

Trump's Initiative for the Resettlement of Palestinians from Gaza—A Feasibility Assessment

Reem Cohen | No. 1948 | February 17, 2025

President Trump's initiative for the resettlement of Palestinians from Gaza may indicate a shift in the approach to addressing the region's widespread destruction and the lack of housing for residents displaced by the war. Trump's plan also seeks to involve Egypt and Jordan in actively resolving the challenges posed by this situation. If the initiative is indeed implemented, the process should be carried out with the consent of all those involved, offer meaningful incentives, and establish international oversight to protect the rights of those who emigrate. At the same time, the United States and other relevant international actors should engage in dialogue with the Palestinians, integrating their needs into the initiative and ensuring a fair and comprehensive solution. Israel, in turn, should take a secondary role and refrain from openly leading the effort or its implementation while allowing Gazans to leave.

The Gaza Strip is one of the most densely populated and complex areas in the world, home to over 2.1 million people. Even before the onset of the war on October 7, 2023, Gaza faced a prolonged economic, social, and humanitarian crisis. High demographic pressure, an 80% unemployment rate, and dependence on foreign aid made Gaza a difficult place to live. The war that began on October 7, 2023, exacerbated these issues, causing widespread destruction of infrastructure. Against this backdrop, President Trump's proposal to transfer residents from Gaza to other countries—including Egypt, Jordan, Albania, and Indonesia—marks a shift in the approach to resolving the crisis in the war-torn region. The idea is to create mechanisms that will allow residents to leave Gaza in an orderly manner while ensuring their rights and facilitating Gaza's reconstruction, all while removing the burden of having to provide housing and humanitarian aid to hundreds of thousands of displaced Gazans. This proposal raises important questions regarding its political, economic, and legal feasibility, as well as its potential regional and international implications.

President Trump's Proposal

US President Donald Trump's proposal to resettle Palestinian refugees from the Gaza Strip in neighboring countries—specifically Egypt and Jordan (and even more distant countries such as Albania and Indonesia)—has sparked extensive debate in both the international and regional arenas. Trump stated that he had spoken with King Abdullah II of Jordan about the possibility of his country accepting Palestinian refugees and had also discussed the issue with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi. According to Trump, the [situation in Gaza is a “mess” and “something has to happen](#). But it's literally a demolition site right now. Almost everything's demolished, and people are dying there. So I'd rather get involved with some of

the Arab nations and build housing in a different location where they can maybe live in peace for a change.”

Furthermore, in his meeting with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on February 4, 2025, [Trump proposed an initiative](#) whereby all residents of the Gaza Strip would be resettled in other countries. He stated that the United States would take responsibility for clearing bombs and debris from Gaza and would work toward economic development that would provide jobs and housing. He even suggested that the United States assume long-term control over the Gaza Strip to promote stability in the Middle East. Netanyahu called the idea “out-of-the-box thinking.”

It should be emphasized that Arab states have strongly opposed the initiative and refuse to accept refugees from the Gaza Strip. Egypt has firmly rejected any attempt to resettle Palestinian refugees within its borders, primarily due to concerns about demographic changes in the Sinai Peninsula and the potential destabilization of the country’s internal security. Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi declared that Egypt would not accept any attempt to transfer Palestinians into its territory, emphasizing that the resolution of the Palestinian issue should be found within Palestine’s borders. Jordan also categorically rejected the proposal. Jordanian government spokesperson Mohammed al-Momani stated that [“Jordan’s national security is tied to Palestinians remaining on their land and rejecting emigration.”](#)

Although President Trump’s initiative signals a shift in the US approach to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, the United States’ Arab partners view it as a potential disruption to the status quo in their countries rather than a step toward easing tensions related to the Palestinian issue. [In a joint statement](#) issued at the foreign ministers’ summit of the Arab League in Cairo on February 1, representatives of the member states reaffirmed their commitment to a two-state solution and the protection of Palestinian rights while rejecting the displacement of Gaza’s residents. They emphasized the need to support efforts to rehabilitate the Gaza Strip and ensure that Palestinians remain in their homeland.

Nevertheless, despite their initial opposition, Arab states—particularly Egypt and Jordan—could benefit from essential economic incentives if persuaded to cooperate in implementing the initiative. For Egypt, for instance, accepting refugees in northern Sinai could contribute to regional development and strengthen the local economy. Jordan, meanwhile, faces demographic and political challenges that could destabilize the delicate balance between its Palestinian and Transjordanian populations. However, with adequate funding and careful planning of designated residential areas for Gazan immigrants in the southern part of the kingdom, the initiative could present an opportunity to strengthen Jordan’s economy.

Other countries may also be willing to receive Palestinians from Gaza for resettlement. For example, in October 2023, at the start of the war, Humza Yousaf, then Scotland’s first minister, expressed his country’s willingness to accept Palestinian refugees from Gaza and urged other nations to join the humanitarian effort. In May 2024, Canada announced its intention to increase the number of Palestinian refugees it would admit from Gaza to approximately 5,000 Palestinians with relatives in Canada. Additionally, Israel’s ambassador to the UN, Danny Danon, stressing the importance of creating options for Palestinians seeking to relocate to

other countries, stated that countries in South America and Africa had expressed their willingness to accept Palestinians from Gaza in exchange for economic support.

Economic and Political Implications of the Trump Initiative

Key aspects of encouraging resettlement include the need to create significant economic incentives for both those being resettled and the host countries. The United States and other international actors may offer extensive economic aid packages (the cost is estimated at approximately \$14 billion for the migration of about half a million Gaza residents). However, the central question remains whether this aid will be sustainable in the long term or whether it will become a source of opposition from host countries concerned about the economic, social, and security implications of absorbing a substantial Palestinian population. If the initiative advances to practical implementation, the United States will strengthen its position as a global leader in promoting pragmatic solutions to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict while reducing the diplomatic and political burden it faces regarding this issue.

For Palestinians, Trump’s initiative could present a genuine opportunity to improve their living conditions. Resettlement in other countries with guaranteed economic incentives, infrastructure, and services could provide a better life for many families. A survey conducted by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PSR), led by Dr. Khalil Shikaki, indicates that a significant portion of Gaza’s residents have expressed a desire to emigrate; 44% of Gazans aged 18–29 would leave the Strip if given the opportunity. The reasons for this are varied, including dire humanitarian conditions, high unemployment, Hamas’ tight control, and a sense of hopelessness about improving their situation. For many, the possibility of leaving Gaza has become a dream, especially given the severe security and economic crisis they face. Nevertheless, the initiative has met strong opposition from Hamas and the Palestinian Authority, which fear it will be perceived as another Nakba and as a surrender of the Palestinians’ right to self-determination.

The initiative also raises legal questions. Encouraging resettlement must be conducted while safeguarding human rights and without coercion. The emphasis in Trump’s initiative is on positive incentives rather than pressure or force. The involvement of international bodies such as the UN—should it choose to cooperate in advancing Trump’s initiative—would help ensure that it meets international standards. Additionally, broad participation from multiple countries in leading the process could reduce concerns over legal criticism on the global stage.

However, strong opposition from regional countries, alongside resistance from Palestinian leadership and international organizations, could prevent the initiative from materializing or lead to significant obstacles. Additionally, a lack of willingness from host countries to cooperate may result in the initiative’s failure, worsening the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and reinforcing international criticism against Israel and the United States for allegedly seeking to remove the Palestinian population instead of addressing the root causes of the conflict. In this scenario, Trump’s initiative could become a highly controversial issue in the international arena.

The Israeli Perspective

The discussion about encouraging emigration from the Gaza Strip has surfaced multiple times in Israel's public and political arenas. [Surveys conducted](#) by the Direct Polls company in 2024, during the war, indicated that approximately 80% of respondents in Israel supported encouraging Gaza residents who wished to emigrate abroad, while 12% opposed it. Similarly, [a survey conducted by the Israel Index of the Jewish People Policy Institute \(JPPI\)](#) on February 3, 2025, found that 52% of Israeli Jews consider Trump's initiative practical and believe it should be promoted, while another 30% see it as a positive idea but ultimately unfeasible. In other words, more than 80% of respondents support the idea of moving the residents of Gaza to other countries.

Human rights related to freedom of movement and the choice of individuals in their own country and in other nations are protected by international law. International treaties, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, limit a state's ability to exert direct or indirect pressure to encourage emigration by force. Additionally, many Gaza residents are registered as refugees under UNRWA, a status that grants them certain rights, including economic aid. This could pose an obstacle to encouraging the resettlement of Gazans, as their departure might lead to the loss of assistance provided by the organization. At the same time, resettlement encouraged through economic incentives and improved opportunities in other countries—secured by host states and the international system—could be considered legitimate as long as the human rights of those being resettled are protected and they are not subjected to direct or indirect coercion. Encouraging emigration from Gaza, therefore, requires a strong legal framework to prevent concerns about human rights violations.

The fact that the initiative originates from the United States rather than Israel reduces legal complexities and could make it easier to gain international support. From Israel's perspective, this initiative presents a significant strategic advantage by reducing both security and demographic pressures along its southern border. Additionally, it could mitigate security threats to Israel, as the resettlement of even some of the population could diminish support for terrorist organizations. The initiative, in the context of Egypt and Jordan, appears aimed at actively involving these two countries in resolving the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, stabilizing and rebuilding the region, or absorbing Gazans to alleviate humanitarian pressure.

However, there is a risk that encouraging resettlement could be perceived as coercion or as a discriminatory policy, potentially triggering widespread international criticism. Furthermore, resettlement might be interpreted as an attempt to depopulate the Gaza Strip in a way that weakens Palestinian claims to the territory or as a prelude to Israeli annexation of parts of Gaza. For these reasons, without the willingness of other countries to accept immigrants from Gaza, the plan would not be feasible.

Conclusion

A key aspect of Trump's initiative is the recognition that solving the Gaza problem is not solely Israel's responsibility but requires broad regional and international involvement. Shifting the perception that the Gaza Strip is solely an Israeli problem is crucial, as the initiative also places responsibility on Arab states to find a solution. Moreover, many of the solutions are beyond

Israel's direct control. For example, Israel cannot single-handedly promote de-radicalization among the Palestinians, while addressing the Palestinian issue should be considered within a broader regional context.

Implementing President Trump's proposal requires international coordination, extensive financial resources, and safeguards to protect the human rights of those who are resettled. At this stage, the initiative indeed signals a shift in American policy toward the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and challenges conventional approaches such as the “two-state solution.” However, it still lacks clear mechanisms for effective execution. The key question is whether the Arab world and the international community will be willing to support such a solution. Furthermore, will the residents of the Gaza Strip see it as a real opportunity to improve their lives, or will they continue to perceive it as an attempt to weaken Palestinian national identity and their right to self-determination?

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