

The Egyptian Agenda and Relations with Israel in the Shadow of the War in the Gaza Strip

Amira Oron | November 23, 2025

The main foreign policy issue that has preoccupied Egypt recently has been the war in the Gaza Strip. Egypt's policy toward the war in particular, and toward Israel in general, should be assessed in light of two central factors: first, the prolonged war and its severe consequences in the Gaza Strip—an area that directly borders Egypt; and second, the war's contribution to the growing prominence of the Palestinian issue on Egypt's national agenda, which resonates deeply within Egyptian public opinion. In this sense, this current situation is unprecedented in the 45 years of peace between Egypt and Israel.

The war has posed a significant test for Egyptian–Israeli relations. At the same time, Egypt's leadership has had to consider its domestic political and economic agenda—already burdened with challenges—as it formulated its policy toward both the war and Israel. Understanding these two dimensions—Egypt's position on the Palestinian issue and its internal challenges—helps explain Egypt's policy toward Israel and the likely implications for relations between the two countries. The analysis and insights presented in this article are based on official statements, as well as commentary and reporting by Egyptian analysts and journalists during the period under review.

In December 2023, presidential elections were held in Egypt, concluding a complex and challenging year for President al-Sisi. During that time, [al-Sisi was compelled to contend](#) with growing public tension and anger stemming from the prolonged economic crisis Egypt had been experiencing—particularly the rise in the cost of living. In the last quarter of 2023, [economic indicators](#) were negative: Inflation had reached 32%, with food prices increasing by 68%; the value of the Egyptian pound had fallen to 50 pounds to the dollar. The ongoing war in Ukraine, along with disruptions to shipping through the Suez Canal caused by Houthi activity—which led to a significant 70% drop in the canal's revenues that year—were additional causes for public concern. Moreover, the civil war in Sudan brought a large and constant flow of refugees into Egypt, and there was growing apprehension over the possible influx of Palestinian refugees into the Sinai Peninsula due to the war in Gaza.

President al-Sisi had to maneuver between several fronts: the country's economic needs—mainly the reforms outlined by the International Monetary Fund as part of its economic recovery program; public distress; and a tense geopolitical situation along Egypt's borders (Libya, Sudan, the Gaza Strip, and the dispute over the filling of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam on the Nile). His first move was to advance the presidential elections, which had originally been scheduled for spring 2024, to December 2023. The aim was to preemptively secure renewed public support for his policies and obtain a mandate from the public for further measures and decision-making as Egypt's challenges were expected to intensify.

Egyptian Policy Toward the Gaza Strip Over the Past Two Decades

The Gaza Strip is of critical importance to Egypt's national security because of its geographic proximity to Egypt and its direct impact on the Sinai Peninsula, particularly on Egypt's ability to maintain governance and security there. The significance of Gaza to Egypt was apparent in the decade after January 2011, when social and political unrest led to the fall of the Mubarak regime and weakened Egypt's control over Sinai. Terrorist networks in Sinai and the Gaza Strip reinforced one another, primarily through tunnels dug beneath the Philadelphi Route that connected the two areas. Through these tunnels, terrorists, weapons, equipment, and goods were smuggled in both directions, effectively turning the Strip and the Sinai Peninsula into a single area of significant instability. Therefore, from the beginning of his presidency in 2014, President al-Sisi adopted a strict policy aimed at restoring governance in Sinai. Egypt took action against terrorism and implemented a series of measures—in coordination with Israel—which included sealing the tunnels under the border with Gaza, altering the terrain along the Gaza–Egypt border adjacent to the Philadelphi Route, and conducting extensive military operations against terrorist strongholds in northern Sinai that claimed the lives of Egyptian officers and soldiers. At the same time as it blocked the tunnels, Egypt allowed substantial overland trade between Gaza and Egypt and in 2018 opened the [Salah al-Din Gate adjacent to the Rafah crossing](#) for that purpose.

Egypt regards the Gaza Strip as part of the territory on which a future Palestinian state is to be established, as stipulated by the Oslo Accords. This outlook contrasts with Israel's approach, which seeks to separate Gaza from the West Bank and from the future Palestinian state. The war between Hamas and Israel in Gaza has forcefully returned the Palestinian issue to the forefront of regional consciousness—an issue that Egypt has consistently supported throughout the history of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. From the beginning of Egypt's peace relations with Israel, President Sadat offered a solution to the Palestinian problem as part of the peace process he initiated with Israel, which was reflected in the Framework for Peace in the Middle East agreements—known as the Camp David Accords—signed in September 1978, and in [his historic speech at the Knesset](#) on November 20, 1977. Moreover, in the past decade, Egypt has notably played a central role in preventing escalation between Israel and Hamas and halting rounds of fighting between them by formulating understandings that served as the basis for prolonged ceasefires. These developments have reflected Egypt's consistent position that the Palestinian issue lies at the heart of the Arab–Israeli conflict, defined as the “problem of the problems,” and from this perspective, a just resolution to the conflict could bring about its end.

The senior Egyptian commentator, [retired Major General Muhammad Ibrahim al-Duwairi](#), who serves as deputy director of the Egyptian Center for Strategic Studies (ECSS), summarized the importance of the Gaza Strip to Egypt as follows:

(The Gaza Strip) is a national security issue because of the 14-kilometer shared border with Egypt, known as the Philadelphi Route. Egypt has recognized the borders of the Palestinian state in accordance with the position of the international community, which views the Gaza Strip and the West Bank as a single political entity. Egypt does not see Gaza as a separate or independent unit and therefore works to promote internal Palestinian

reconciliation. In this way, Egypt seeks to prevent the security situation from deteriorating in northern Sinai, which was fueled by the tunnels that had been dug along the border with Gaza. The Rafah land crossing is the entry and exit point for the residents of the Strip; it lies within Egyptian territory, and it is also the route through which essential humanitarian aid enters.

The War in the Gaza Strip in Egypt's Presidential Election Campaign

A clear demonstration of the centrality of both the Gaza Strip and the Palestinian issue in Egypt could be seen during its presidential election campaign. President al-Sisi's statements in various forums throughout November and December 2023 showed how effectively he leveraged the war as an issue of national security for Egypt to serve his campaign and restore his standing among the Egyptian public. A dramatic event such as the war in Gaza, with all its implications, inevitably provides a head of state with an opportunity to project leadership and strength, thereby seeking to bolster public confidence in his rule. As the elections approached, improving President al-Sisi's image became an urgent priority, particularly given the growing number of videos on social media that featured Egyptian citizens expressing anger, fatigue, and resentment toward the president. They appealed to him, pleaded with him, and even attacked him verbally, blaming him for their economic hardship, the significant decline in their living standards, and even their inability to afford basic food items. In their economic assessments, international financial institutions indicated that Egypt's middle class was the main casualty of the prolonged economic crisis. Characteristically, Egyptians also responded with satirical videos mocking their economic situation and criticizing the president's flawed priorities regarding the needs of the public and the state. The economic crisis thus became the central and almost sole issue fueling public criticism of the president.

However, public attitudes toward al-Sisi began to shift in November 2023 when he declared [that the potential transfer of Palestinian civilians from Gaza to Sinai was a "red line."](#) At the time, Egyptians felt this possibility seemed plausible, given statements by Israeli officials and numerous reports in the Israeli and international media. However, by designating the matter a "red line," the president underscored to the Egyptian public that this subject was of supreme national security importance, and there would be no retreat from this position. This declaration also served as a signal for Egypt's media, commentators, and experts to discuss the issue intensively and continuously throughout the war—and indeed up to the present day. In this context, al-Sisi was presented as a defender of the homeland, the guardian of Egyptian sovereignty who stood firm and resolute out of a deep patriotic conviction against international pressures, as they appeared in the different proposals and various plans reported by the media to resettle Palestinians from Gaza in Sinai. The public discourse revived and reinforced the perception that the president was loyal and committed to Egypt, just as he had shown in 2013, when, as minister of defense during Morsi's presidency, he opposed initiatives led by the Muslim Brotherhood, which he believed threatened to alter Egypt's identity.

Other policy measures taken by al-Sisi that enhanced his public image included his firm position in support of the Palestinian people, especially residents of Gaza, manifested by providing extensive humanitarian aid, evacuating and treating the wounded, and coordinating

with Arab states, the international community, UN agencies, and civil society organizations. The president also led a broad diplomatic effort, together with former Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry and current Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty, beginning with the Cairo Peace Summit, convened and hosted by Egypt on October 21, 2023. Egypt continued this diplomatic activity by hosting numerous heads of state and senior ministers and by actively participating in every international forum on the issue, and through the many foreign visits undertaken by its foreign ministers. Furthermore, Egypt regularly hosted Mahmoud Abbas, the president of the Palestinian Authority, as well as senior leaders of Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. This activity reinforced among the public in Egypt and across the Arab world the importance of the Palestinian issue as a regional concern.

Egypt also played a leading role in shaping a unified Arab–Islamic position on the war, as reflected in [President al-Sisi’s speech at the Arab–Islamic Summit held in Riyadh](#) in November 2023. In that address, he called for an immediate ceasefire; an end to all measures aimed at promoting the forced displacement of Palestinians within or outside the Gaza Strip; the secure delivery of humanitarian aid; the advancement of the two-state solution through the establishment of a Palestinian state; and the investigation of crimes committed in Gaza. This position was reaffirmed at the second session of the summit in November 2024, where it was decided to establish the Arab–Islamic Ministerial Committee, composed of the foreign ministers of leading Arab and Muslim countries—including Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan, and Turkey. Since its inception, the committee has worked intensively to mobilize international support for recognizing a Palestinian state as soon as possible.

The elections in December 2023 culminated with President al-Sisi’s victory over the four other presidential candidates—a result that, for many in Egypt, was a foregone conclusion given the identity of the other contenders. This perception largely explained the low voter turnout of 45%. Public apathy toward the elections also reflected the population’s preoccupation with the economic crisis and its impact on their standard of living, as seen in the popular hashtags circulating even during the election days—among them the dollar exchange rate, food prices, and the black market. In [his victory speech](#), President al-Sisi identified the war taking place on Egypt’s eastern border as Egypt’s foremost challenge and stated that efforts were required to bring it to an end, as it threatened Egypt’s national security and the fate of the Palestinian issue. Al-Sisi claimed that the impressive voter turnout in the Egyptian elections represented an expression of opposition to the “inhumane war,” as he defined it. In doing so, the president echoed the public mood and signaled to the media and commentators to continue expressing this position.

Challenges During President al-Sisi’s Third Term

Al-Sisi’s third term, which officially began in April 2024 with his swearing-in before parliament, thus far has been marked by the war in the Gaza Strip alongside the need to confront Egypt’s worsening economic and social challenges. The campaign for the senate elections provided an opportunity to again examine the key domestic issues preoccupying the public nearly two years after the presidential elections. In these elections, 11 parties competed for 200 of the 300 seats (the remaining 100 are appointed by the president), led by the president’s party “Mostaqbal Watan” (The Nation’s Future). The Senate, the upper house of parliament, serves

as a platform for deepening discussion on various national-level issues while providing representation to a wide and diverse array of groups and sectors. Its powers include approving constitutional amendments, treaties, and agreements affecting the state's sovereignty, as well as offering advice on legislation proposed by the president, national development programs, and international issues referred to it by the lower house. The lower house of parliament handles legislation, oversight of the executive branch, and budget approval. In general, the public attaches little significance to these elections, as it does not regard the Senate as particularly important.

In the weeks preceding the Senate elections, several incidents occurred, which many saw as reflecting chronic problems linked to the economic situation, such as outdated infrastructure, poor-quality services, and a lack of awareness, supervision, and enforcement. These problems are evident in the condition of roads and railways, the lack of monitoring of public transport drivers, and weak regulatory enforcement, all of which have led to deadly car accidents. All these issues were manifested in a particularly horrific car accident on June 28, 2025, when a minibus driver drove recklessly, possibly under the influence of drugs, and killed 19 passengers, mostly young, poor, female factory workers. The regime responded quickly and generously, compensating the victims' families in an effort to contain the public anger that the accident caused, as well as out of recognition of the workers' underprivileged status.

Numerous fires also broke out across the country during the summer of 2025, including a major fire at the main communications center located in a large and aging building at Cairo's Ramses Square, which destroyed the building and caused fatalities. As a result, the country's communication services were shut down for several long hours, including the internet network, the banking system, traffic lights, and electricity in parts of Cairo. It is estimated that the Egyptian economy suffered millions in losses. The authorities' investigation concluded that the fire resulted from the ignition of electrical cables due to extreme heat, further indicating poor maintenance.

Another economic and social challenge that recently sparked public debate was parliament's passage in July 2025 of a new rental law aimed at rebalancing the power relationship between landlords and tenants and abolishing the old rental law, which had been more favorable to tenants. Under the previous law, landlords were not permitted to raise rent or evict tenants, allowing about 1.6 million families and millions of commercial tenants to maintain low rent payments. The new law set a five-year transition period, after which rental contracts signed under the old law will expire. For many Egyptians, this means being unable to afford rent—which is now to be updated annually according to new criteria—and a growing fear of being left without shelter.

These challenges reflect Egypt's economic situation, as it struggles with a series of chronic problems that have worsened due to global crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the war between Russia and Ukraine, and the war in the Gaza Strip.

The Regime's Methods of Coping

During the war in Gaza, Egypt's policy consistently combined measures in both the domestic and foreign arenas, all intended to remove the threat that the war posed to its national security and to prevent the erasure of the Palestinian issue.

Domestic Channels

Media Coverage. The regime allowed a more intense public discourse on the war and the situation in the Gaza Strip, which included harsh criticism of Israel and its government, along with claims that Israel's military actions caused Palestinian suffering and amounted to a massacre. Headlines and often entire pages in the newspapers were devoted to the war, as were all television talk shows. Conversely, the October 7 massacre in Israel received almost no coverage. It appears that at the beginning of the war, the Egyptian public was not aware of the events that had taken place in Israel or of their severity, while reporting on the war itself, especially in the early stages, was so intensive that it seemed to be the only event unfolding in the region. For comparison, the media devoted more coverage to the war in the Gaza Strip than to the civil war that erupted in Sudan in April 2023—a conflict that has resulted in massive civilian casualties (about 61,000 people as of November 2023, according to UN organizations), widespread destruction and displacement, and reports of massacres and severe sexual assaults—even though Sudan holds strategic importance for Egypt and is considered a sister country with deep historical ties between the two peoples.

Fierce Criticism of Israel. The official critical position toward Israel—expressed by President al-Sisi and Foreign Ministers Sameh Shoukry and then Badr Abdelatty—was echoed and amplified in a highly hostile manner by the media—journalists, columnists, talk shows, influencers—and by the public on social media platforms. In the final months of the war, President al-Sisi sharply criticized Israel's policy and actions in the Gaza Strip, as he did [during a press conference in Cairo](#) alongside his guest, the president of Vietnam, on August 5, 2025: "The ongoing war in Gaza is no longer merely a war to achieve political objectives or secure the release of hostages. This war has long since surpassed any semblance of logic or justification and has become a war of starvation, genocide, and also the liquidation of the Palestinian issue."

In the early months of the war, as Israel's image deteriorated—reinforced by caricatures and statements containing antisemitic undertones or questioning Israel's right to exist—there was a parallel tendency to whitewash Hamas's image, granting it legitimacy by describing its actions as *muqawama* (resistance). Hamas representatives became sought-after guests in television studios, in contrast to the years after the 2011 revolution, when both members of Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood were boycotted as terrorists and enemies of Egypt. At the same time, several senior journalists reminded the public of Hamas's past misconduct toward Egypt, having caused serious harm to Egypt's national security in the previous decade, as well as of the dangers inherent in the ideology of Hamas and its parent movement, the

Muslim Brotherhood. As the war continued, the media's tone shifted toward blaming Hamas for the devastation in the Gaza Strip.¹

Al-Azhar Institution. The institution, which holds supreme religious importance in the Sunni world and considerable cultural and social influence in Egypt, published harsh and hostile criticism of Israel, using especially strong language against the IDF. On its official website, Al-Azhar frequently issued [severe condemnations of Israel](#), referring to it as an “oppressive entity” or “tyrannical enemy.” Al-Azhar’s unequivocal support for the Palestinian people—and implicitly for Hamas’s actions—was evident, despite its well-known principled opposition to the Muslim Brotherhood, which it defines as a terrorist movement that distorts sacred texts.

Aid to Gaza Residents Through the Rafah Crossing. From the first day of the war, Egypt acted with determination and persistence to provide humanitarian aid to residents of Gaza via the Rafah crossing and the adjacent Salah al-Din Gate. In the first month of the war, during the Cairo Peace Summit convened by Egypt on October 21, 2023, Egypt emphasized the importance of facilitating the entry of humanitarian aid into the Strip. Egypt also insisted that foreign nationals and representatives of international organizations seeking to leave Gaza would be permitted to do so only if Israel lifted its blockade on the entry of humanitarian aid.

However, during the war, caricatures circulated portraying President al-Sisi as being indifferent to the Palestinians’ suffering because he did not allow the Rafah crossing to open for Gaza residents wishing to enter Egypt. A major source of this criticism came from media outlets and social media platforms affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood, which operates from several centers around the world, including Doha, London, and Istanbul. Egypt’s consistent response to these claims, which was also meant to prevent them from gaining traction in Egyptian and Arab public opinion, was to emphasize that Egypt had never closed the Rafah crossing, except during the first days of fighting after it was bombed by the IDF, and then it subsequently resumed operation.

Accordingly, the media regularly and prominently covered the aid efforts, broadcasting images of trucks waiting to enter Gaza bearing signs reading “From the Egyptian people to the people of Gaza.” In doing so, Egypt was portrayed as a vital gateway for the delivery of aid from around the world. This coverage also conveyed an important message to the Egyptian public, addressing questions and criticism regarding Egypt’s solidarity with the Palestinian people. Throughout the war, a vast logistical infrastructure developed at the Rafah crossing and in the city of al-Arish, which became a central logistical hub for international aid organizations, supported by the city’s airport. Heads of state, foreign ministers, UN Secretary-General António Guterres, and numerous foreign delegations, ambassadors, and

¹ The prominent journalist and intellectual Ibrahim Eissa, in his program *Hadith al-Qahira*, has regularly and sharply attacked Hamas, its ideology rooted in the Muslim Brotherhood’s teachings, and its decision to launch the attack against Israel—a move that, in his view, brought about the devastation of Gaza and damaged the achievements of the Palestinian people. For example, on his May 7, 2024 program, he criticized Hamas for being unable to defend the Rafah crossing or a hospital, yet still seeking to rule Gaza, which, as he put it, “is nothing but dust.”

humanitarian workers arrived in al-Arish and from there traveled to Rafah to observe the aid efforts firsthand, expressing appreciation for Egypt. Egypt also participated in several food airdrop operations during the war. Another important aspect of the aid effort was the evacuation of wounded and sick Palestinians through Rafah for medical treatment in Egypt or other countries.

In addition, Egypt applied pressure on the Israeli government to accelerate the entry of aid through the Israeli crossings at Nitzana and Kerem Shalom by improving the inspection and clearance processes for incoming trucks and urging Israel to open additional gates into the Gaza Strip. During the second year of the war, Egypt repeatedly asserted that the amount of aid Israel allowed in fell short of meeting the needs of Gaza's residents, resulting in widespread hunger among segments of the population.

The Struggle Against the Muslim Brotherhood's Propaganda. Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated websites frequently addressed the issue of opening the Rafah crossing, which they viewed as representing the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip—and, in effect, the crisis of the Palestinian issue—while placing the blame on Egypt. In addition, through this issue, the Muslim Brotherhood sought to maintain public attention on the war, criticize the regime for not doing enough, and even incite and mobilize the public to act. As usual, the movement attacked the regime and its leadership, pointing to the government's alleged incompetence. The intensity of criticism in the Brotherhood's media outlets—such as on the websites of *Rassd*, *Midan*, *Ikhwan Online*, and the television channel *Mekameleen*—increased in the weeks preceding the Senate elections, coinciding with a historic date in Egypt's history: June 30, 2013, which marked the end of the Muslim Brotherhood's rule under President Morsi, who was deposed by the army. Most Egyptians view that event as a popular revolution—a response to the Brotherhood's rule, which had “hijacked” the state and reversed the results of the earlier 2011 revolution that had toppled Mubarak's regime—and thus it is seen as the “Correction Revolution.” The Muslim Brotherhood, for its part, views Morsi's ouster as a military coup and therefore does not regard President al-Sisi's regime as legitimate.

Commentators and talk-show hosts made sure to counter every claim raised by supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas in articles and interviews that were published daily across all official media outlets. Their explanations included warnings that the Brotherhood sought to drag Egypt into the war in the Gaza Strip, a move that could cause serious difficulties and even chaos in Egypt. One of Egypt's leading intellectuals challenging the movement's claims, Ibrahim Eissa, noted that the Brotherhood's propaganda was intended to make Egypt lose the Sinai Peninsula, given its call for Egypt to join Hamas's war against Israel. His colleague Nashat Eldehy rejected what he described as the movement's attempt to exploit the Palestinian issue to harm the Egyptian regime and expressed opposition to the “Steadfastness Convoy” (*Shayarat al-sumud*) that was organized in Tunisia and Algeria on June 10, 2025, by activists who set out toward Egypt and the Rafah crossing. Egypt prevented the activists from reaching their destination.

The more the Brotherhood's propaganda challenged Egyptian policy, [the more the Egyptian media emphasized the president's firm stance as the defender of the state and its territory](#). Alongside support for the president, the public's backing of the Egyptian army was also

highlighted and was presented as strong, powerful, and ready—capable of deterring any threat to Egypt, as it did in 2013. Journalists also rejected accusations repeatedly published by the Muslim Brotherhood regarding the president’s management of the country, primarily claims of economic failures and of ceding large tracts of land for Gulf state investment, as well as allegations concerning the military’s control of the economy and the management of the energy sector, which has led Egypt to import gas from Israel.

Foreign Channels

Extensive Diplomatic Activity. Throughout the war, Egypt conducted—and continues to conduct—regional and international diplomatic efforts aimed at keeping the Palestinian issue on the global agenda and resolving it through the establishment of a Palestinian state along the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital, while also maintaining and reinforcing Egypt’s leading regional position. This characteristic of Egyptian diplomacy was particularly evident during the 12-day war between Israel and Iran in June 2025. From Egypt’s perspective, the root of the Palestinian problem does not lie in the events of October 7, 2023, but in the prolonged Israeli occupation and the prevention of the establishment of a Palestinian state. The war in the Gaza Strip was viewed as an Israeli move that could bring about a dramatic shift in the Palestinian issue, particularly in the Gaza Strip, by rendering the area uninhabitable and emptying it of its residents. For this reason, Egypt reiterated its call for an immediate ceasefire and for the protection of Gaza’s residents through the deployment of international forces as an initial step, to be followed by a renewal of the political process led on the Palestinian side by the Palestinian Authority, culminating in the realization of the two-state solution. In addition, Egypt continued to urge countries around the world to recognize the State of Palestine and welcomed those that did so.

Efforts to Achieve a Ceasefire. Throughout the war, Egypt invested considerable and sustained effort to achieve a ceasefire. Egypt understood that a ceasefire depended on reaching an agreement for the release of the Israeli hostages held by Hamas in exchange for Palestinian prisoners, yet it framed the issue through the prism of the urgent need for an immediate cessation of hostilities. Beginning in May 2024, Egypt put forward a series of ceasefire proposals. The Egyptians had several objectives in advancing these proposals: The first and most important was to save the lives of Gaza’s civilians, many of whom were being killed daily in the fighting. These deaths were perceived in Egypt as collective punishment, compounded by Israel’s restrictions on the entry of humanitarian aid into the Strip. The second goal was to reduce the likelihood of migration or mass flight of Gaza’s residents into Egyptian territory. The third was to prevent the establishment of an Israeli military presence in Gaza, which might later evolve into a civilian presence and possibly even annexation, thereby creating a reality that would severely hinder the desired political solution—the establishment of a future Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The fourth goal was to revive political dialogue as soon as possible and prevent regional escalation while enabling the renewal of economic activity in the area, which could only occur once fighting ceased. These relentless and even Sisyphean efforts to secure a ceasefire positioned Egypt, alongside Qatar, as a central mediator and strengthened its status as a key regional player.

The Egyptian–Arab Plan for Gaza’s Reconstruction. From the beginning of the war’s second year, this issue featured prominently in both the media discourse and the diplomatic dialogue Egypt conducted with numerous international actors. As the fighting continued and the destruction of Gaza’s infrastructure expanded, Egypt began advancing its initiative for the Strip’s reconstruction. President al-Sisi repeatedly emphasized the need for rapid reconstruction in his conversations with world leaders.

At the emergency summit convened by Egypt in Cairo on March 14, 2025, Egypt presented a detailed 90-page plan titled “Rapid Recovery, Reconstruction, and Development of the Gaza Strip.” In the [summit’s concluding statement](#), the Arab states endorsed the strategic choice of achieving a just and comprehensive peace; called for an end to the Israeli occupation and the establishment of a Palestinian state; declared their opposition to any displacement of the Palestinian people from their land; expressed support for the Egyptian plan and the immediate need to implement a ceasefire agreement in all its stages; stressed coordination with the international community to support Palestinian rights; and endorsed the Palestinian Authority’s decision to form a committee to administer the Gaza Strip and implement reforms within its ranks. The plan—adopted by all Arab states during the Arab League summit held on May 17, 2025, in Baghdad—aimed to address the challenges that intensified with the entry of President Trump into the White House. Specifically, it sought to safeguard the viability of the two-state solution by preserving Palestinian life in the Gaza Strip as part of an independent Palestinian state; to guarantee the Palestinian people’s right to self-determination and to human dignity, in stark contrast to the current conditions in Gaza; and to enable the Palestinian people to reclaim responsibility for their own lives and future.

Formulating a comprehensive plan for Gaza’s reconstruction with international assistance and mobilizing Arab and global support for it became essential in light of President Trump’s statements during Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s visit to Washington on February 4, 2025. President Trump presented an initiative to evacuate the Gaza Strip’s two million residents and to establish an American administration there focused on reconstruction. His remarks reinforced statements by Israeli ministers who, since the beginning of the war, had called for the removal of Gaza’s Palestinian residents. This approach took shape within the Israeli government with the establishment of a “Voluntary Migration Administration” for Gaza residents, which sought to identify countries willing to absorb Palestinians. By presenting the Gaza reconstruction plan, Egypt and the Arab states aimed to block progress on this evacuation initiative and to signal to the international community a path toward resolving the issue of Gaza and Hamas’s rule there—one that would include significant Arab involvement. They also sought to generate motivation and interest among all relevant actors in the international arena and promote an end to the fighting or a permanent ceasefire.

Joining the Lawsuit Against Israel at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague. Egypt took another significant step with its decision [in May 2024 to join the lawsuit filed by South Africa in December 2023](#) at the International Court of Justice against Israel. According to the official statement issued by the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, this decision was made in light of the intensifying Israeli hostilities against civilians, the destruction of infrastructure in the Gaza Strip, and the worsening of the unprecedented humanitarian crisis

unfolding there. It is likely that the IDF's takeover of the Gazan side of the Rafah crossing on May 7, 2024, to which Egypt strongly objected, also contributed to this decision. A main reason for Egypt's opposition was its concern over a potential mass influx of Palestinians into Sinai, given that the area surrounding the Rafah crossing was already densely populated with displaced Palestinians at the southernmost point of the Strip, from which there is nowhere further to go. Egypt's decision to join the lawsuit was also viewed domestically as an expression of a moral imperative to achieve justice for the Palestinian people.

Policy Toward Israel

Reduction of Official Dialogue With the Israeli Government

Since the beginning of the war, Egypt has had no communication at the level of heads of state. Security coordination channels have continued to operate for the range of military, security, and humanitarian activities, as well as diplomatic working channels. Both embassies, in Israel and in Egypt, continued to function, and despite occasional public calls to downgrade relations, no formal step was taken to reduce the level of diplomatic ties. In practice, however, the level of diplomatic representation was lowered below the rank of ambassador. At present, both embassies, in Israel and in Egypt alike, are not headed by ambassadors.

Commitment to the Peace Treaty With Israel

Within the Egyptian public and media, questions arose regarding Egypt's continued commitment to its relations with Israel, and there were even calls to annul the peace treaty. President al-Sisi and Foreign Ministers Shoukry and Abdelatty were required to address the issue. They expressed unequivocal commitment to the peace treaty and to the strategic choice Egypt made in 1977. At the height of the tension between the two countries during the war in Gaza—immediately after Israel's takeover of the Rafah crossing in May 2024—[Foreign Minister Shoukry reiterated this commitment](#). At a press conference during the visit of Slovenia's foreign minister to Cairo on May 12, 2024, Foreign Minister Shoukry stated:

The peace treaty between Israel and Egypt is a strategic choice that Egypt made more than four decades ago, and it remains a main pillar in the region for achieving peace and security. The treaty has its own mechanisms that are activated to handle any disagreements, if they exist, and special tools are in place for this purpose if differences are found. This matter is managed within the technical framework of the Military Liaison Committee. We will continue to interact with the treaty from this perspective.

In recent years, President al-Sisi has repeatedly recalled the historic step taken by President Sadat, who signed the peace treaty with Israel as the right move for its time, one that has proven itself even four decades later, and he has emphasized Egypt's commitment to the strategic choice of peace with Israel in various public addresses across Egypt. In his speech at the emergency summit on March 4, 2025, President al-Sisi said:

The peace treaty between Egypt and Israel, achieved through American mediation in 1979, is an example of how a state of hostility, war, and the desire for revenge can be transformed into lasting peace and mutual diplomatic relations.

Al-Sisi expressed the same sentiments in his speech on April 25, 2025, marking the anniversary of the return of the Sinai Peninsula to Egyptian sovereignty, celebrated annually. Alongside his reaffirmation of commitment to the peace treaty with Israel, the president also signaled to Israel what Egypt's red lines are, as detailed below.

Containment of Military Tension Along the Shared Border With Israel

The large-scale and unprecedented military activity carried out by Israel in the Gaza Strip, close to Egyptian territory, created a new reality along the 14 kilometers of shared border between the two countries along the Philadelphi Route. This situation could have undesirable implications, in addition to the already existing tension between the two countries. However, the well-established and experienced military coordination mechanism in place for decades enabled the tensions created by this reality to be contained throughout the war in an optimal manner, given the circumstances, including along the bilateral Egyptian–Israeli border. No incidents or clashes involving the armed forces of the two countries took place in the border areas.

It should be emphasized that the conditions along both the bilateral border between Israel and Egypt and the border between Egypt and the Gaza Strip have changed significantly: Egypt also deployed considerable military forces and reinforced its presence along the border areas to prevent a mass exodus of Gaza residents into Sinai. On the Israeli side, on the day the IDF took control of the Rafah crossing, efforts were made to prevent residents of the Strip from rushing to the area. Leaflets were distributed, instructing them to avoid approaching the border fence, which had been designated a dangerous combat zone. The Egyptian media frequently covered the Egyptian military readiness on the border as a message to the public that the army was fulfilling its supreme mission—the defense of the homeland. Commentators and social media users presented this as a show of deterrent strength toward Israel, to prevent it from provoking Egypt.

Economic Channels of Activity

Throughout the war, bilateral economic activity continued, primarily the export of gas from Israel to Egypt. In addition, the Qualifying Industrial Zones (QIZ) agreement for Egyptian textile exports to the United States, which requires the inclusion of Israeli inputs, continued to operate, and exports persisted despite a reduction in the volume of activity. Both countries maintained their commitment to their economic agreements as a direct and natural continuation of their commitment to the peace treaty; however, there were no new economic activities or initiatives.

Trends Influencing Egypt's Relations With Israel

The trends within Egypt's domestic arena and in its relations with Israel, whose influence is expected to continue into the foreseeable future, are intertwined and have the following implications:

The Centrality of the Palestinian Issue in the Bilateral Relations

The war in Gaza is the most severe of all the escalatory actions in the Israeli–Palestinian arena and, as such, has had the most damaging effect on relations between Egypt and Israel. Even before the war, from the beginning of the current Israeli government’s term in January 2023, Egypt expressed concern about the government’s composition and the policies it was expected to adopt regarding the Palestinian issue, and from Egypt’s perspective, these concerns materialized. During the war, the deep and long-standing disagreement between Egypt and Israel over the Palestinian issue became increasingly apparent. While Egypt calls for the establishment of a Palestinian state along the 1967 borders, Israel officially opposes this, reaffirming its opposition in a Knesset resolution passed on July 18, 2024, declaring that the Knesset opposes the establishment of a Palestinian state west of the Jordan River. The Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs also issued condemnations of Israeli government decisions and military operations in the Gaza Strip, as well as of Israeli actions in the West Bank, including decisions to continue settlement construction and measures affecting the Temple Mount compound. At the same time, official dialogue and bilateral economic activity between the two states were reduced. Taken together, these developments underscore the enduring validity—unchanged for five decades—of the premise linking the Palestinian issue to peace relations between Israel and Egypt.

Fear of Harming Egyptian National Security

The war in the Gaza Strip clearly demonstrated, more than ever before, the link between an escalation in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and the potential for direct harm to Egypt’s national security. In fact, the war posed a potential threat to the [peace treaty](#) itself, which stipulates an end to the state of war between the two countries and the establishment of peace under which each state would exist in security. Article 3, section 2 of the peace treaty states:

Each Party undertakes to ensure that acts or threats of belligerency, hostility, or violence do not originate from and are not committed from within its territory, or by any forces subject to its control or by any other forces stationed on its territory, against the population, citizens, or property of the other Party. Each Party also undertakes to refrain from organizing, instigating, inciting, assisting or participating in acts or threats of belligerency, hostility, subversion, or violence against the other Party anywhere, and undertakes to ensure that perpetrators of such acts are brought to justice.

[In his remarks at the emergency summit](#) held in Cairo on March 4, 2025, President al-Sisi—after recalling that Egypt had inaugurated peace with Israel five decades earlier and has upheld it ever since—stated that Egypt recognizes no peace other than one based on justice and the protection of land and sovereignty. He noted that the provisions of the peace treaty, which Egypt ratified in 1979, “require no interpretation and therefore oblige each side to uphold and respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the other, including the legal commitment not to create a reality that would lead to the displacement of residents from their land, which would constitute a violation of the obligation to respect secure borders.” It can be assumed that the president was referring to the section of the peace treaty cited above.

In addition to the scenario of pushing Gazans into Sinai, President al-Sisi also addressed the opposite scenario—one in which a threat to Israel might emerge from Egyptian territory. At a press conference during the visit to Cairo by former German Chancellor Scholz on October 18, 2023, the president described a scenario in which Gaza residents forced to move to Sinai would bring with them elements seeking to harm Israel. In such a case, the concept of resistance and warfare would be transferred from the Gaza Strip to Egyptian soil, which would become a base from which actions could be launched against Israel. Israel would then have the right to defend itself and respond, and it would strike Egyptian territory in retaliation.

Egypt's Regional Status

The war has demonstrated that Egypt has maintained—and even strengthened—its prominent regional status. In the years preceding October 7, 2023, it was common in Israel and among international observers to assume that Egypt had lost influence and significance in favor of the Gulf states, whose regional and international weight grew as a result of the Abraham Accords. However, Egypt emerged as a leading mediator, alongside Qatar, in the efforts to reach an agreement to cease the war. To that end, it has undertaken a wide range of diplomatic steps, welcomed and appreciated by the international community.

The international community, for its part, views Egypt as a central regional actor in coordinating and formulating positions regarding the post-war period. This is evident in the frequent visits of heads of state and other official representatives to Egypt, as well as in Egypt's participation in every relevant international forum. Egypt is expected to continue to engage with the Palestinian issue, particularly the Gaza Strip, thereby sustaining its regional status. In doing so, Egypt will also work to curtail the influence and activity of Qatar, Iran, and Turkey, which aim to increase their involvement in the Palestinian arena.

The Gap Between the Regime and Public Opinion Toward Israel

The war has once again highlighted the long-standing gap between the Egyptian regime's policy toward Israel and Egyptian public opinion regarding Israel. From the earliest days of the war, extremely hostile reactions toward Israel—and even toward Jews—proliferated on Egyptian social media. A wave of hateful and vitriolic expressions, often antisemitic in nature, emerged. Israel is frequently referred to as “the Zionist entity” or “the enemy” in various media reports. Two attacks carried out by Egyptians resulted in the deaths of three Israeli tourists at a tourist site in Alexandria on October 8, 2023, and of a Canadian-Israeli businessman near Alexandria on May 9, 2024.

Yet against this backdrop of public hostility and aggression toward Israel, the measured statements of President al-Sisi and the foreign ministers stood out, reflecting careful consideration of the circumstances and tensions generated by the war. In a speech delivered on March 8, 2025, at the Military Academy before the cadets and staff—an event significant both for its setting and audience—President al-Sisi recalled the signing of the peace treaty with Israel as an excellent precedent “at a time when no one in the region was talking about peace or a peace treaty.” He added that, among the options available to Egypt, the path of peace is always the best one. The president repeated these messages at two nationally

significant events in Egyptian public life—the celebration of Sinai Liberation Day on April 25 and the anniversary of the overthrow of the Morsi regime on June 30. During the latter event, al-Sisi elaborated on Egypt’s conception of peace, in a message that can be understood as directed also toward Israel:

Egypt, which has always supported peace, believes that peace is not achieved by gunfire, nor is it imposed by force or through normalization that peoples oppose. Peace must be based on justice and mutual understanding. Continued war and occupation will not bring peace but will only feed hatred and violence and open the gates of revenge and resistance that will not close. Violence, killing, and hatred must stop; occupation, forced migration, and displacement must stop. Peace, although seemingly difficult to achieve, is not impossible. It is always the choice of the wise. Let us draw inspiration from the peace experience between Egypt and Israel, achieved through American mediation, which proves that peace is possible if intentions are sincere. Peace in the Middle East will not be achieved except through the establishment of an independent Palestinian state within the borders of June 4, 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital.