



المركز العربي للأبحاث ودراسة السياسات
Arab Center for Research & Policy Studies

situation Assessment | 9 August 2026

From Ceasefire to Gridlock: Phase Two and Israel's Strategy of Obstruction

Unit for Political Studies

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Series: [situation Assessment](#)

9 August 2026

Unit for Political Studies

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On 31 July, US President Donald Trump announced a “historic” agreement to implement the second phase of the Gaza ceasefire deal. Under the agreement, a new Palestinian administration will be established in the Strip, followed by the withdrawal of Israeli forces, and Palestinian armed factions’ weapon will be collected and stored under the supervision of the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza (NCAG).¹ Although the first phase of the agreement had entered into force on 10 October 2025, it had effectively been limited to the exchange of prisoners and bodies between Israel and the Palestinian factions. While the Palestinian factions adhered to their commitments under this phase, Israel reneged on its own – notably failing to withdraw beyond the so-called “Yellow Line,” facilitate the regular entry of humanitarian aid, and ease military restrictions imposed on the Strip.² Nevertheless, in January 2026 – coinciding with the unveiling of the so-called “Board of Peace” – the US administration declared the start of the second phase of its plan, based on UN Security Council Resolution 2803. This phase entails launching reconstruction efforts and transitioning to “Day After” arrangements, with the primary objective of disarming the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas). However, this goal was not realized, as Israel continued to obstruct the transition on the ground. It has treated the entire process as nothing more than a set of temporary security arrangements, while persisting in its war on the Strip – albeit at a lower intensity than previously.

Key Provisions

Following Trump’s announcement that the agreement had been reached, the Board of Peace published a document entitled “A Roadmap for Completing the Implementation of President Trump’s Comprehensive Peace Plan in Gaza.” Comprising 15 points, the document addresses security, administrative, and institutional arrangements within the Gaza Strip.³ It outlines a vision for managing the transitional phase in the Strip, encompassing a full Israeli withdrawal, the restoration of normal life, the organization of governance mechanisms, security arrangements, and reconstruction – while also laying the groundwork for a political process that enables the Palestinian people to exercise their right to self-determination and establish a state.

A System for Governing Gaza

A central pillar of the roadmap is the restructuring of the system for governing the Gaza Strip. The document stipulates the transfer of all civil and security powers to the NCAG, which replaces existing entities in managing the territory during the transitional phase. The NCAG is tasked with keeping civilian institutions and public services running, as well as managing civil service personnel

1 Yousef Abu Watfa, “A Roadmap to Finalize the Gaza Agreement: Opportunities and Obstacles to Implementing the Mladenov Plan,” *Al-Araby Al-Jadeed*, 31/7/2026, accessed 6/8/2026 (in Arabic), at: <https://acr.ps/hBxNMzn>.

2 “The Peace Framework for Gaza: Drivers, Details, and Difficulties Ahead,” Situation Assessment, Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, 14/10/2025, accessed 6/8/2026, at: <https://acr.ps/1L9BPAD>.

3 Mohammed Al-Badiwi, “Full Text of the Second Phase Terms of the Gaza Agreement,” *Al-Araby Al-Jadeed*, 31/7/2026, accessed 6/8/2026 (in Arabic), at: <https://acr.ps/hBybGIP>; “A Roadmap for Completing the Implementation of President Trump’s Comprehensive Peace Plan in Gaza,” Board of Peace, X, 31/7/2026, accessed 6/8/2026, at: <https://acr.ps/hBxNMdu>.

in accordance with existing laws, effectively making it the executive authority in the Strip. Notably, the document does not mention any role for the Palestinian Authority (PA) in the arrangements for managing the Strip, reflecting a move to establish a transitional administration to oversee Gaza's affairs independently of Ramallah.

Security Arrangements

The security component of the roadmap centres on initiating a gradual process to confiscate and stockpile heavy weaponry, and to dismantle military production sites, arms depots, and tunnels. This process is to commence after the fulfilment of initial obligations outlined in the Sharm El-Sheikh Protocol – including the NCAG's entry into the Strip and the deployment of the International Stabilization Force (ISF). The NCAG is responsible for managing this process according to a timetable to be agreed upon within 14 days of the parties' approval of the roadmap – a timeline that may be extended by a decision of the International Verification Committee (IVC). The latter, supported by the ISF, is tasked with monitoring the implementation of these arrangements and verifying compliance with them. The document affirms that the measures regarding weaponry apply solely to heavy arms, and do not extend to individual weapons, which remain subject to Palestinian laws. The agreement prohibits the transfer of any weapons to Israel or to any non-Palestinian entity, and designates the NCAG as the sole body authorized to possess, store, or control weapons within the Gaza Strip. Thus, the issue of weaponry is framed as part of the process of rebuilding public authority in Gaza, and as a condition for Israel's full withdrawal from the Strip.

Israel's Withdrawal and the International Stabilization Force

The roadmap links the implementation of arrangements to consolidate control over weaponry with Israel's gradual withdrawal from the areas it controls within the Gaza Strip, which is to proceed according to an agreed-upon timetable, and in a manner consistent with the commitment in the peace plan that the Strip's residents will not be forced to leave. However, while the document affirms the principle of a full Israeli withdrawal, it fails to specify a clear timetable or a binding mechanism for its implementation. This leaves one of the most critical issues hostage to future negotiations – something Israel is adept at dragging out into an open-ended process.

The document also stipulates the deployment of the ISF to act as a buffer between Israeli troops and the areas under the control of the NCAG. However, in approving the deployment, Israel's Security Cabinet imposed conditions that restrict the scope of ISF operations, including that it must be deployed with the approval of, and in full coordination with, the Israeli army, and that its operations be restricted to areas lying outside the so-called "Yellow Line."⁴ This approval came shortly before Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's trip to Washington to meet President Trump – a move

⁴ "Israel Agrees to the Entry of 'International Forces' into Gaza... Key Details," *Al Jazeera Net*, 26/7/2026, accessed 6/8/2026 (in Arabic), at: <https://acr.ps/hBxNLL7>.

seen as a pre-emptive measure to avoid potential pressure on Israel to accede to Trump's plan. This raises doubts over the seriousness of the initiative, as well as the impact of Israeli conditions on the ISF's independence and its ability to carry out its assigned tasks.

Reconstruction and the Political Track

The roadmap stipulates that the Board of Peace and NCAG are responsible for preparing a plan and timeline for the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip, as well as securing the necessary resources and funding, in a manner consistent with the implementation of the agreement's other provisions. At the same time, the document emphasizes that the implementation of all arrangements – including those regarding weaponry – aims to create the conditions for launching a credible political track that guarantees the rights of the Palestinian people, foremost among them the right to self-determination. Consequently, the arrangements stipulated in the plan, including for reconstruction, become part of a broader political project intended to lead, ultimately, to the establishment of a Palestinian state.

The Context of the Roadmap

The unveiling of the roadmap followed months of negotiations led by Egypt, Qatar, and Türkiye. These talks focused primarily on addressing the issues that had stalled the transition to the second phase of the ceasefire agreement since its announcement in October 2025: specifically, Israel's withdrawal, the issue of weapons, and arrangements for the administration of the Gaza Strip. Since early June 2026, Cairo has hosted a series of meetings involving Hamas and other Palestinian factions,⁵ along with mediators, in order to reach an agreed response on the proposed roadmap, which had been presented to the UN Security Council on 21 May 2026 by Nickolay Mladenov, the High Representative for Gaza on the Board of Peace. These discussions resulted in an agreement among eight Palestinian factions on most of the document's provisions. Key points of consensus included restricting heavy weaponry and storing it under the supervision of NCAG (rather than surrendering it), as well as an agreement to address the status of civil servants and maintaining civil institutions during the transitional period.⁶

These understandings paved the way for Hamas to announce, on 6 July, the dissolution of its governing body in Gaza – the Government Work Committee – and to call on the NCAG to assume administrative and security responsibilities in the Strip.⁷ This move removed one of the key pretexts hindering the transfer of the Strip's administration to the new committee, which was supposed to assume its duties upon formation, coinciding with the launch of the Board of Peace in early 2026. This

⁵ "Following the Dissolution of the Government Work Committee in Gaza... A Hamas Delegation Heads to Cairo," *Al Jazeera Net*, 28/7/2026, accessed 6/8/2026 (in Arabic), at: <https://acr.ps/hBxNMaf>.

⁶ Thabet Al-Amour, "Scenarios Following the Cairo Meetings and Consensus among the Factions," *Al-Araby Al-Jadeed*, 28/6/2026, accessed 6/8/2026 (in Arabic), at: <https://acr.ps/hBxNLUr>.

⁷ Israel refused to engage with the resignation of the government emergency committee in the Gaza Strip, viewing it as a manoeuvre by Hamas to retain its weaponry. See: "Dissolution of the Government Work Follow-up Committee in Gaza... What Next?" *Al Jazeera Net*, 6/7/2026, accessed 6/8/2026 (in Arabic), at: <https://acr.ps/hBxNM70>; Muhannad Mustafa, "Resignation of the Gaza Emergency Government: Between Israeli Securitization of the Gaza Issue and Palestinian Attempts to Politicize It," *Al Jazeera Centre for Studies*, 9/7/2026, accessed 6/8/2026 (in Arabic), at: <https://acr.ps/hBxNMjz>.

facilitated the announcement of an agreement on implementing the second phase of the ceasefire deal. The announcement also came as Mladenov exerted intense pressure on Hamas, appearing to take back Israel's position and seeking to hold the Palestinian movement responsible for stalling the implementation of the agreement's second phase. In a report submitted to the Security Council in May, he linked progress on the agreement and the start of reconstruction efforts to the disarmament of Palestinian factions. He went so far as to threaten – during negotiations with Hamas in Cairo – that those across the table would pay a price if they did not accept his proposals.⁸ Conversely, Mladenov ignored Israeli violations, avoided holding Israel accountable for breaches of the agreement, and overlooked its ongoing killings, assassinations, military expansion, and the tightening of the blockade on the Strip – despite having documented “grave” violations of the ceasefire.⁹

Mladenov's pressure on Hamas to accept the roadmap proposal aligned with Israeli pressure on the ground, as manifested in Israel's continued assassinations and violations of the truce deal,¹⁰ seizure of more land by shifting the so-called “Yellow Line,” restrictions on the entry of humanitarian aid, and continued displacement of Palestinians from their homes through projects labelled as “humanitarian zones.”¹¹ This has evolved into a publicly declared Israeli government policy, following Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's declaration that he had instructed the army to expand the area of Israeli control to encompass approximately 70 percent of the Strip.¹² This move coincides with calls from Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich to establish three settlements inside the territory's northern border,¹³ the latest in a rising chorus of Israeli demands for re-establishment of settlements within the territory.

The Parties' Positions on the Roadmap

Hamas announced that it had accepted the roadmap, but clarified that including the issue of heavy weaponry in the arrangements for the second phase of the ceasefire agreement was part of an integrated package of mutual and simultaneous obligations, rather than a standalone measure or a prerequisite to the agreement's other terms. The movement conditioned the implementation of arrangements over weapons on a comprehensive halt to Israeli military operations, the withdrawal of Israeli occupation forces from the Gaza Strip, the launch of early recovery and reconstruction efforts,

⁸ “The Peace Board: Re-engineering Gaza in Line with Israel's Post-War Vision” Situation Assessment, Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, 25/5/2026, accessed 6/8/2026, at: <https://acr.ps/hBylCo1>.

⁹ Ibtisam Azem, “Key Takeaways from the ‘Board of Peace’ Report on Gaza Submitted to the Security Council,” *Al-Araby Al-Jadeed*, 20/5/2026, accessed 6/8/2026 (in Arabic), at: <https://acr.ps/hBxMvNZ>.

¹⁰ Al-Amour, “Scenarios.”

¹¹ “Cabinet Approves Deployment of ‘Board of Peace Forces to the Gaza Strip,” *Al-Araby Al-Jadeed*, 26/7/2026, accessed 6/8/2026 (in Arabic), at: <https://acr.ps/hBxNLRC>.

¹² “In a Challenge to the Terms of the Truce... Netanyahu Announces Expansion of Control in Gaza to 70%,” *Al Jazeera Net*, 28/5/2026, accessed 6/8/2026 (in Arabic), at: <https://acr.ps/hBxNMw8>.

¹³ “Smotrich Renews Calls to Israeli PM to Greenlight Three North Gaza Settlements,” *The New Arab*, 2/8/2026, accessed on 6/8/2026, at: <https://acr.ps/hBxNLED>.

the NCAG's entry into the territory, the deployment of an international protection force, and the disbanding of armed groups operating in the Strip that were formed by, or collaborate with, Israel. It emphasized that the transition to the second phase remained contingent upon Israel fulfilling all its obligations under the first phase – foremost among them halting its killings and military operations, opening the crossings, ensuring the flow of aid, and ceasing its territorial expansion within the Strip.¹⁴

Thus, Hamas views its agreement to arrangements regarding the restriction of arms not as an isolated, unilateral step, but as part of an integrated process contingent upon ending the war, achieving withdrawal, and launching a political track that guarantees the right to self-determination and the establishment of a Palestinian state. As for Islamic Jihad, it has expressed reservations regarding the final version of the agreement, citing a lack of clarity in several clauses – ambiguity that could grant Israel significant room to manoeuvre and evade its obligations.¹⁵

Conversely, the Israeli government did not initially issue a clear official stance on the document. However, statements from officials within both the ruling coalition and the opposition reflected widespread rejection of any arrangement that would not result in the complete disarmament of Hamas and the dismantling of its military capabilities and ability to govern.¹⁶ This includes a refusal to withdraw from areas beyond the “Yellow Line” prior to the completion of a comprehensive disarmament. More broadly, Israel rejects any political path that might lead to the establishment of a Palestinian state, a stance that places it in direct conflict with the political objective declared in the roadmap.

According to Israeli media reports, the Netanyahu government informed the Board of Peace and the US of its reservations over three key issues: the failure to mandate the complete destruction of Hamas's weaponry, potential restrictions on the Israeli military's freedom of action, and the inclusion of Qatar and Türkiye in verification mechanisms over its implementation.¹⁷ Netanyahu's office officially acknowledged that Israel had informed Washington that that the published version did not reflect its position.¹⁸ Subsequently, Mladenov visited Israel, and the Board of Peace issued a statement affirming that a full Israeli withdrawal from the “Yellow Line” would only occur after the process of disarmament had been completed, including light and heavy weaponry, as well as tunnels.¹⁹

14 “Hamas Announces Conditions for Launching Implementation of Second Phase of Gaza Agreement,” *Al-Araby Al-Jadeed*, 31/7/2026, accessed 6/8/2026 (in Arabic), at: <https://acr.ps/hBxNMq3>.

15 “Islamic Jihad Expresses Reservations on Agreement Draft, Emphasizes Need for Balance Between Both Parties' Obligations,” *Palestine Today*, 31/7/2026, accessed 6/8/2026 (in Arabic), at: <https://acr.ps/hBxNM3L>.

16 “Roadmap to Complete Gaza Agreement: Opportunities and Obstacles Facing Implementation of Mladenov Plan,” *Al-Araby Al-Jadeed*, 31/7/2026, accessed 6/8/2026 (in Arabic), at: <https://acr.ps/hBxNMzn>.

17 “Israel Informs ‘Board of Peace of Objections to Three Clauses in Gaza Agreement,” *Al-Araby Al-Jadeed*, 2/8/2026, accessed 6/8/2026 (in Arabic), at: <https://acr.ps/hBxNMst>.

18 “Israeli Government Confirms it Informed Washington of ‘its Concerns’ Regarding Gaza Agreement,” *Al-Araby Al-Jadeed*, 3/8/2026, accessed 6/8/2026 (in Arabic), at: <https://acr.ps/hBxNMFs>.

19 “Peace Council Links Israeli Withdrawal from Gaza to Complete Disarmament... and Hamas Seeks Clarification,” *Al-Araby Al-Jadeed*, 3/8/2026; accessed 6/8/2026 (in Arabic), at: <https://acr.ps/hBxNLNX>.

Israel thus succeeded in imposing its own interpretation of the roadmap, specifically regarding the sections on sequencing and the timing of its withdrawal, and those regarding arrangements on weaponry, effectively turning it into a demand for complete disarmament prior to withdrawal.

Israel's response was not limited to political reservations, but was accompanied by a significant escalation on the ground immediately after Hamas announced it had accepted the initial version of the roadmap, which Mladenov had proposed and later contradicted. The Israeli military intensified its combat operations, targeted killings, and bombardment, expanding its areas of control within the Strip, including by shifting the "Yellow Line" and seizing additional territory. It has continued to restrict the delivery of humanitarian aid and to obstruct the implementation of commitments outlined in the first phase of the ceasefire agreement. This was a clear attempt to derail any effort that would lead to the subsequent phase, which entails distinct obligations – foremost among them a comprehensive ceasefire, a full withdrawal, and allowing reconstruction efforts.

Conclusion

The latest diplomatic manoeuvres regarding the Gaza Strip have not deviated from the trajectory established since the start of the genocide. Israel has continued to negotiate whilst pressing on with targeted killings and bombing and blockading Gaza; parallel negotiations between mediators and Hamas have taken place under relentless pressure aimed at compelling the movement to make concessions. When deals have been agreed, Israeli has not abided by their outcomes; instead, it has continued to exert pressure through military action. The US, for its part, pays little attention to Israel's non-compliance, not viewing it as violating the ceasefire agreement, while treating Hamas as the sole party required to honour its commitments.

The "roadmap" reveals an attempt to transition from managing the war to managing the post-war phase, by consolidating security, administrative, and political arrangements into a single framework. However, Mladenov's adoption of the Israeli position regarding the roadmap that he proposed for the second phase suggests that the primary objective was – and remains – disarming the Palestinian resistance, without providing any guarantees that would bind Israel to honour its own obligations. Ultimately, the second phase of the agreement may not be implemented, unless both parties adhere to the twin conditions of simultaneity and complementarity.