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# Trump's "Peace" Declaration:

## Reshaping the Middle East to Suit Israel

Unit for Political Studies

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### Unit for Political Studies

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At the "Sharm el-Sheikh Peace Summit" in Egypt on 13 October, US President Donald Trump formally declared that "the war in Gaza is over" and that the Middle East had entered a "new chapter".<sup>1</sup> He confirmed that the second phase of negotiations had begun following the ceasefire, Israel's partial withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, and the exchange of prisoners and remains between Israel and Palestinian resistance factions.<sup>2</sup> This phase is set to address several contentious issues, foremost among them the fate of the Hamas arsenal, which Washington and Tel Aviv insist must be dismantled. It also includes the creation of the so-called "International Stabilization Force" to assume security responsibilities in the Strip, and the establishment of a "Palestinian technocratic committee" to administer Gaza under the supervision of the international "Board of Peace" tasked with overseeing reconstruction efforts.

Yet Trump's optimistic tone belies a reality fraught with uncertainty about this second phase, which is ostensibly intended to pave the way for lasting stability in the region. Growing doubts are fuelled by his wholesale adoption of Israeli discourse, while speaking in the Knesset as though at home, his praise for Israel's use of US weaponry, and his repeated threats towards Hamas and other regional actors, including Iran, as well as anyone who dares challenge the US Israeli vision of a "new Middle East" being reshaped according to what they regard as a joint Israeli US military victory in the region.

## The Fate of the Ceasefire Agreement: Between Guarantees and Threats

On 9 October, Trump announced that Israel and Hamas had agreed to his proposed peace plan to end the war in the Gaza Strip, a plan that incorporated all of Israel's publicly declared objectives for the war.<sup>3</sup> The initial ceasefire agreement came into effect on 10 October, while the prisoner exchange began three days later. As part of the exchange, Hamas released twenty Israeli prisoners alive, in return for the release of 1,968 Palestinian prisoners, including 250 serving life sentences. Hamas also handed over the bodies of four Israeli soldiers, while efforts are still underway to recover the remains of twenty-four others, amid technical and logistical difficulties in locating their burial sites due to the extensive destruction caused by Israeli military operations. Israel, for its part, is expected to hand over fifteen Palestinian bodies for each Israeli one.

According to the general framework of the agreement announced by Trump in late September, Israeli forces withdrew – prior to the start of the prisoner exchange – to what is known as the "Yellow Line" inside the Gaza Strip.<sup>4</sup> This left Israel in control of 53 per cent of the territory and allowed humanitarian

1 "Speech: Donald Trump Delivers Remarks at the Peace Ceremony in Egypt," *Roll Call*, 13/10/2025, accessed on 16/10/2025, at: <https://acr.ps/1L9BPzY>

2 Diyar GÜldoğan, "Trump Announces Start of 'Phase 2' of Gaza Deal," *Anadolu Agency*, 14/10/2025, accessed on 16/10/2025, at: <https://acr.ps/1L9BP8P>

3 "The Peace Framework for Gaza: Drivers, Details, and Difficulties Ahead", Situation Assessment, Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, 14/10/2025, accessed on 16/10/2025 at: <https://acr.ps/1L9BPAD>

4 "Enshrining Israeli Hegemony Under the Veil of Peace: Trump's Revised Plan for Gaza", Situation Assessment, Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, 2/10/2025, accessed on 13/10/2025, at: <https://acr.ps/1L9BPcf>

aid to enter the besieged areas.<sup>5</sup> Israel has already violated the agreement by manipulating the lists of Palestinian detainees and its backtracking on its pledge to allow 600 aid trucks into Gaza daily, reducing the number by half on the pretext that it had not yet received the remains of all its captives, as well as by killing several Palestinians accused of crossing the permitted boundary.<sup>6</sup> Yet the ceasefire “remains in place,” largely because there is a tacit consensus to regard it as a success.

Despite the obstacles facing the current agreement, Trump’s considerable political investment in it has generated a degree of cautious optimism.<sup>7</sup> This support is bolstered by the dizzying race to appease Trump and his unpredictable reactions, which was on full display at the Sharm el-Sheikh Summit attended by leaders from around thirty countries. Trump authorized his envoys, Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner, to meet with leaders of Hamas in Sharm el-Sheikh on 8 October and gave them a personal guarantee that Israel would not be allowed to resume the war so long as Hamas upheld its part of the agreement, the interpretation of which remains contested, particularly the clauses that Hamas has not formally approved.<sup>8</sup> The involvement of Qatar, Egypt and Turkey as guarantors alongside the United States has further strengthened Hamas’s confidence, as well as that of other Palestinian resistance factions, creating a more favourable atmosphere for engaging with the terms of the agreement, despite persistent concerns about Israeli intentions. Nevertheless, apprehension remains, as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his far-right government continue to threaten a return to war unless, in their view, all objectives are achieved, including the disarmament of Hamas’s military and political capacities.<sup>9</sup> This has fuelled fears that Israel is scrambling for pretexts to renege on the ceasefire.

## A New Middle East?

Neither Trump nor Netanyahu concealed their intentions to reshape the Middle East and impose what they described as “peace through strength,” in their speeches before the Israeli Knesset.<sup>10</sup> Netanyahu outlined Israel’s “victories,” achieved with US support following the 7 October 2023 attack, emphasizing that Israel’s power represents “the indispensable foundation of peace. Peace through strength.” He also announced his determination, together with Trump, to advance the

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5 Mariel Ferragamo, “A Guide to Trump’s Twenty-Point Gaza Peace Deal,” Council on Foreign Relations, 13/10/2025, accessed on 16/10/2025, at: <https://acr.ps/1L9BPAV>

6 Jane Arraf, “Israel keeps Gaza border crossing closed while reducing aid deliveries,” *NPR*, 15/10/2025, accessed on 13/10/2025, at: <https://acr.ps/1L9BOXs>

7 Darlene Superville & Chris Megerian, “Trump Urges Leaders to Put ‘old Feuds’ Aside as he Calls for a New Era of Harmony in the Middle East,” *Associated Press*, 13/10/2025, accessed on 16/10/2025, at: <https://acr.ps/1L9BOVZ>

8 Barak Ravid, “Direct Meeting Between Trump Envoys and Hamas Leaders Sealed Gaza Deal,” *AXIOS*, 13/10/2025, accessed on 16/10/2025, at: <https://acr.ps/1L9BP0z>

9 Kevin Liptak, “Trump’s insistence produced a ceasefire in Gaza. Now he hopes it will end the war,” *CNN*, 13/10/2025, accessed on 16/10/2025, at: <https://acr.ps/1L9BPUP>

10 “Benjamin Netanyahu’s Speech; Benjamin Netanyahu Speaks After Hostage Release; Dan Senor is Interviewed about Israel,” *CNN*, 13/10/2025, accessed on 16/10/2025, at: <https://acr.ps/1L9BPcC>

"Abraham Accords," affirming that "Under your leadership, we can forge new peace treaties with Arab countries in the region and Muslim countries beyond the region."<sup>11</sup>

Trump, for his part, proclaimed that what had been achieved was "not only the end of a war, this is the end of an age of terror and death." He declared that "we have weapons that nobody's ever dreamt of", implicitly warning "I only hope we never have to use them". He added "we make the best weapons in the world, and we've got a lot of them. And we've given a lot to Israel, frankly". Trump stressed that the US participation in the war against Iran, and the strikes on its nuclear facilities in June, had helped pave the way for the Gaza ceasefire agreement, asserting that "the other Arab and Muslim nations really wouldn't feel comfortable making the deal that we have now, right, if Iran had that nuclear weapon that they were about two months away from having."<sup>12</sup> Accordingly, Trump urged Israel to seize the opportunity his administration had created, saying, "Israel, with our help, has won all that they can by force of arms. You've won. I mean, you've won. Now it's time to translate these victories against terrorists on the battlefield into the ultimate prize of peace and prosperity for the entire Middle East." He vowed to pressure Arab states to sign the Abraham Accords, saying "I hope that every one of the countries that we're seeking, Jared, I hope they join quickly. No games, no nothing, just join, get it."<sup>13</sup> His message to Netanyahu was clear: Israel will attain the political objectives of the war because the US has adopted them – there is therefore no need to continue fighting once those aims have become attainable.

Trump reiterated this vision during the Sharm el-Sheikh Summit, saying "I hope everybody's gonna join the Abraham Accord,"<sup>14</sup> even though his proposed framework offers no clear path towards the establishment of a Palestinian state, which is a key demand supported by the majority of Arab and Islamic nations, and backed internationally. In essence, he is asking Arab states to reward a war criminal responsible for genocide for his crimes, setting a new historical precedent. He is, in effect, urging them to partake in disgrace. The summit generated a document titled "*The Trump Declaration for Enduring Peace and Prosperity*", which was notably vague. It spoke of "a new chapter for the region defined by hope, security, and a shared vision for peace and prosperity", and pledged support for "Trump's sincere efforts to end the war in Gaza and bring lasting peace to the Middle East." It affirmed that "lasting peace will be one in which both Palestinians and Israelis can prosper with their fundamental human rights protected, their security guaranteed, and their dignity upheld."<sup>15</sup> Yet the declaration fails to specify the conditions under which such "lasting peace" might be achieved, nor does it clarify Israel's responsibilities or the rights to which Palestinians would be entitled under it.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> "Full text of Trump's Knesset Speech: You've Won. You can't Beat the World. It's Time for Peace," *The Times of Israel*, 13/10/2025, accessed on 16/10/2025, at: <https://acr.ps/1L9BPok>

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> "Speech: Donald Trump Delivers Remarks at the Peace Ceremony in Egypt."

<sup>15</sup> "The Trump Declaration for Enduring Peace and Prosperity," The White House, 13/10/2025, accessed on 16/10/2025, at: <https://acr.ps/1L9BP1b>

## Implementation Challenges

Despite President Trump's exaggerated public pronouncements and his ostentatious claims of achievement – such as his hyperbolic assertion that what has been accomplished is a feat in the context of a “3,000 years of pain and conflict”<sup>16</sup> – a sober assessment of the ceasefire agreement to halt the genocidal war Israel waged on Gaza, and of the prospects for a “comprehensive peace” in a region that would include Iran, exposes a series of challenges and obstacles. The most important of these are:

- **Who will administer Gaza:** The form and mechanism for governing the Gaza Strip after hostilities cease remain hotly contested. Palestinian resistance factions insist on exclusively Palestinian administration founded on national consensus and reject any international tutelage<sup>17</sup> – in direct conflict with Trump's proposal.
- **The question of armed resistance:** Trump and Netanyahu insist on disarming the resistance, by force if necessary, while the resistance factions say they will only surrender their arms to a legitimate Palestinian government after the establishment of a Palestinian state. Qatari mediators are seeking compromises to avert a resumption of fighting: Qatari Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani emphasized a “a marked difference between Hamas giving its weapons to a Palestinian authority and the group giving them to another entity,” and noted the movement's willingness to discuss ways of ensuring its arms do not pose a threat to Israel.<sup>18</sup> In practice, however, there is no reliable formula for disarmament other than war.
- **The Palestinian right to self-determination:** The plan speaks vaguely and imprecisely about a Palestinian state, tying its establishment to progress on reconstruction and to reforms within the Palestinian Authority, treating statehood as an “aspiration” rather than an inherent right or an entitlement under international law.<sup>19</sup>
- **Lack of guarantees:** It is unclear whether Arab states will agree to finance Gaza's reconstruction instead of insisting that Israel pay reparations for its crimes and the destruction it caused, not to mention to join the Abraham Accords, without credible guarantees that Israel will not resume hostilities and will accept the establishment of a Palestinian state in accordance with international law.
- **Sustained US commitment:** It remains uncertain whether Trump will stay engaged in overseeing implementation and restraining Israeli conduct, or whether he will withdraw

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<sup>16</sup> “Full text of Trump's Knesset Speech.”

<sup>17</sup> “Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and the Popular Front: We Reject Any Foreign Guardianship over Gaza,” *Al Jazeera*, 11/10/2025, accessed on 16/10/2025, at: <https://acr.ps/1L9BOVX>

<sup>18</sup> Adam Rasgon, “Israel and Hamas Were Not Ready for a Comprehensive Peace Deal, Mediator Says,” *The New York Times*, 12/10/2025, accessed on 16/10/2025, at: <https://acr.ps/1L9BPCI>

<sup>19</sup> “‘The Closest we’ve Ever Come’: Full Text of Trump, Netanyahu Statements on Deal to end Gaza War,” *The Times of Israel*, 29/9/2025, accessed on 16/10/2025, at: <https://acr.ps/1L9BPTw>

once media attention wanes, thereby leaving room for Israel to press ahead with measures aimed at securing its wartime objectives under various pretexts.

## Conclusion

Trump's insistence on securing a ceasefire agreement in Gaza is underpinned by a range of personal and political motives, some of which stem from his narcissism, his desire to leave a lasting political legacy, and his fixation on winning the Nobel Peace Prize. Others reflect growing discontent within his right-wing electoral base over Israel's expanding influence over Washington and deepening US involvement in conflicts unrelated to its national security. Moreover, Israel's growing international isolation and the mounting condemnations of its genocidal crimes in Gaza have added layers of pressure – something Trump himself acknowledged in his address to the Knesset when he said he had told Netanyahu that “it's now time” to agree to a ceasefire because “it was getting to be a little nasty out there in the world. And ultimately the world wins. You can't beat the world.”<sup>20</sup> He offered his help in breaking Israel's isolation while still enabling it to achieve its war aims.

This plan is far removed from advancing Palestinian interests or achieving any form of “comprehensive peace,” since it embraces virtually all of Israel's demands for ending the war and seeks to reshape the region to serve Israeli interests. Its significance lies simply in putting an end to the brutal onslaught Israel has waged on Gaza for the past two years, allowing humanitarian aid to reach the besieged Strip, and perhaps opening the door to reconstruction while reducing the risk of the mass expulsion of Gaza's population. The balance will only begin to shift against the regional order Trump and Netanyahu are striving to impose when Arab and Islamic states take a clear stance in support of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination, stop pandering to Trump, and invest in the global solidarity movement.

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20 “Full Text of Trump's Knesset Speech.”