of Peace"—whose composition is not specified in the resolution, but which will be chaired by Donald Trump himself—to:

- Set up "a transitional governance administration, including ... a Palestinian technocratic, apolitical committee of competent Palestinians from the Strip"
- Establish "a temporary International Stabilization Force (ISF)... with forces contributed by participating States"
- Create a "newly trained and vetted Palestinian police force," which will work with the ISF to ensure "the process of demilitarizing the Gaza Strip, including... the permanent decommissioning of weapons from non-state armed groups."

"As the ISF establishes control and stability, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) will withdraw from the Gaza Strip... save for a security perimeter presence that will remain until Gaza is properly secure from any resurgent terror threat," the text goes on. The "standards, milestones, and timeframes" will be "agreed between

the IDF, ISF, the guarantors [the US, Turkey, Egypt and Qatar], and the United States.”

Astonishingly, there is no provision for any Palestinian input into this most important of issues—for both sides. If the Palestinians give up their arms with no internationally backed guarantee of eventual statehood, they are defenceless in the face of an army that has repeatedly proved its ruthlessness. But so long as Hamas is not disarmed, Israelis fear a repetition of the [dreadful events of October 7, 2023](#), which triggered the present so-called “war” and have been [invoked to justify](#) every Israeli action since.

## **The deal of the century?**

These transitional arrangements, says the resolution, will remain in place “until such time as the Palestinian Authority (PA) has satisfactorily completed its reform program, as outlined in various proposals, including President Trump’s peace plan in 2020... and can securely and effectively take back control of Gaza.”

Both the PA and Hamas [denounced](#) Trump’s [2020 plan](#) (which he modestly called “the deal of the century”) at the time, with Hamas describing it as an attempt “to liquidate the Palestinian national project.” Among other things, the plan would have allowed Israel to annex much of the West Bank, including the Jordan Valley, leaving behind a demilitarized Palestinian “state” made up of a [series of Bantustans](#).

Only “after the PA reform program is faithfully carried out and Gaza redevelopment has advanced,” Resolution 2803 continues, “the conditions may”—note it says “may,” not “will”—be in place for a credible pathway to Palestinian self-determination and statehood. The United States will establish a dialogue between Israel and the Palestinians to agree on a political horizon for peaceful and prosperous coexistence.”

The postponement of establishing even a “pathway” to Palestinian statehood to the indefinite future—while effectively giving Israel and the US a veto over the process—is particularly ironic, coming so soon after Canada, the UK, and all the rest purportedly “recognized” the state of Palestine.

Unsurprisingly, Hamas and the other factions in Gaza [rejected](#) Resolution 2803. In their view, Trump’s plan is no more than a “form of deep international

partnership in the war of extermination waged by the [Israeli] occupation against our people.”



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and US President Donald Trump during the introduction of the Gaza ceasefire proposal, September 29, 2025. Photo courtesy the White House/[Wikimedia Commons](#).

## **The legal background**

It is difficult to overstate just how major a departure Resolution 2803 is from the UN’s previous policies on the Palestinian question—and from the body of law established by the world’s two highest international courts.

After the 1967 Six Day War, when Israel occupied the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza, Security Council Resolution 242 called for:

*Withdrawal of Israel armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict [and]... Termination of all claims or states of belligerency and respect for and acknowledgement of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every State in the area...*

Israel ignored Resolution 242, as it has ignored literally hundreds of UN resolutions since—usually with the support of the United States, which has frequently employed its veto to shield Israel from sanctions or other UN action. The US has vetoed no less than six United Nations Security Council ceasefire resolutions in the course of the current “war” alone.

Responding to a request from the UN General Assembly, on July 19, 2024, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled that “Israel’s continued presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory is unlawful,” and it must “end its unlawful presence... as rapidly as possible,” “cease immediately all new settlement activities,” and “evacuate all settlers from the Occupied Palestinian Territory.”

The justices went on to stress that “all states,” as well as international organizations (including the UN), were “under an obligation not to recognize as legal the situation arising from the unlawful presence of the State of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and not to render aid or assistance” in maintaining the occupation.

Recalling the ICJ ruling as well as earlier resolutions, on December 3, 2024 the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution requiring Israel to “comply with international law, including ceasing all settlement activities and evacuating settlers from the Occupied Palestinian Territory.” The vote was 157 in favour, eight against, and seven abstentions. Though both the US and Israel opposed the motion, the overwhelming majority of Western democracies, including Canada and the UK, backed it.

On November 21, 2024 the International Criminal Court (ICC), which was established by the Rome Statute in 1998 as “an independent, permanent court of last resort... to investigate and prosecute the most serious crimes of international concern, namely genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and aggression,” issued arrest warrants for Benjamin Netanyahu and former Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant for “the war crime of starvation as a method of warfare; and the crimes against humanity of murder, persecution, and other inhumane acts.”

Though not recognized by the US or Israel, this is the same court that convicted Ratko Mladić and Radovan Karadzic for their part in the 1995 Srebrenica genocide and—with US approval—indicted Vladimir Putin in 2023 for war crimes in Ukraine.

The Trump administration’s response to the ICC indictments of Netanyahu and Gallant has been to impose sanctions on both the court and several of its individual officials and judges.

## **The UN betrays Palestine—and itself**

The Security Council’s acceptance of the Trump “peace plan” is a watershed moment for the postwar international order. It marks the definitive abandonment of attempts to resolve the Israel-Palestine dispute within this framework of international law, and their replacement by obeisance to the imperatives of great power realpolitik.

Though Russia and China both criticized the Trump plan, they conspicuously did not veto Resolution 2803. Russia has no more interest in upholding international law than Israel or the US, given its invasion of Ukraine, while China would welcome a free hand in Taiwan, which it has always insisted is an integral part of its national territory (and therefore not governed by international law regarding relations between states).

In a blistering response to Security Council Resolution 2803 Francesca Albanese, the United Nations Human Rights Council Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, got to the heart of the matter.

“Despite the horrors of the last two years and the ICJ’s clear jurisprudence,” she wrote:

*the Council has chosen not to ground its response in the very body of law it is obliged to uphold: international human rights law, including the right of self-determination, the law governing the use of force, international humanitarian law, and the UN Charter.*

Instead, “the resolution risks entrenching external control over Gaza’s governance, borders, security, and reconstruction” and “betrays the people it claims to protect.”

Specifically:

*A military force answering to a so-called 'Board of Peace' chaired by the President of the United States, an active party to this conflict that has continually provided military, economic and diplomatic support to the illegal occupying Power, is not legal. It is a brazen attempt to impose, by threat of continued force against a virtually defenceless population, US and Israeli interests, plain and simple.*

*Essentially, it will leave Palestine in the hands of a puppet administration, assigning the United States, which shares complicity in the genocide, as the new manager of the open-air prison that Israel has already established.*

In abnegating its legal responsibilities and outsourcing Gaza's future to Trump's "Board of Peace," she charges, the UN has betrayed not only the Palestinian people but its own founding principles as embodied in Articles 1 and 2 of the [UN Charter](#).

## You cease, I fire

Nearly three months have passed since the Gaza "ceasefire" came into effect. Israel has repeatedly stalled progress on moving to phase two of Trump's "peace plan" until all the bodies of deceased Israeli hostages have been returned—no small task, given the difficulty of recovering them in Gaza's devastation. By December 4 the remains of all but one hostage, police officer Ran Gvili, [had been recovered](#). Israel is still stalling.

Though both sides have accused the other of multiple violations of the ceasefire, the [monstrous asymmetry](#) of casualties suggests the fault lies overwhelmingly with Israel.

Since October 10, at least [416 Palestinians have been killed](#) and more than 1,110 wounded in Israeli attacks. Over the same period, just three Israeli soldiers lost their lives in Gaza. According to [Palestinian sources](#), two of them died when their vehicle ran over unexploded ordinance, and not, as Israel claimed, in a Hamas ambush.

While there hasn't been a single reported incident of Hamas firing rockets into Israel, the [Gazan authorities claim](#) that between October 10 and December 28 "Israel shot at civilians 298 times, raided residential areas beyond the 'yellow

line' 54 times, bombed and shelled Gaza 455 times, [and] demolished people's properties on 162 occasions."

In total, Israel [violated](#) the ceasefire agreement at least 969 times from October 10 to December 28. To describe Trump's ceasefire as "fragile," "precarious," or "tested," as mainstream Western media habitually do, is to stretch the meaning of words beyond all credibility. On the Israeli side, at least, this has been a ceasefire in name only.

## Restriction of aid

Let me finally turn to the only other provision in Trump's Gaza Plan aside from the exchange of prisoners that was actually agreed in the ceasefire deal between Israel and Hamas on October 9, the resumption of "full aid" into Gaza.

Israel has failed to open the Rafah crossing into Egypt, as is explicitly mandated in the Trump plan, and has severely restricted and on occasion completely stopped traffic at other crossing points throughout the ceasefire. While the number of humanitarian aid trucks that have been allowed into Gaza since the ceasefire is disputed, it is clearly [far fewer](#) than the agreed minimum of 600 per day.

Per the Israeli human rights organization [B'tselem](#), "Due to Israeli restrictions, as of December 16, only 57 percent of the 556 aid missions planned by the UN and its partners were carried out, including the delivery of vital aid and equipment, medical evacuations, and infrastructure repairs."

According to Oxfam, [posting](#) on December 22:

*Since the current ceasefire began on October 10th, Israeli authorities continue to arbitrarily reject scores of shipments of life-saving assistance into Gaza. Almost \$50 million worth of food, water, tents, and medical supplies is still being held up at border crossings and warehouses. Oxfam alone has \$2.5 million worth of aid sitting in Jordan, including 4,000 food parcels.*

Expressing "serious concerns about the renewed deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Gaza, which remains catastrophic," on December 30 the foreign ministers of Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Iceland, Japan, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom [issued a joint](#)

statement calling upon Israel to fully open all the crossings and “lift unreasonable restrictions on imports considered to have a dual use... includ[ing] urgently needed medical and shelter equipment.”

## Hobbling of INGOs

The statement further demanded that international NGOs “are able to operate in Gaza in a sustained and predictable way,” and that “the UN and its partners can continue their vital work.” It emphasized that “this includes United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East [UNRWA], which provides essential services, such as health care and education, to millions of Palestinian refugees.”

This last point matters because Israel banned UNWRA—the single most important agency for coordinating aid efforts in Gaza—from operating in Israel from January 2025, on the basis of accusations (for which it provided no evidence) that some of its employees participated in the Hamas October 7 attack. That ban remains in place.

Tightening the screw further, on December 29 the Knesset passed a law cutting off electricity and water supplies to facilities owned by or operating on behalf of UNRWA in the occupied Palestinian territories, and banned provision of telecommunications, banking, and other financial services to the agency.

Under rules introduced in March 2025, Israel required aid organizations operating in Gaza and the West Bank to submit lists of their Palestinian staff by December 31 for vetting by intelligence services. Fearful that this would put their employees in danger of targeting by the IDF, many refused. Their fears are well founded. In 2024 alone, 125 UNRWA aid workers were killed in Gaza, the highest death toll in UN history.

Despite the ceasefire in Gaza, Israel has insisted on implementing this so-called “security” measure. As a result, 37 INGOs have now lost their accreditation and will have to cease operating by March 1. These include Médecins Sans Frontières, Oxfam, Vision International, ActionAid, International Rescue Committee, CARE, Medico International, Medical Aid for Palestinians, and the Norwegian Refugee Council.

These restrictions on aid entering Gaza are too numerous and systematic to be an accident. The guns may have temporarily quieted, but Israel is continuing its ethnic cleansing and genocide by other means.

As winter bites, the old, the infirm, and above all the children will continue to die. In these circumstances the survivors may be that much more willing to abandon their homeland for “voluntary” exile. In another press conference with Netanyahu on December 29, Donald Trump suggested that more than half the population would like to take advantage of such an offer (“To me it’s common sense”).

Coincidentally or otherwise, on January 2 Israel became the first country in the world to recognize the breakaway state of Somaliland, an enclave strategically situated on the coast of the Gulf of Aden. The government of Somaliland has denied agreeing to host Israeli bases or accept displaced Gazans, but suspicions remain.

## **What comes next?**

Three months on, the prospects for Donald Trump’s “comprehensive peace plan” are looking decidedly shaky. Having got all its hostages back, and secure in its military occupation of 53 percent of the Gaza Strip, Israel may decline to move on to phase two and find some excuse to resume the conflict as in the previous ceasefires.

Hamas is unlikely to agree to disarm in the absence of guarantees of eventual statehood that Israel will never give—what more, after all, do Palestinians have to lose by keeping their weapons? Meantime the states that were mooted as contributors of troops to Trump’s proposed international stabilization force, including Egypt, Turkey, and Indonesia, are reportedly getting cold feet about being dragged into the quagmire.

But in a sense none of this matters. The Trump plan has done its job. Gaza is out of the headlines, the allies are back on board, and the US is calling the shots—with the imprimatur of the United Nations Security Council, which has accepted the inevitable.

The “rules-based order” established at the end of World War II is over. The world is entering “a new era of great power competition; a generational struggle to maintain peace through strength”—to quote US Secretary of War Pete

Hegseth, speaking after the US invasion of Venezuela—an era in which right gives way to might.

Resolution 8302 is the embodiment of that capitulation. Gaza is the future. And not just for Palestinians.