Trump's Ceasefire in Israel-Gaza

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"And in an unprecedented achievement, virtually the entire region has endorsed the plan that Gaza will be immediately demilitarized, that Hamas will be disarmed, and Israel's security will no longer be threatened in any way, shape, or form."

– President Donald Trump, in a speech to Israel's Knesset

The U.S. as Architect and Arbiter

The war between Israel and Hamas has taken a devastating toll, leaving over 68,000 Palestinians and about 2,000 Israelis dead since October 2023. Against this backdrop, the Trump administration introduced a 20 point

peace plan for Gaza on September 29, 2025. It was designed as a distinctly American initiative to bring an end to the conflict, reestablish Washington's influence in the region, and showcase Trump's return to global leadership.

By October 10, 2025, a U.S. brokered ceasefire came into effect. Washington quickly moved from mediator to guarantor, coordinating follow-up meetings with regional partners and pledging to oversee the plan's enforcement. At the Sharm El Sheikh summit on October 13, Trump secured public backing from Egypt, Qatar, and Türkiye, presenting the deal as a testament to U.S. diplomacy and cooperation in the region.

Yet as calm settled over Gaza's skyline, the more difficult work was only beginning. Implementing demilitarization, establishing a multinational stabilization force, stewarding an interim government, and managing reconstruction efforts will determine whether this agreement marks a genuine turning point or merely a temporary pause in violence. This article was completed on 24 October; updates to the situation in Gaza are ongoing.

Ceasefire and Hostage Exchanges: Washington's First Success

The first stage of the plan called for Hamas to release all 20 surviving Israeli hostages and transfer the remains of 28 deceased captives in exchange for approximately 2,000 Palestinian detainees. On October 13, 2025, Hamas released the surviving hostages to the International Committee of the Red Cross, and Israel freed nearly 2,000 Palestinian prisoners, most of whom were sent to Gaza and the West Bank.

However, as of October 18, only 13 bodies of the 28 deceased hostages have been returned. Hamas has attributed the delay to the difficulty of retrieving remains buried under extensive rubble from Israeli airstrikes, a claim Israeli officials have questioned as an excuse for noncompliance. This unresolved issue has created growing frustration in Jerusalem and could reignite hostilities if viewed as deliberate obstruction.

Although the ceasefire has largely held, Gaza's media office accused Israel of 47 violations in the first week of the ceasefire, resulting in 38 deaths and over 140 injuries. Israel, in turn, alleged Hamas militants have fired sporadic rockets and conducted sniper fire. These incidents highlight the fragility of the truce and the continuing challenge for Washington to maintain stability. The recent suspension of aid into Gaza also presents difficulties for the protection of civilians.

For the Trump administration, the initial success of the ceasefire offered an opportunity to demonstrate its unique leverage over both sides. Yet every violation and delay in fulfilling terms reminds observers how precarious the peace remains. Some Gaza residents fear an imminent breakdown of the ceasefire, and a return to previous hostilities.

Demilitarization and Israeli Withdrawal: The Core Challenge

The next phase of the 20 point plan—Hamas's full disarmament and Israel's phased withdrawal from Gaza—presents the greatest challenge. The framework requires Hamas to hand over weapons, dismantle tunnels, and relinquish control of border crossings to an international force. Recent evidence suggests Hamas is already reemerging and competing against clans and militias to reassert control of Gaza.

Hamas has rejected unconditional disarmament, insisting that doing so would leave Gaza defenseless. The scale of its tunnel network and weapons caches make verification nearly impossible without full cooperation. Israeli intelligence estimates that thousands of small arms and several hundred rockets remain hidden. Trump has stated that "If they don't disarm, we will disarm them and it will happen quickly and perhaps violently," hinting at potential U.S. or allied pressure if negotiations stall. Israel has meanwhile been arming families and militias in Gaza who are opposed to rule under Hamas, adding complexity to a fragile ceasefire.

This phase is particularly sensitive for Washington. If the U.S. pushes Israel to withdraw too quickly, it risks provoking accusations of compromising Israel's security. Conversely, failing to ensure demilitarization would expose the U.S. to criticism for overseeing an unstable agreement. The delicate balance between credibility and restraint underscores how difficult it will be to turn this plan into a lasting framework for peace.

Should disarmament fail, the ceasefire could collapse entirely, potentially drawing the U.S. back into active diplomatic or even coercive involvement. This risk highlights how the credibility of both Trump and U.S. foreign policy now hinges on compliance by actors with little mutual trust.

The International Stabilization Force and U.S. Oversight

Central to Trump's proposal is the creation of an International Stabilization Force (ISF) led by Egypt, with contributions from Türkiye, Indonesia, and Azerbaijan. Its mandate is to maintain order and monitor the ceasefire during Gaza's political transition. A small number of British soldiers were also recently deployed to Gaza to monitor the ceasefire.

As of October 18, 2025, negotiations over troop numbers, jurisdiction, and command structure are still underway. The United Nations has not officially endorsed the force, though U.S. officials argue that a regional mechanism will be more agile and credible. Without a formal framework, however, the initiative's effectiveness remains uncertain.

For Washington, the ISF allows projection of stability through allies rather than American troops, consistent with Trump's "America First" doctrine. Yet reliance on regional forces could limit U.S. control if disagreements arise over operational rules or engagement policies.

Governance and the Technocratic Transition

The fourth stage of the plan envisions a technocratic interim government to administer Gaza until a reformed Palestinian Authority assumes control. On October 13, the U.S. and Egypt announced the appointment of 15 Palestinian technocrats to this temporary body.

This approach aligns with Washington's preference for politically neutral governance, drawing on lessons from Iraq and Afghanistan. However, sidelining Hamas may deepen divisions in Gaza, where many view the interim administration as externally imposed. Nevertheless, the peace plan demands that Hamas have no role in governing Gaza, and Israel will not accept a future where it does. Resistance to the legitimacy of this temporary governing may create friction among Palestinians that undermines early progress.

For the U.S., this phase carries both symbolic and practical stakes. Success would bolster America's reputation for stabilizing fragile states, while failure could expose limits to its state-building ambitions. The credibility of American diplomacy may hinge as much on how Gaza is governed in the next months as on the disarmament process itself.

Reconstruction and American Soft Power

The reconstruction of Gaza is expected to cost around 70 billion U.S. dollars, according to the UN, World Bank, and EU. More than 90 percent of schools are damaged or destroyed, hospitals remain largely nonfunctional, and debris obstructs much of the city infrastructure. The UN released 11 million dollars in emergency aid on October 14 to begin relief operations, while Qatar pledged 4 billion dollars contingent on the continuation of the ceasefire. Both President Trump and former British PM Tony Blair are said to be part of a "Board of Peace" overseeing reconstruction of Gaza.

This reconstruction phase also serves Washington's strategic goal of restoring its soft power. The Trump administration has emphasized that visible progress in rebuilding Gaza will serve as proof that U.S.-led diplomacy can deliver tangible results. Yet logistical obstacles and political divisions have slowed early implementation.

Regional Dynamics and U.S. Strategy

The plan's stability depends not only on local compliance but also on regional actors. Iran has denounced the deal as "a mirage of peace," while Hezbollah continues to provoke along Israel's northern frontier. At the Sharm summit, Trump signed the "Declaration for Enduring Peace and Prosperity" with Egypt, Qatar, and Türkiye, signaling a symbolic coalition under U.S. leadership.

While some in Washington praise the plan as a pragmatic step toward stability, others warn it may be more about optics than lasting peace. Still,

the agreement has re-centered U.S. influence in the region and offered Trump a platform to reclaim America's image as a decisive global power.

Unfinished Business

Although this ceasefire is a necessary step towards deescalation in Gaza, it does not address a number of issues related to this conflict. Iran is not mentioned in the 20-point peace plan, and its 10-year long nuclear agreement expired several days after the conclusion of the ceasefire.

Hezbollah and the Houthi rebels in Yemen are likewise excluded from mention in the peace plan. Lebanon's government is reportedly currently struggling to disarm Hezbollah without provoking open violence in the country. Meanwhile, the Houthis have reportedly agreed to stop attacking cargo ships in the Red Sea—for a while, anyway. Some observers fear a restart of hostilities if the ceasefire falls through.

No multilateral agreement will be able to stymie the investigations into Israel's PM Benjamin Netanyahu, nor the former Israel Minister of Defense, Yoav Gallant, who have both been indicted by the International Criminal Court. And although actions in future months may affect the International Court of Justice's inquiry, prompted by South Africa, into potential genocide conducted in Gaza, states are not withdrawing their case, and the investigation and deliberations will continue for months more. Nor did the 20-point peace plan mention the West Bank, still an area of tension between Israelis and Palestinians.

Trump's Gamble and America's Legacy

From a U.S. standpoint, the Gaza ceasefire represents both a calculated, tentative, diplomatic victory and also a precarious experiment in negotiation. The Trump administration can point to clear accomplishments—the ceasefire's implementation, hostage releases, and early reconstruction pledges—but the plan's deeper success will depend on sustained cooperation and active enforcement.

Trump has also hinted that the initiative should earn him the Nobel Peace Prize. Reports suggest he expressed frustration after this year's prize was awarded before his plan was unveiled, viewing it as a missed recognition. Analysts note that if the ceasefire endures and reconstruction advances, Trump could be considered a contender next year, marking a symbolic victory to his foreign policy agenda.

Whether that recognition comes or not, the ultimate measure will be whether U.S. diplomacy can turn this fragile truce into a durable peace that stabilizes both Gaza and the region at large.