

Israel's Demands for the Demilitarization of the Gaza Strip and the Operating Principles of the International Stabilization Force

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The United States is determined to advance the implementation of President Donald Trump's framework to end the war and reshape the Gaza Strip without Hamas, and with the area demilitarized of military and terrorist capabilities. The gap between the strategic objective and the challenges of implementation indicates that the success of the framework will require coercive and sustained American involvement, close coordination with Israel, and persuasive US efforts to convince moderate Arab states to take an active role in stabilizing, demilitarizing, and rebuilding the Gaza Strip.

As for an International Stabilization Force (ISF), Israel must insist that it operate in accordance with performance-oriented objectives, beginning with initial stabilization, followed by a process of disarmament, and culminating in the transfer of control to the Palestinian Authority (PA), once it has carried out reforms and is capable of realizing the principle of "one authority, one law, one gun." To that end, Israel should not rule out the renewal of the PA's presence in the Gaza Strip and should agree to formulate a political framework with it that, among other things, will help expand the scope of the Abraham Accords.

In any case, it is essential that Israel maintain greater security responsibility to thwart threats and prevent the rebuilding of Hamas's military capabilities.

Background and Purpose of Establishing an International Stabilization Force in the Gaza Strip

The process of demilitarizing the Gaza Strip is one of the central components of the Trump framework. The United States has circulated a draft text in early November for a UN Security Council resolution that would provide a mandate for [an international stabilization force \(ISF\) in Gaza](#) for at least two years. The ISF would be authorized to protect civilians and humanitarian aid operations, work to secure border areas with Israel and Egypt along with a newly trained and vetted Palestinian police force, which the ISF would be responsible for training and supporting. The ISF would stabilize security in Gaza, "including through the demilitarization of non-state armed groups and the permanent decommissioning of weapons, as necessary."

The ISF is expected to deploy throughout Gaza during the transitional period and serve as the primary security authority in place of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). In other words, its purpose is to immediately fill the security and governance vacuum that will emerge once

Hamas is removed from power, to assist in transferring control to a temporary technocratic committee, and to prevent anarchy and/or the reestablishment of terrorist infrastructure. In addition, the ISF intends to shape the conditions for the PA's return to the Strip after it undergoes reforms that will prepare it for governing the territory.

From Israel's perspective, the ISF must be granted enforcement powers to ensure the disarmament of Hamas and other armed factions, in accordance with Trump's plan for the demilitarization of the Strip. However, significant gaps exist between Israel's position and those of Hamas, the PA, and the moderate Arab states regarding the role of the stabilization force.

- **Hamas and other factions in the Gaza Strip** are prepared to hand over the civilian-security management of the Strip to a Palestinian technocratic committee and have even expressed a willingness for the deployment of UN peacekeeping forces to serve as a buffer between the IDF and Palestinian forces, and at most, they will have supervisory authority over the implementation of the ceasefire. Hamas opposes any international force with enforcement powers aimed at disarming the armed organizations. According to its spokesmen, the issue of disarmament is tied to the end of the "occupation" and is premature to address.
- **The Palestinian Authority** views the ISF as a mechanism for monitoring the ceasefire, which would enable the PA to renew its control in the Gaza Strip. The PA demands that internal security be entrusted to official Palestinian entities, namely, its security forces. The PA is willing to see an international peacekeeping force that is established under a UN Security Council resolution as a body that supports Palestinian security, border protection, and the training of Palestinian forces.
- **The moderate Arab states**, which pressed President Trump to advance the framework for ending the war and support Hamas's disarmament, are reluctant to participate in the ISF. They prefer a "peacekeeping" model limited to monitoring and buffering, without powers to enforce disarmament. They are prepared to assist, train, and fund but without deploying Arab troops or putting "boots on the ground."

Consequently, following Israel's opposition to the deployment of Turkish and Qatari forces into the Strip, the United States is advancing a plan to include other Muslim countries, particularly Indonesia and Azerbaijan. According to this plan, in addition to being under American command, the stabilization force will rely on Muslim and Arab troops to enhance its legitimacy and acceptability among the Palestinians. European countries will be expected to participate indirectly, focusing on monitoring, advising, mentoring, and providing logistical support to the force, in full coordination with the Civil-Military Coordination Center (CMCC) established by the United States in Israel.

Civil–Military Coordination Center—Objectives and Tasks

To enable informed management of assistance (food, supplies, infrastructure) to the Gaza Strip—and to monitor implementation of the ceasefire or transition arrangements;

To coordinate among partner states, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, and logistical forces;

To support long-term stability and the entry of the ISF into the Gaza Strip.

Israel's strategic objectives—the end of Hamas's rule in the Gaza Strip and the destruction of the organization's military capabilities, as well as those of other armed factions—remains valid even after the war's end. Accordingly, Israel views the disarmament of Hamas and the other factions and the prevention of their rearmament as central objectives and demands that the Strip's reconstruction be closely linked to its demilitarization. However, Israel's position regarding the ISF's mandate is ambivalent. While Israel supports granting the ISF enforcement powers to disarm Hamas and the other factions, it also seeks to preserve broad operational freedom of action to enforce security arrangements should Hamas resist. Israel fears that the ISF's deployment could impose constraints on the IDF's freedom of action in the Strip. In any event, Israel insists on retaining **overriding security responsibility** in order to counter threats and prevent the reestablishment of terrorist infrastructure in Gaza if the Palestinian police and the ISF face difficulties in disarming Hamas and the other terrorist groups and in preventing their rebuilding.

Israel should demand the integration of a ceasefire, the deployment of the ISF, and the demilitarization of the Strip within a process of Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR). This process combines compulsory and voluntary components that have been used in several conflict zones worldwide and requires intervention by an international force with implementation and enforcement powers. Applying this model would place the Strip on a reconstruction track free of military capabilities, terror, and violence. This process should include the following stages:

Stage I—Initial stabilization: An international stabilization force will be deployed, supported by a Palestinian policing force trained and operated under Egyptian/Jordanian/American supervision. In its initial phase, this force will focus on restoring public order; securing the distribution of humanitarian aid; conducting security checks at crossings; mapping terrorist infrastructure; and developing an intelligence picture aimed at locating weapons stockpiles and workshops that produce and assemble rockets, missiles, and explosive charges. This force will also launch a short-term voluntary weapons collection program, allowing combatants to surrender weapons and other means of warfare in exchange for incentives.

Stage II—Beginning of disarmament and enforcement: The ISF will conduct operations to collect weapons, expose and dismantle weapons stockpiles and production infrastructures; remove offensive weaponry from the Strip; operate centers for the destruction and dismantling of weapons; and demolish tunnels. In parallel, the force will oversee the reorganization of Palestinian policing mechanisms. Palestinian legislation will also be required to prohibit armed militias and ensure that the monopoly on the use of force rests solely with the technocratic committee.

Stage III—Combined control: Joint operations by the ISF and the Palestinian police will take place, with a gradual transfer of powers to the Palestinian police according to defined performance metrics.

Stage IV—Full Palestinian control: The international force will transition into a monitoring and verification mission to ensure that the disarmament process continues and to prevent the rearmament of Hamas and other Palestinian factions. The Palestinian police will assume full responsibility for public order, disarmament, and internal security.

Israel must be involved in shaping the ISF's mandate, which should be defined in a security protocol and operate under US leadership, likely in partnership with Egypt, the PA, and additional Arab states (with priority given to Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia). That protocol will define the ISF's areas of responsibility, its powers, rules of engagement (ROE), and coordination mechanisms with Israel. It is important to define in the ISF's mandate its role in preparing the conditions for a moderate, responsible Palestinian governing body in the Strip; in disarming Hamas and other factions; and in implementing long-term demilitarization of the territory. It is necessary to challenge those drafting the mandate—if the ISF is not given enforcement powers to carry out disarmament and Hamas refuses to surrender its weapons, then Israel must retain the right to act to prevent future threats against it. It is essential that this condition be anchored in a UN Security Council resolution if the ISF is established pursuant to such a resolution.

Structure and composition of the force: The ISF will be under American command, within the overall framework of the US Central Command (CENTCOM). Full and close coordination with Israel will be conducted via a security coordination mechanism, integrated into the Civil–Military Coordination Center (CMCC) that the United States established. The CMCC will serve as a friction-mitigation and dispute-resolution body, overseeing the establishment and implementation of all civilian and security mechanisms and synchronizing them. At the same time, it should reduce potential frictions between the IDF, the ISF, and the Palestinian police.

Capabilities Required of the ISF

- **Rapid-intervention** capabilities that enable the force to respond immediately to threats and loss of control on the ground. High mobility is required—on land, including complex urban terrain, in the air, and at sea. (1) **On land**—lightly armored vehicles with high mobility; engineering capabilities to detect and destroy tunnels and subterranean infrastructure; (2) **In the air**—a helicopter wing for airlifting special forces, search-and-rescue, and aerial collection and reconnaissance platforms, including UAVs and drones; (3) **At sea**—a coast-guard flotilla to detect and prevent smuggling and infiltrations by sea.
- **Self-defense capabilities:** To protect forces and ensure mission effectiveness.
- **Intelligence:** Advanced intelligence-collection capabilities; information sharing with Israel, Egypt, and CENTCOM; centralized fusing, processing, and presentation of an updated operational picture 24/7; emphasis on intelligence aimed at locating weapons as well as production and storage facilities; precision intelligence with short reporting loops to the stabilization forces deployed on the ground.

The disarmament mission, even if carried out by the Palestinian police under ISF supervision and backing, must include the following steps:

Intelligence and mapping of terrorist infrastructure and weapon concealment sites



A short amnesty window + incentives (“weapons-for-bonus” + community reward)



Fixed/mobile turn-in posts + registration and biometric recording



Secure storage of weapons found or surrendered under ISF custody



Sorting and destruction (cutting/melting; dismantling warheads; controlled detonations;
removal of hazardous materials)



Neutralization and demolition of production infrastructures, tunnels, and storage facilities



Multi-layer verification (community + intelligence + spot checks)



Targeted enforcement against defiant elements + Palestinian judicial process

Expected Obstacles and Constraints

The anticipated challenges in stabilizing and demilitarizing the Gaza Strip include Hamas’s refusal to cooperate—the organization does not disarm and does not reveal its tunnel networks; ongoing resistance—Hamas and other faction members attack ISF and Palestinian police forces; a governance vacuum—the technocratic committee proves unstable, ineffective, and unable to prevent chaos; continued public support for Hamas and opposition to its disarmament; obstruction of stabilization, disarmament, the dismantling of armed groups, and integration under the PA by Hamas and other factions; reluctance among moderate Arab states to intervene or assist, leaving the arena open to Qatari and Turkish influence; and the failure of the reintegration programs intended to absorb former militants into Palestinian society and reconstruction efforts.

Accordingly, Israel must hold dialogue with American representatives and with those of the countries expected to contribute forces to the ISF in order to prepare for these scenarios in advance. Simultaneously, Israel must formulate a backup plan that includes “defensive belts” before reaching a point of breakdown and returning to confrontation with Hamas. This framework includes conditioning reconstruction on effective disarmament processes; building legitimacy for disarmament through the involvement of moderate community, religious, and social leaders; establishing mechanisms of social reconciliation; and creating a clear alternative narrative to Hamas—one that centers on a shared goal of reconstruction and personal security for most Gaza residents; ensuring that the Palestinian police focus on enforcement capabilities against “spoilers”; integrating the PA into regional economic and

infrastructure projects to strengthen its commitment to the framework and its resolve to implement President Abbas's vision of "one authority, one law, one gun."

In any case, international diplomatic and economic efforts will be required to "dry out" Hamas's power base. This includes intensifying and expanding direct international sanctions on Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and other extremist entities; establishing financial mechanisms to prevent the transfer of funds and assets to Hamas, its operatives, and the various factions; and imposing sanctions on states and international organizations that assist Hamas.

Conclusion

Israel must present an organized, multi-layered, and detailed plan for the demilitarization of the Gaza Strip, including the missions and the mandate of the ISF. Preparations must include responses to foreseeable scenarios, especially the lack of cooperation by Palestinian actors (both Hamas and other factions as well as the PA) and the hesitation of Arab states and the international community to intervene directly in Gaza or invest in its long-term stabilization.

The gap between the strategic objective—a demilitarized Gaza Strip, responsibly governed by a moderate Palestinian actor—and the operational, legal, and political challenges involved in achieving this objective indicates that the success of the framework will require coercive and sustained American involvement, close coordination with Israel, and US persuasion of moderate Arab states to mobilize for active intervention in the stabilization, demilitarization, and reconstruction of the Gaza Strip. To this end, Israel should remain open to the PA's involvement in Gaza's stabilization—provided it implements the required reforms—and should seek to formulate with it a political framework that would also help expand the scope of the Abraham Accords.