

Hamas Disarmament Agreement: Motives, Core Elements, and Obstacles

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U.S. President Donald Trump announced that the Board of Peace had reached what he described as a “historic agreement” on the complete disarmament of Hamas and other armed groups in the Gaza Strip. The U.S. administration is now working to implement the agreement in order to offset the sense of failure vis-à-vis Iran and revive the 20-point plan. For its part, Hamas is displaying tactical flexibility in response to Israeli military pressure (the IDF has expanded its control westward from the “Yellow Line” to the “Orange Line”) and has announced that it accepts the framework in principle. In practice, however, its representatives declare that the organization will refuse to disarm before a full Israeli withdrawal. In the background, Qatar and Turkey are assisting Hamas through a double game: they are encouraging it to accept the agreement on the assumption that Israel will reject it, thereby seeking to shift responsibility for the agreement’s failure onto Israel and portray Hamas as a legitimate actor.

From Israel’s perspective, especially in the period leading up to the elections, withdrawing from the security zones it has established inside the Gaza Strip is expected to pose a political challenge. Nevertheless, given the alternative risk of full reoccupation and the need to avoid a confrontation with the Trump administration, Israel should agree in principle to the disarmament framework — while conditioning any withdrawal on strict oversight and verification of the disarmament process, as well as on the transfer of control in the Strip to the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza (NCAG) and the Palestinian police. Israel should also permit these bodies, together with the International Stabilization Force (ISF), to enter initially the area between the “Yellow Line” and the “Orange Line.”

U.S. President Donald Trump announced that the Board of Peace had reached what he described as a “historic agreement” providing for the complete disarmament of Hamas and other armed groups in the Gaza Strip. Trump portrayed the agreement as a significant step toward lasting peace and security, stating that it would enable a new Palestinian administration to govern Gaza in close cooperation with the Board of Peace. He added that the arrangement would provide Israel with security guarantees and prevent the Strip from again being used as a base for attacks against it. According to Trump, the agreement constitutes a major milestone in implementing the administration’s 20-point plan for stabilizing and rebuilding the Gaza Strip. It is to be carried out in carefully sequenced stages: once disarmament has been completed, Israeli forces will withdraw, while the International Stabilization Force (ISF) and a new Palestinian police force will assume responsibility for security in Gaza.

The agreement constitutes a breakthrough, as Hamas has formally committed to disarmament. Its main provisions are as follows:

A. Ceasefire, sequencing, and oversight: Israel will halt military operations in accordance with the Sharm el-Sheikh Agreement, while Hamas and the other factions will fully cease all military activity. A verification mechanism — the International Verification Committee (IVC) — will be established to monitor violations by both sides and authorize the transition between the agreement’s stages.

B. Weapons in the Gaza Strip: The National Committee for the Administration of Gaza (NCAG) will be responsible for decommissioning and storing heavy weapons, weapons-production sites, stockpiles, and tunnels, as well as for dismantling armed militias, under IVC supervision and with the assistance of the ISF. The committee will be the sole body authorized to possess, store, register, and license weapons, and will also be responsible for internal security. A police force will be established under its authority, and all personnel serving in the police will undergo a comprehensive security-vetting process.

C. The disarmament process: The process, which is expected to last six to eight months, will begin only after completion of the prior commitments set out in the “Sharm el-Sheikh Protocol.” Combat tunnels and weapons-production facilities in the Strip will be dismantled and destroyed. Small arms will be collected and transferred to the Palestinian police under the responsibility of the NCAG.

D. The International Stabilization Force: The ISF will be deployed as a buffer between Israeli forces and areas under NCAG control. It will monitor the ceasefire, secure humanitarian aid, and train the Palestinian police.

E. Civil governance and employees’ rights: Hamas and the other factions will transfer all powers of civil administration and security to the NCAG, which will operate with full independence and without interference, in accordance with the principle of “one authority, one law, one weapon.” The committee will preserve the rights of existing civil servants from the period of Hamas rule, while offering retirement or compensation options under Palestinian law in cases of termination.

F. The principle of reciprocity: Each verified stage of weapons collection and storage will trigger a corresponding Israeli measure:

1. **Cessation of hostilities and withdrawal:** Israel will halt its attacks, the IDF will withdraw to the original Yellow Line, and further withdrawals will take place gradually from additional areas transferred to NCAG responsibility in accordance with progress in the disarmament process.
2. **Humanitarian measures:** The crossings will be opened and humanitarian assistance will be substantially expanded, including the entry of at least 600 aid trucks and 50 fuel trucks per day.
3. **Disarmament of rival militias:** Armed groups and clans operating in the Strip with Israeli support will also be disarmed.
4. **Incentives and amnesty:** A weapons buyback program will be introduced, and Hamas members who comply with the agreement’s terms will be granted amnesty.
5. **Operational restrictions on Israel:** Limits will be imposed on military operations and targeted killings, except in cases involving a “ticking bomb” or an immediate threat.

Main Obstacles to Implementing the Agreement

Despite the celebratory announcement and Hamas’ agreement in principle to the framework, deep gaps remain between the parties, compounded by flawed assumptions on the part of the mediators.

Together, these factors are likely to limit both the scope and the feasibility of implementing the agreement. The main obstacles are as follows:

A. Hamas' position: Senior Hamas official Ghazi Hamad directly linked the issue of disarmament to an Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, reconstruction, and reciprocal implementation of Phase I of the "Sharm el-Sheikh Protocol." Hamad stated that Israel would have no role in implementing or supervising the disarmament process, which would instead be carried out by the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza. He emphasized that Hamas would take no steps regarding its weapons before Israeli forces withdraw from the Strip, and that it would halt the disarmament process if Israel failed to fulfill its commitments. In other words, Hamas views disarmament as one component of a reciprocal process, not as a unilateral obligation. In addition, Hamas demands guarantees that it will be integrated into Gaza's governing mechanisms as a condition for relinquishing its weapons.

B. Israel's position: Israel firmly insists on the full disarmament of Hamas and the demilitarization of the Gaza Strip (which includes removing the weapons and not leaving them in the Strip, even under NCAG) as a precondition for withdrawal. Israel currently controls approximately 65 percent of the Strip, and the IDF is preparing for a permanent military presence along the "Yellow Line," including through the construction of earthworks and trenches — indicating an intention to remain in the area rather than withdraw. Although the agreement is based on phased and reciprocal implementation, as President Trump declared, Israeli forces would withdraw only after disarmament has been completed. This position is favorable to Israel but conflicts with Hamas' and the mediators' understanding of the agreement.

C. Weakness of the alternative mechanisms to Hamas (ISF and NCAG): The security and civilian mechanisms intended to replace Hamas rule suffer from structural weaknesses and severe limitations that are likely to impede implementation of the agreement. The establishment of the Palestinian police force has been delayed by Egypt's refusal to allow approximately 5,000 candidates — who have undergone Israeli security vetting — to leave for training on its territory, due to the absence of Israeli guarantees that they will be permitted to return to the Strip. The International Stabilization Force faces significant recruitment difficulties, stemming from the refusal of states to deploy troops to areas where Hamas remains armed. The National Committee for the Administration of Gaza continues to operate from Cairo and is reluctant to enter the Strip in the absence of an effective security mechanism to protect its members. At the same time, Hamas demands that civil servants and security personnel affiliated with it be incorporated into the new governing structure. Although Hamas has ostensibly expressed willingness to transfer civilian control to the NCAG, in practice it is exploiting the governance vacuum and working intensively to consolidate its civilian and security control on the ground.

D. The role of Turkey and Qatar: The pressure exerted by Turkey and Qatar (alongside Egypt) as key mediators in formulating the agreement appears to have prompted Hamas to back down, as it did when the organization accepted the first Trump framework and the hostage-release deal. In return for these efforts, both countries received public recognition from the U.S. president and from senior Hamas officials. The situation on the ground, however, is far more complex. Hamas sources revealed that the organization formulated its hardline positions — foremost among them its refusal to disarm before a full Israeli withdrawal — in close coordination with those same mediators. Turkey and Qatar's strategic objective is to preserve Hamas as a legitimate political actor. They strongly oppose conditioning Gaza's

reconstruction on the organization's complete disarmament, while seeking to assume a leading role and secure a major share in reconstruction projects in the Strip.

Implications and Recommendations

At first glance, Hamas appears to be showing greater flexibility than in the past, when its rigid position centered on the prior demand for a full Israeli withdrawal, followed only then by discussions on disarmament. This apparent willingness can reasonably be attributed to the IDF's sustained military pressure, including targeted killing operations and the expansion of Israel's hold over territory in the Gaza Strip, reflected in the shift from the "Yellow Line" (approximately 53 percent of the Strip) to the "Orange Line" (approximately 65 percent under IDF control). In practice, however, this does not represent a substantive change, but rather a calculated strategy of delay and "tactical flexibility" whose sole purpose is to ensure the organization's political and military survival. Hamas has effectively exploited the diversion of regional attention toward the campaign against Iran to rebuild its military and civilian systems: it has restored its chain of command, resumed weapons production and tunnel construction, and expanded its ranks to approximately 30,000 armed operatives on the ground. These are not the actions of an organization preparing or intending to disarm. In addition, Hamas is deeply concerned by the growing strength of armed clans operating under Israeli sponsorship and opposing its rule. It has therefore introduced an additional condition for its participation in the disarmament process: the dismantling of those militias, even if the IDF begins to withdraw. Public statements by senior Hamas officials make clear that, ultimately, the organization has no intention of laying down its arms before the last IDF soldier has withdrawn from the Gaza Strip.

Given the broader conditions and the specific factors likely to impede implementation of the "roadmap" for carrying out the 20-point plan, there is serious concern that the states that helped formulate it and mediated between Hamas and the United States — Qatar, Turkey, and Egypt — are playing a dangerous double game. Their apparent objective is to push the United States and the Board of Peace into a confrontation with the Israeli government and to place responsibility on Israel for derailing the Trump plan because of its insistence that withdrawal from the Strip take place only after the complete disarmament of Hamas and the other armed organizations. It is even possible that Turkey and Qatar persuaded Hamas to accept the framework on the assumption that Israel would reject it in any event. Such a move serves Hamas by enabling it to present itself as a positive and constructive actor and thereby regain legitimacy in the international arena.

Israel's current dilemma lies between security requirements and the need to reach an arrangement in the Gaza Strip. Until the elections are held, the Israeli government will find it difficult to decide on a withdrawal from the security zones established by the IDF in the Strip, which are viewed as essential to protecting the communities of the western Negev and preventing a recurrence of the October 7 attack. Nevertheless, Israel would be well advised to express support in principle for the agreement aimed at advancing Hamas' disarmament. The realistic alternative — a full occupation of the Gaza Strip — would entail far-reaching negative consequences for Israel's resilience and for its regional and international standing. Israel must also take into account President Trump's motivation to advance an arrangement in Gaza, which is linked to the administration's need to present a rapid achievement, inter alia in order to soften the impact of the outcome of the war with Iran and relaunch the 20-point plan. From the president's perspective, it appears that a fundamental condition for a new regional order is restoring

the Palestinian issue to center stage as a basis for stabilizing the region and expanding the Abraham Accords.

Accordingly, Israel should accept the agreement on disarmament in the Gaza Strip, while conditioning any withdrawal on the establishment and operation of effective monitoring and verification mechanisms that will ensure the actual implementation of demilitarization and the transfer of security and civilian control to the NCAG and the Palestinian police. As a confidence-building measure signaling goodwill, Israel could allow these alternative mechanisms to Hamas (accompanied by the ISF) to enter the Strip in an initial phase and begin consolidating their presence on the ground, particularly in the area bounded by the original “Yellow Line” and the current “Orange Line.” Such a move would signal Israel’s commitment to the agreement and enable the gradual establishment of a governing alternative to Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

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