



U.S. Senators Chris Van Hollen and Jeff Merkley

The Netanyahu Government
is Implementing a Plan
to Ethnically Cleanse
Gaza of Palestinians.

America is Complicit.

The World Must Stop It.

*Van Hollen, Merkley Report Following
2025 CODEL to Gaza Border, Israel,
West Bank, Jordan, and Egypt*

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INTRODUCTION

The Netanyahu government has not kept its goals secret in Gaza. Prime Minister Netanyahu and his government have made the removal of Palestinians from Gaza a strategic aim of the war. Netanyahu said that Israel is “destroying more and more homes, and Gazans have nowhere to return to. The only inevitable outcome will be the wish of Gazans to emigrate outside of the Gaza Strip.”¹ Finance Minister Smotrich has said, “Gaza will be totally destroyed” and that Palestinians there would be “totally despairing, understanding that there is no hope and nothing to look for in Gaza, and will be looking for relocation to begin a new life in other places.”²

Foreign Minister Gideon Sa’ar has called Gaza a “failed experiment,” backed President Trump’s plan to relocate Palestinians,³ and said, “What you call Palestine - this is the land of Israel.”⁴ National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir has said, “We must not stop for even a moment. We need to achieve a full victory, occupy all of Gaza, stop humanitarian aid, and encourage migration, not partial deals.”⁵ The National Heritage Minister Amichai Eliyahu has said, “the government is rushing to erase Gaza, and thank God we are erasing this evil. All of Gaza will be Jewish.”⁶

These are not the isolated comments of an out-of-power fringe group. They are statements from key officials – all members of the Netanyahu government – who are shaping Israel’s actions in Gaza, the West Bank, and beyond. During our week-long visit to Israel, the West Bank, the border of Gaza, Jordan, and Egypt, the facts demonstrated overwhelmingly that Israel is putting these words into action by implementing a plan to ethnically cleanse Gaza of Palestinians and dealing a death blow to the vision of a future Palestinian state that would include Gaza and the West Bank. In Gaza, the Netanyahu government is implementing its goal through the near-total destruction of civilian infrastructure and its use of food as a weapon of war. These policies are part of a calculated effort to drive Palestinians out of Gaza by making it impossible for them to live there. Any talk of “voluntary departures” is a cruel hoax. Departure is not “voluntary” when the conditions needed to support life are extinguished.

¹ “Benjamin Netanyahu: Emigration from Gaza Blocked by Host Countries: The Jerusalem Post.” *The Jerusalem Post* | JPost.Com, 11 May 2025, www.jpost.com/israel-news/politics-and-diplomacy/article-853568.

² Bowen, Jeremy. “Netanyahu’s Plan for Gaza Risks Dividing Israel, Killing Palestinians and Horrifying World.” *BBC News*, BBC, 6 May 2025, www.bbc.com/news/articles/cd020j97179o.

³ “Trump Fuels Fury and Fear in the Middle East after Vowing to ‘take over’ the Gaza Strip.” *NBCNews.Com*, NBCUniversal News Group, 5 Feb. 2025, www.nbcnews.com/news/world/donald-trump-gaza-take-over-netanyahu-israel-war-hamas-rcna190744.

⁴ Magid, Jacob. “‘What You Call Palestine, Is the Land of Israel,’ Sa’ar Tells Palestinian Reporter at Munich Confab | The Times of Israel.”, *The Times of Israel*, 14 Feb. 2025, www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/what-you-call-palestine-is-the-land-of-israel-saar-tells-palestinian-reporter-at-munich-confab/.

⁵ Arnaout, Abderaouf, and Ikram Kouachi. “Israel’s Ben-Gvir Renews Call to Occupy Gaza, Encourage Palestinian Migration.” *Anadolu Ajansı*, 7 Mar. 2025, www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/israel-s-ben-gvir-renews-call-to-occupy-gaza-encourage-palestinian-migration/3620645.

⁶ “Solomon, Avi. “All of Gaza Will Be Jewish, Israeli Heritage Minister Says: The Jerusalem Post.” *The Jerusalem Post* | JPost.Com, 24 July 2025, www.jpost.com/israel-news/article-862117

From the horrific October 7, 2023, Hamas terror attacks against Israel until today, we have never wavered in our belief that Israel has a right, indeed a duty, to defend its people and ensure that there cannot be a repeat of that terrible day. It is clear, however, that the Netanyahu government's war has gone far beyond targeting Hamas to imposing collective punishment on all of the people of Gaza. Moreover, whatever Israel's original war aims may have been, they now include the removal of Palestinians from Gaza. That is ethnic cleansing. But for the fact that Egypt, Jordan, and other Arab countries have prevented such displacement, it may well have already become the reality.

SUMMARY OF MEETINGS AND SITE VISITS

From August 24th to September 1st, we traveled to Israel, the West Bank, the border of Gaza, Jordan, and Egypt on a fact-finding mission to better understand the various forces shaping the ongoing humanitarian disaster in Gaza and to press for an immediate ceasefire and the return of the hostages.

In Israel, we met with families whose loved ones were taken hostage during Hamas's heinous terrorist attack on Israel on October 7, 2023. We also returned to Kfar Aza, an Israeli kibbutz near the border with Gaza that we had previously visited in the summer of 2023. What we remembered as a vibrant community had become the site of one of the worst massacres on October 7th, with 80 people killed and 19 taken hostage.⁷

We visited the Port of Ashdod, where the World Food Programme (WFP) has a staging area for receiving shipments of food assistance to be transported to and distributed in Gaza. We also visited Kerem Shalom in the southwestern corner of Israel, one of two crossing points that are regularly open for the delivery of international humanitarian aid into Gaza, the other being the Zikim crossing along Gaza's northern border with Israel. We examined the Kerem Shalom border crossing and received briefings from Israel's Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) and the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF). We also spoke with President Herzog and met with Ambassador Huckabee, the U.S. Embassy Jerusalem country team, World Food Programme Executive Director Cindy McCain, and Patriarch of the Orthodox Church of Jerusalem Theophilos and other church leaders. We met with IDF soldiers – current and former – who have provided testimony to Breaking the Silence, an organization created by former IDF soldiers to shine a light on systematic abuses of the Palestinian people by the IDF.

From Israel, we traveled to the West Bank. While this report is more specifically focused on the situation in Gaza, the Netanyahu government's policies on the West Bank reflect on the ongoing effort to push Palestinian communities off their land and confine them into smaller

⁷ Fabian, Emanuel. "Terrorists Took Kfar Aza in an Hour. Recapturing It Took the IDF Days, Probe Finds | The Times of Israel." *The Times of Israel*, 3 Mar. 2025, www.timesofisrael.com/terrorists-took-kfar-aza-in-an-hour-recapturing-it-took-the-idf-days-probe-finds/.

and smaller areas. It is ethnic cleansing in slow motion. Even our short visit there revealed that the situation has worsened considerably since our last trip in 2023. We observed many more trailers and illegal outposts springing up on hilltops, and many settlements that had previously been deemed illegal, even under Israeli law, have since been “legalized.” That growth has been accompanied by a substantial increase in new checkpoints, gates, and walls encircling and encaging Palestinian communities throughout the West Bank. We also drove by the Israeli settlement of Ma’ale Adumim near Jerusalem and close to the area that has been designated by Israel as “E1,” which the Israeli government recently announced it plans to develop for new settlements. If that happens, it will violate international law, sever the already restricted north-south transportation corridors used by Palestinians on the West Bank, and put another nail in the coffin of a two-state solution.

We met with Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas, who underscored the PA’s longstanding commitment to peaceful co-existence with Israel, to implementing necessary reforms, and to the goal of establishing a demilitarized Palestinian state. Despite the PA’s enduring security cooperation with Israel, facilitated by the United States, the Netanyahu government has frozen the transfer of customs duties (which Israel collects on behalf of the PA in accordance with the Oslo Accords) to the PA. That freeze is preventing the PA from paying its security forces, local police, teachers, and other government officials who work to deliver essential public services on the West Bank. The withholding of funds is leading to severe economic uncertainty and more instability in the already highly stressed West Bank population. Meanwhile, the Trump Administration has refused to issue visas for Abbas and other PA representatives to attend the September session of the U.N. General Assembly, where the recognition of a State of Palestine will be a major topic of discussion.

We also met with Palestinian civil society leaders who chronicled the well-documented rise in settler violence against Palestinians that has been accompanied by either indifference or, more often, the active complicity of the Netanyahu government. In Taybeh, one of many Palestinian communities attacked and harassed by settlers — including on the day of our visit — we heard accounts of the attacks and visited the historic church that settlers attempted to damage. In Ramallah, we met with the families of American citizens – most of them under 18 – killed by violent settlers or the IDF in the past few years. We also met the father of an American boy who has been jailed, without charges, by the Israeli government for more than six months. The American government has absolutely failed in its duty to secure any kind of accountability for the killings and detention of these American citizens.

We left the West Bank by taking the Allenby/King Hussein Bridge crossing into Jordan, which is part of the current designated route of the “Jordan Corridor” to transport humanitarian assistance from Jordan to Gaza. In Jordan, we held roundtables with humanitarian organizations working to send humanitarian assistance into Gaza. We met with the Jordan Hashemite Charity Organization (JHCO), which included a tour of their warehouses where humanitarian supplies are stored before being transported through the Jordan Corridor. We also spoke with children at the King Abdullah II Cancer Center who were suffering from cancer and who had been evacuated from Gaza with their family members or guardians. Our visit

additionally included a stop at the King Abdullah II Airbase, where we were scheduled to join the Royal Jordanian Air Force during one of their humanitarian airdrop missions into Gaza in order to view conditions inside Gaza; however, Israel denied clearance for the operation. Following that, we visited the Joint Training Center (JTC), a joint U.S. Army-Jordanian Armed Forces base, which prior to the 2025 ceasefire, was used to screen humanitarian supplies sent to Gaza through the Jordan Corridor. At JTC, we met with U.S. servicemembers and were briefed on the security situation in the region. In addition to these tours, in Amman, we met with Foreign Minister Safadi and the entire embassy team at the U.S. Embassy.

From Jordan, we traveled to Egypt, where our first stop was the Rafah border crossing. Egyptian officials gave us a tour of the border area with Gaza, from which we could see into Gaza. From the rooftops, we witnessed firsthand the devastation and destruction: Rafah had been reduced to rubble. We then traveled to El Arish, a city south of Rafah that serves as a staging location for much of the humanitarian supplies going into Gaza from Egypt, where we visited an Egyptian Red Crescent (ERC) aid facility and met with ERC and WFP officials working jointly on aid delivery. The following day we met with the U.S. Embassy team in Cairo and with Foreign Minister Abdelatty, with whom we discussed a range of issues, including the dire situation in Gaza, efforts to end the war and secure the release of hostages, our security partnership, and other bilateral issues, including the need to improve Egypt's human rights record.

FINDINGS

Through our many meetings, site visits, and discussions, we were able to draw several key takeaways, both from conditions we witnessed firsthand and from accounts we received. We found that the Netanyahu government has used a two-pronged approach to pursue its current strategy to displace Palestinians from Gaza — the systematic destruction of civilian infrastructure and the use of food and humanitarian assistance as a weapon of war. The goal is, in effect, to ethnically cleanse Gaza of its Palestinian population.

This includes both the ethnic cleansing and forced migration of people within Gaza to “humanitarian zones” in areas such as Al-Mawasi, like we are now seeing during the IDF’s operation in Gaza City, as well as the ultimate goal of ethnically cleansing Palestinians from the entire Gaza Strip. Recent estimates from the UN state that approximately 87% of Gaza is either within designated Israeli military zones or under evacuation orders.⁸ These latest estimates do not take into account the IDF’s recent announcement that all of Gaza City, which hosts hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, is now under evacuation orders.⁹ As we previously described, removing Palestinians from Gaza is a publicly declared strategic aim of the

⁸ “Reported Impact Snapshot: Gaza Strip (3 September 2025).” *United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - Occupied Palestinian Territory*, 3 Sept. 2025, www.ochaopt.org/content/reported-impact-snapshot-gaza-strip-3-september-2025.

⁹ Ostaz, Diaa, et al. “Israeli Military Issues Full Evacuation Order for All of Gaza City.” ABC News, 9 Sept. 2025, <https://abcnews.go.com/International/israeli-military-issues-full-evacuation-order-gaza-city/story?id=125387489>. Accessed 10 Sept. 2025.

Netanyahu government and Israel has engaged with third countries to convince them to take Palestinians from Gaza.¹⁰

The systematic destruction of Palestinian civilian infrastructure has been well documented by others and confirmed in our conversations with credible and reliable sources in Israel, the West Bank, Jordan, and Egypt. That campaign of destruction includes the destruction or damage of 92% of housing units¹¹, 94% of the Strip's hospitals¹², 92% of schools and university buildings¹³, and 86% of water and sanitation facilities¹⁴. Aerial footage and before-and-after photos of much of Gaza show an apocalyptic ruin. We heard firsthand accounts of how this was part of an intentional pattern of using explosives to blow up whole city blocks, houses, schools, and other civilian sites. We also witnessed with our own eyes the Palestinian city of Rafah, previously home to over 270,000 people, reduced to rubble.¹⁵ The recent Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) report released on August 22, 2025, which found that 500,000 people in Gaza are in famine, could not make a determination on the food security situation in Rafah because the former city and the surrounding area were deemed "largely depopulated."¹⁶

Most of our findings relate to the fact that the Netanyahu government has willfully obstructed the flow of food and other humanitarian aid into Gaza in order to impose collective punishment on the population of Gaza for the sins of Hamas; to use the four GHF sites erected on May 26 as tools to restrict the flow of food and control population movement; and to make conditions so unbearable that Palestinians "volunteer" to depart.

The Netanyahu Government Has Willfully Obstructed the Delivery of Sufficient Food and Other Necessities into Gaza

Getting food and other aid into Gaza has been extremely difficult due to deliberate obstacles imposed by the Netanyahu Government. Those obstacles included the 78-day blockade on all

¹⁰ Ravid, Barak. "Scoop: Israel Seeks U.S. Help on Deals to Move Palestinians Out of Gaza." *Axios*, 18 July 2025, <https://www.axios.com/2025/07/18/israel-send-palestinians-gaza-indonesia-ethiopia>. Accessed 10 Sept. 2025.

¹¹ "Reported Impact Snapshot: Gaza Strip (3 September 2025)." *United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - Occupied Palestinian Territory*, 3 Sept. 2025, www.ochaopt.org/content/reported-impact-snapshot-gaza-strip-3-september-2025.

¹² "Health System at Breaking Point as Hostilities Further Intensify in Gaza, Who Warns." *World Health Organization*, World Health Organization, 22 May 2025, www.who.int/news/item/22-05-2025-health-system-at-breaking-point-as-hostilities-further-intensify--who-warns?utm_source=chatgpt.com.

¹³ "Reported Impact Snapshot: Gaza Strip (3 September 2025)." *United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - Occupied Palestinian Territory*, 3 Sept. 2025, www.ochaopt.org/content/reported-impact-snapshot-gaza-strip-3-september-2025.

¹⁴ "Reported Impact Snapshot: Gaza Strip (3 September 2025)." *United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - Occupied Palestinian Territory*, 3 Sept. 2025, www.ochaopt.org/content/reported-impact-snapshot-gaza-strip-3-september-2025.

¹⁵ Sullivan, Becky, et al. "War in Gaza Drove Them from Their Homes. Now, Many Palestinians Can't Even Find Tents." *NPR*, NPR, 19 Jan. 2024, www.npr.org/2024/01/19/1225250933/gaza-rafah-tents-shortage.

¹⁶ "Famine Review Committee: Gaza Strip, August 2025." *Integrated Food Security Phase Classification*, 22 Aug. 2025, www.ipcinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/ipcinfo/docs/IPC_Famine_Review_Committee_Report_Gaza_Aug2025.pdf

assistance to Gaza, ongoing restrictions on the number of entry points for the delivery of humanitarian aid, the establishment of the GHF model at a time when no other assistance was coming in, and a mountain of bureaucratic, technical, and inconsistent obstacles placed in the way of delivering aid from the Port of Ashdod, the Jordan Corridor, and from Rafah, Egypt. We report on each of these below.

78 days of Total Blockade of Food and Humanitarian Assistance

From March 2nd to May 19th, Israel deliberately imposed a total blockade on all food and humanitarian assistance entering Gaza. Not surprisingly, during that period, people grew desperately hungry, and a huge surge of food would have been required to stave off starvation after the blockade ended. That surge did not happen. As a result, in August 2025, a famine was declared by the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) in Gaza Governorate, and the IPC also warned that famine is projected to expand to Deir al-Balah and Khan Younis by the end of September. Even the COGAT officials we met on the ground at Kerem Shalom acknowledged that there were “islands” of starvation in Gaza. Netanyahu’s claim that the IPC applied a different standard to parts of Gaza than to areas in other countries has been widely refuted by independent analysts and by the IPC itself, which publicly defended its methodology and findings in a comprehensive response to Netanyahu’s criticism.¹⁷ Humanitarian officials in one country we visited also said that the Netanyahu government intentionally allows only what they deem to be the minimum necessary aid to enter Gaza, only increasing the flow once an IPC report is about to come out to counter the narrative.

Since the end of the blockade, the Israeli government has used a range of often-shifting tactics to achieve its goal of limiting aid. While COGAT denies that they are slowing down the delivery of humanitarian assistance, the overwhelming weight of the evidence shows otherwise.

Restrictions on Entry Points into Gaza

There are two primary entry points into Gaza that are currently open for the delivery of humanitarian aid by humanitarian organizations to over two million people in Gaza — one at Kerem Shalom and the other at Zikim.¹⁸ The World Food Programme and other international humanitarian organizations have urged the Israeli government to allow them to deliver supplies through additional crossings, including Gate 96 and Kissufim (sometimes referred to as Gate 147), and to reopen the Rafah crossing, which remains completely shut down. We have been told that, unlike Zikim and Kerem Shalom, Gate 96 and Kissufim are not open on a regular basis for humanitarian deliveries, with only a trickle going through both. While COGAT asserted that Kissufim and Gate 96 were fully open for humanitarian aid deliveries by

¹⁷ “Response to Issues Raised Following IPC’s Famine ...” *Integrated Food Security Phase Classification*, 30 Aug. 2025, www.ipcinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/ipcinfo/docs/Response_to_Issues_Raised_Following_IPC_Famine_Classification_in_the_Gaza_Strip.pdf.

¹⁸ “Daily Press Briefing by the Office of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases.” *United Nations*, United Nations, 6 Aug. 2025, press.un.org/en/2025/db250806.doc.htm

humanitarian organizations, the humanitarian officials we spoke with stated that only Kerem Shalom and Zikim have been open for regular deliveries, and that even if some trucks have gone through these other crossings since the blockade was lifted, the total volume has been woefully inadequate.

As noted previously, one of their major requests to us — both in terms of getting the necessary quantity of assistance into Gaza and getting it to the locations where it is most needed — was to help get additional gates open on a regular basis for humanitarian aid convoys. To “flood” Gaza with humanitarian assistance, there needs to be more total aid getting in, and there is a great need to increase the number of regular transport routes to reduce bottlenecks, reach more civilians who are located across the Strip, and reduce the likelihood of aid convoys being overwhelmed by hungry people.

The Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF) Initiative

Much has already been reported about the GHF, so we will not duplicate those reports here. They currently have only four sites, three of which are in southern Gaza and none in northern Gaza, to supply food to all of Gaza. In fact, on the day we were briefed at Kerem Shalom, only three sites were open, and it has been widely reported that the site hours fluctuate unpredictably.¹⁹ What was predictable, as the UN and humanitarian organizations warned at the outset, was the crush of thousands of starving people rushing toward these sites because they were virtually the only available sources of food for them and their families in the immediate aftermath of an 11-week blockade. Between May 27th and July 31st, at least 1,373 Palestinians were killed, mostly by IDF soldiers, as they surged forward to get food, including 859 in the vicinity of GHF sites.²⁰ We heard a firsthand account from a doctor who had treated many of the Palestinians who were injured by the gunfire around the GHF sites. They stated that when GHF announces the time food distribution sites open, “our staff start preparing body bags.” Doctors Without Borders (MSF) released a detailed report that included data and testimony of doctors and patients treated at MSF health clinics located near the GHF sites.²¹ The report stated that “over a seven-week period from early June to late July 2025, MSF’s two primary healthcare centres in Rafah received 1,380 casualties, including 28 dead bodies, coming from GHF sites. Among the injured were 174 people with gunshot wounds, including women and children.” They go on to say that “The medical data is clear. This is not aid. It is orchestrated killing.”

There has been much written about GHF and its origins, and we won’t repeat that history here. We did find it interesting that, in their briefing to us, GHF emphasized two points. First, they said that they have made requests to the Israeli government to add many more sites in many

¹⁹ “Gaza: Israeli Killings of Palestinians Seeking Food Are War Crimes.” *Human Rights Watch*, 1 Aug. 2025, www.hrw.org/news/2025/08/01/gaza-israeli-killings-of-palestinians-seeking-food-are-war-crimes.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ “This Is Not Aid. This Is Orchestrated Killing. | MSF.” *Médecins Sans Frontières*, 7 Aug. 2025, www.msf.org/not-aid-orchestrated-killing.

more areas of Gaza, including in northern Gaza, but those requests have gone unheeded. Second, they said that GHF never envisioned their sites to be a substitute for the UN-sponsored food delivery system, which had over 400 delivery sites when it was fully operational. That is very different from the Netanyahu government's claims that GHF had to be created to prevent the systematic diversion of food from international humanitarian organizations to Hamas.²² In other words, the Netanyahu government envisioned the GHF model as a substitute for the delivery system established by international aid organizations.

The Netanyahu government's claim that Hamas has systematically diverted assistance distributed by international aid organizations has been debunked by multiple independent sources, including a recent USAID report,²³ high-level Israeli military officials²⁴ and, during his tenure as the U.S. Special Envoy for Middle East Humanitarian Issues, Ambassador David Satterfield.²⁵

The combination of allowing only a handful of GHF sites to operate and limiting those sites to southern Gaza is a clear indication that their operations were designed by the Netanyahu government to use food as a method of population control. The Israeli government has made clear it wants to empty northern Gaza of its population, especially as it has now launched a fresh offensive against Gaza City. By restricting the flow of food into northern Gaza while establishing the GHF sites in the south, it is using hunger and food to achieve that objective.

Deliberate Obstacles at the Israeli Port of Ashdod

The Israeli port of Ashdod is north of Gaza on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. The port has warehouse facilities used by the WFP and other international organizations to process humanitarian assistance for transport to Gaza. During our visit to the WFP warehouses and staging area at the port, we learned it had become an additional bottleneck for the delivery of aid. We were told by WFP officials that following the resumption of aid delivery to Gaza after the blockade was lifted, the Israeli government changed its screening practices and customs policies, resulting in the deliberate and unnecessary slowdown of the flow of food into Gaza. Currently, WFP is only able to screen between 20 to 30 containers a day, whereas before these new requirements were put in place, they were able to screen over a hundred a day. The new screening procedures take about 3 to 5 hours per container, and they must physically check each pallet inside the container before the whole container is cleared. Specifically, they told us they had 2,200 shipping containers holding 40,000 metric tons of food on site – enough to feed

²² Odenheimer, Natan. "No Proof Hamas Routinely Stole U.N. Aid, Israeli Military Officials Say." *Nytimes.Com*, The New York Times, 26 July 2025, www.nytimes.com/2025/07/26/world/middleeast/hamas-un-aid-theft.html.

²³ Kingston, Shannon K., and Morgan Winsor. "USAID Analysis Finds No Evidence of Widespread Aid Diversion by Hamas in Gaza." *ABC News*, ABC News Network, 26 July 2025, abcnews.go.com/International/usaid-analysis-finds-evidence-widespread-aid-diversion-hamas/story?id=124092822.

²⁴ Odenheimer, Natan. "No Proof Hamas Routinely Stole U.N. Aid, Israeli Military Officials Say." *Nytimes.Com*, The New York Times, 26 July 2025, www.nytimes.com/2025/07/26/world/middleeast/hamas-un-aid-theft.html.

²⁵ Lew, Jacob J., and David Satterfield. "How to Stop a Humanitarian Catastrophe in Gaza." *Foreign Affairs*, 14 Aug. 2025, www.foreignaffairs.com/middle-east/how-stop-humanitarian-catastrophe-gaza?check_logged_in=1.

everyone in Gaza for about three weeks – but that the cumbersome clearance process was preventing them from getting the food to starving people there.

It is worth noting that the customs and clearance process at the port of Ashdod is under the control of the Minister of Finance, Bezalel Smotrich. Preventing food arriving at the port of Ashdod from reaching civilians in Gaza is not a new tactic for Smotrich.²⁶ Early in the war, in February 2024, he confirmed to media that he was blocking the offloading of food assistance from ships at the port of Ashdod for more than a month.

Deluge of Unnecessary Requirements and Red Tape

Many examples of the recent obstacles to the delivery of humanitarian aid erected by the Israeli government are found in the Jordan Corridor. The Kingdom of Jordan worked with the Government of Israel to establish what it hoped would be a reliable humanitarian supply line from Jordan to Gaza. The Jordan Corridor now has the capacity to transport 150 trucks of humanitarian aid per day across the King Hussein/Allenby Bridge into the West Bank, and then onwards through Israel to points of entry into Gaza. That capacity has been made possible in large part by U.S.-funded donations of 280 trucks and 10 warehouses completed in the spring of 2025, which more than tripled the corridor's operational capacity. However, we learned that, as a result of multiple restrictions imposed by the Israeli government, less than 10% of that capacity is currently being utilized.

Senior Jordanian and humanitarian officials emphasized that obstacles facing the Jordan Corridor are political rather than technical or operational and that, each time one bureaucratic obstacle is overcome, Netanyahu government officials impose new ones that fail to pass any credulity test. The restrictions include excessively burdensome, costly, bureaucratic, and constantly changing customs and screening requirements at the Allenby Bridge that result in very long wait times and a large share of trucks laden with humanitarian supplies being turned back on any given day.

We were informed that, some time ago, the Government of Israel requested that the United States set up a screening facility at the Joint Training Center (JTC), a U.S. Army-Jordanian Armed Forces base outside of Amman. The U.S. complied with that request and spent about \$1.5 million to purchase advanced screening machines. Once screened at this U.S.-operated facility, the trucks, driven by members of the Jordanian Armed Forces (JAF), were then allowed to make their way across the Allenby Bridge without undue delay. We visited the site and saw those machines. U.S. officials on site told us that the scanners were still operational and ready to go. When we saw them, they were idle. Trucks are no longer screened through that sensible process. We were informed that when the ceasefire ended in March, everything changed. Israel no longer accepts trucks screened at the U.S. facility. Instead, they decided to hire their own private contractor to establish a new screening process at the Allenby Bridge crossing. U.S.

²⁶ Ravid, Barak. "Scoop: Israeli Minister Blocking Flour Bibi Promised Biden Would Be Allowed into Gaza." *Axios*, 13 Feb. 2025, www.axios.com/2024/02/13/israel-gaza-flour-shipment.

officials at JTC who operated the scanners were confident that no dangerous items passed through the system undetected.

When the U.S. provided screening for the convoys at the JTC at the request of Israel, a 100-truck convoy could be screened in 2–3 hours. Since Israel mandated that a private Israeli company take over the screening at the Allenby crossing, clearing a convoy can take up to 8 hours – with trucks often being turned around. Over the past month, an average of 42% of the trucks in each convoy – typically 60–85 trucks, three times a week – were forced to turn back for one reason or another. Many of them were not able to make it through the screening process during Allenby’s hours of operation. Jordanian authorities pointed out that this 42% rejection rate is from an already reduced total – that is, from 180–255 trucks per week presently sent, rather than the 600–900 per week that are possible through the Jordan Corridor.

Among other new requirements, they reported that the private Israeli screening company at the Allenby Bridge crossing started rejecting any trucks that had partial sides on the flatbed trailers, a change that prevented most of the 280 U.S.-funded trucks – all of which had been purchased to meet the detailed specifications required by the Government of Israel – from being used until that was addressed. Jordanian officials also cited what they called Israel’s “silver bullet” for rejecting a truck with little explanation, simply stating the truck is a “security concern,” with no further details. We were also informed that each truck is now subject to a new \$400 customs processing fee, and that when a truck is unable to make it through the screening process during Allenby’s hours of operation, the \$400 fee had to be paid again to have the truck manifested onto a later convoy. UN agencies utilizing the Jordan Corridor have also had to pay exorbitantly more in fuel costs for all the trucks being turned around at the crossing and having to restart the process the next day. In another recent change, any Jordan-procured items must now be submitted with invoices written in Hebrew, adding another layer of cost and time.

When we visited Egypt, we met with humanitarian officials from UN and humanitarian organizations working on getting aid into Gaza, who identified three technical and bureaucratic changes they have requested of the Government of Israel to improve humanitarian delivery into Gaza. First, humanitarian officials described “two sets of laws” for aid delivery going through Kerem Shalom: one for GHF, another for UN trucks. For example, UN trucks have to be loaded on uneven dirt and gravel, while GHF has its own pavilion and loading platform on the Gaza side of the Kerem Shalom crossing, which is paved and more orderly than the UN site. They requested access to this loading platform to make sure UN cargo is loaded and secured properly to prevent it from falling off the aid trucks or being more easily looted.

Second, the UN’s fleet of trucks in Gaza has sustained severe damage throughout the war, and they have asked for spare parts and tires to be let in, in order to repair their trucks. While COGAT claimed WFP and others were permitted to bring these supplies into Gaza, WFP told us otherwise. In fact, we saw firsthand many tires piled up in an Egyptian warehouse run by WFP and the Egyptian Red Crescent at the Rafah border crossing full of goods that had been denied entry into Gaza by Israeli authorities.

Third, they have asked Israel to resume the joint coordination deconfliction mechanism between the U.S., IDF, and UN to avoid UN trucks coming under fire by the IDF. UN organizations showed us video of their convoys coming under fire from the IDF, which they described as a regular occurrence.

Moreover, the Netanyahu government's insistence that UNRWA be removed completely from the supply and delivery of humanitarian assistance into and within Gaza has resulted in further waste and delay. There are currently about 6,000 truckloads worth of food aid and other supplies for Gaza that UNRWA has stored in warehouses in Egypt and Jordan that could feed all of Gaza for three months and provide six months' worth of medical supplies. According to UNRWA, some of those supplies will expire by the end of the year, including \$3.5M worth of sunflower oil, flour, and medicine. However, Israel has insisted that UNRWA supplies can be allowed into Gaza only if UNRWA branding and labels are removed from the aid and that the aid is handed over to other agencies. These unnecessary restrictions are hampering the transfer of food and supplies to other UN agencies to help starving civilians in Gaza. The Netanyahu government has engaged in a pressure campaign throughout the war to discourage UN agencies from accepting the provisions from UNRWA or involving UNRWA in any way in the distribution of aid inside Gaza. This is not a new problem. In February 2024, Israel's Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich directed the port authorities not to process any UNRWA flour shipments through the port of Ashdod, blocking food that would have fed 1.1 million people inside Gaza for a month.²⁷

Failure to Protect Convoys Along the Jordan Corridor

The obstacles to humanitarian aid reaching Gaza also include the failure of Israeli authorities to adequately protect the Jordanian truck drivers and their vehicles from attacks by violent settlers and other protesters who seek to block the convoys from crossing into the West Bank and through Israel.

Senior Jordanian officials expressed deep concerns that their convoys had come under increasingly frequent attack in recent weeks by violent settlers and protesters, who have slashed tires and inserted substances into the diesel tanks to render the trucks inoperable. Although the IDF escorts all Jordan Corridor convoys through Israel and the West Bank, the convoys are still attacked regularly. Officials estimated that about one in three convoys have been attacked while transiting from the Allenby Bridge to Gaza. They added that even when routes are varied, settlers often appear to be waiting to attack, and that a trip that should take two hours under normal conditions now takes seven to nine hours under IDF escort. One of the most troubling incidents occurred on July 14th, when protesters attacked a convoy with rocks

²⁷ Boxerman, Aaron, and Patrick Kingsley. "Israeli Minister Blocks Flour from Reaching UNRWA in Gaza - The New York Times." *The New York Times*, 14 Feb. 2024, www.nytimes.com/2024/02/14/world/middleeast/israel-unrwa-gaza.html.

and knives, damaging 19 U.S.-funded trucks and seriously injuring a JAF driver. These attacks have also resulted in additional maintenance costs.

The limited security measures provided by the IDF and Israeli security forces have been inadequate to protect the drivers and trucks. Since the beginning of the war, National Security Minister Ben-Gvir has not only deliberately withheld protection from humanitarian aid convoys into Gaza, but has implicitly encouraged the attacks against them.²⁸ In May, he told media that any food entering Gaza will “fuel Hamas and give it oxygen.”²⁹ We also heard troubling reports from Jordanian officials that Israeli authorities recently prohibited trucks from carrying dashcams, tracking devices, or surveillance equipment – removing both the means to track the whereabouts of JAF drivers and the ability to document attacks as they transit through the West Bank and Israel on their way to unload their cargo at the Zikim crossing into northern Gaza.

No Clear List of Banned “Dual Use” Items or Other Prohibited Products

One of the major problems since the start of the war in Gaza has been that the Israeli government has never published, nor provided to humanitarian organizations, a definitive list of what items are permitted or prohibited. Humanitarian groups we met with on the ground stressed that this lack of transparency has created enormous uncertainty and delays. During our trip to Rafah in January 2024, we saw trucks turned back for carrying innocuous items, including maternity kits that had been denied simply because they contained a tiny set of scissors and water filters that were rejected without explanation.³⁰ During our recent visit to Rafah, we toured a warehouse run by the Egyptian Red Crescent and WFP filled with goods that had been rejected by Israeli authorities at the Kerem Shalom crossing. It included many items similar to those we had seen barred in January 2024, including portable solar-powered water filtration systems, gas-powered generators, and tents. Added this time were wheelchairs, sleeping bags, metal pots for cooking, and replacement tires for vehicles. Inconsistency around what items are allowed into Gaza continues, with officials in two countries we visited telling us that humanitarian organizations were recently informed by the Israeli government that peanut butter, honey, and dates are not allowed into Gaza. At the time of our visit, no reason was given for this change. As before, we were told that when one item on a truck is rejected at Kerem Shalom, the entire truck must be turned back and start the process anew. On the day we visited Rafah in 2024, we saw a UNICEF truck that had been sent back. This time, we saw a WFP truck

²⁸ Breiner, Josh. “Police Chief: Ben-Gvir Bypassed Me to Prevent Police Protection of Gaza Aid Convoys.” *Haaretz*, Haaretz, 13 June 2024, www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2024-06-13/ty-article/.premium/police-chief-ben-gvir-bypassed-me-to-prevent-police-protection-of-gaza-aid-convoys/00000190-12b7-d621-abfa-5bb75a220000?utm_source=chatgpt.com.

²⁹ Azulay, Moran. “Ben Gvir: Netanyahu Making Serious Mistake Allowing Gaza Aid, Lacks Majority Support.” *Ynetglobal*, ynetglobal, 18 May 2025, www.ynetnews.com/article/44t6mcbnc.

³⁰ Keath, Lee. “Cumbersome Process and ‘arbitrary’ Israeli Inspections Slow Aid Delivery into Gaza, US Senators Say.” *AP News*, AP News, 7 Jan. 2024, apnews.com/article/israel-gaza-rafah-aid-us-senators-2bc2a3c5e5f8af8e2d3f0b7242c1a885.

that had reportedly been turned around for no known reason. Its cargo included food items like grain and flour.

According to our conversations, the Egypt route has been essential since October 2023. However, following a prolonged period of near-total blockade, it is now crippled by a multitude of restrictions, including the limited number of authorized items and arbitrary rejections. The Egypt corridor is only allowed to move on average 20 trucks per day. In August 2025, only 308 trucks moved through the Egypt route. Our understanding is that the Kerem Shalom crossing, which is the entry point into Gaza for the Egypt corridor and some of the aid coming from the Jordan route, operates only five days a week with limited hours. Between July 27 and August 31, WFP had planned for the entry of 1,271 trucks to enter Gaza through the Egypt corridor, but only 412 managed to offload, and 859 were rejected, a 68% rejection rate. During one day in August, 55 out of 60 pre-cleared WFP trucks were rejected.

While in Jordan, we also visited the Jordan Hashemite Charity Organization (JHCO) facility that serves as the coordinating hub for the Jordan Corridor and toured the ten U.S.-funded warehouses that were built to expand the capacity of the Jordan Corridor. We witnessed a warehouse filled with goods donated by U.S. and other charitable organizations, all of which were awaiting permission from Israeli authorities to be included in convoys for the Jordan Corridor. At this time, along the Jordan Corridor, there is a blanket restriction on ALL non-food items. For example, we saw boxes of medicine and sanitation items supplied by U.S.-based organizations stacked in the JHCO warehouse. Humanitarian organizations we met with requested our advocacy to allow the resumption of these shipments - especially shelter, water, and hygiene items. No new tents have reached Gaza since the beginning of March, despite an estimated need for 3,000–5,000 truckloads of shelter materials to support those displaced or re-displaced since then, making the lack of shelter particularly urgent with the rainy and cold winter season approaching.

The Obstacles to Distributing Food and Humanitarian Aid Within Gaza

Getting food and humanitarian aid into Gaza is only the first step. Once inside Gaza, the challenge is to get food to starving civilians and other necessities, like medicines and shelter, to desperate people. Getting those essentials where they are needed most within Gaza has been made very difficult because of obstacles imposed by Israeli authorities, which have exacerbated the challenges on the ground. We do not underestimate the difficulties of distributing assistance within Gaza. But we also understand from organizations in two countries we visited that the IDF has made the distribution more challenging, including at times splitting up humanitarian convoys as they enter into Gaza and slowing their movements, making them more vulnerable to being rushed by starving Palestinians or looting. While on our trip, we had a chance to talk to several individuals who have recently been inside Gaza and others who have had regular and recent communications with people in Gaza to provide a picture of the reality on the ground.

We know that there are concrete steps the Netanyahu government could take in order to allow the safe passage of humanitarian aid through more areas to reach people most in need. For example, as noted earlier, the Israeli government should allow convoys of humanitarian aid from international organizations like WFP to move regularly through crossings 96 and Kissufim, as they have requested, and allow the organizations to use more varied routes within Gaza. Israeli authorities should also do more to facilitate the pickup of assistance once it has been deposited on the Gaza side of the border, including granting WFP's request to bring in new tires and spare parts for the trucks used to distribute food inside Gaza. The IDF should institute more pauses in its military operations and ensure the safe passage and deconfliction for convoys moving through Gaza. According to UN agencies we spoke with, they are only able to access three main roads inside Gaza. Most of their warehouses fall within designated military zones, and the Israeli government has denied regular access to them. These organizations said that "moving is one of the most dangerous things to do in Gaza," as aid workers face constant risk of being killed by Israeli fire. According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, as of September 3rd, 531 aid workers have been killed in Gaza since the beginning of the war.³¹ A senior UN staff member said that they regularly, sometimes daily, get a "kill list" in their email inbox of the number of UN staff that have been killed in Gaza.

There is no doubt that the extreme scarcity of food within Gaza caused by the total Israeli blockade from March 2nd to May 19th, coupled with the Netanyahu government's initiative to replace the robust UN distribution system with only four GHF sites, resulted in desperately hungry people raiding the reduced number of humanitarian aid trucks that have made it into Gaza. This will remain a problem until people are no longer starving inside Gaza.

Orderly food distribution is essential to making sure aid reaches those most at risk — children, people with disabilities, pregnant and nursing women, and the elderly. When distribution breaks down, these vulnerable groups are the first to be left behind. For example, a shipment of specialized nutrition packs can't reach malnourished children because there is no orderly way to get the food into their hands. During the brief ceasefire, when aid was allowed to flow at scale, the chaos around aid delivery trucks eased and food reached more people in need. Restarting orderly, large-scale distribution throughout Gaza is the only way to get lifesaving aid to those who need it most.

According to individuals we spoke with on the ground, Gaza has become "the rule of the strongest" — only the most able individuals are currently capable of accessing assistance. That's why it's important to "flood the zone" in Gaza with food and other humanitarian supplies to ensure that it is not only those strong enough to fight for food that get it. "Flooding the zone" will allow for the more orderly distribution of assistance going forward and bring down the skyrocketing prices for food and other items within Gaza. There is some evidence that foodstuffs and other provisions carried by commercial trucks entering Gaza are bringing down

³¹ "Reported Impact Snapshot: Gaza Strip (3 September 2025)." *United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - Occupied Palestinian Territory*, 3 Sept. 2025, www.ochaopt.org/content/reported-impact-snapshot-gaza-strip-3-september-2025.

the prices of some goods in the marketplaces.³² However, the costs of essential goods remain unaffordable for a huge swath of the population that has had no work or source of income since the war began. In addition, the residents of Gaza City and others in northern Gaza face an especially dire situation. The Netanyahu government has issued an evacuation order for that entire area and has made it especially difficult for food to reach that population.³³ With the Israeli government commencing a renewed assault on Gaza City, the already terrible conditions will become even more hellish.

One fact came across very clearly: Prime Minister Netanyahu's assertion that no one is starving in Gaza is a lie. We met with representatives from international non-governmental organizations, some of whom had returned from Gaza within the past three weeks — who provided firsthand accounts of deteriorating humanitarian conditions, limited access to life-saving resources, and the anticipated consequences of an impending offensive on Gaza City. The INGO representatives described the situation in Gaza as a “deliberate campaign of starvation.” They reported a sevenfold increase in malnutrition since March and projected that over 132,000 children under five may be at risk of death from acute malnutrition by mid-2026. One representative shared that 30–40% of their patients in Gaza are suffering from “starvation ketoacidosis,” meaning they have ketones in their blood, indicating that their bodies are consuming themselves. The INGOs affirmed the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) findings, noting that their own staff — who are in a more privileged financial situation than most others — are down to one modest meal per day, and in some cases down to one meal every two days — with some fainting from hunger while at work. Other humanitarian organizations mentioned the same, saying that staff in Gaza now are eating on average one meal a day.

The Netanyahu government expressed its skepticism with these independent reports from INGOs as well as from the UN agencies operating in Gaza and has launched a concerted propaganda campaign to discredit and undermine them. In the same way they falsely claimed that UNRWA was an arm of Hamas, they are now maligning other independent, credible organizations who provide information about the reality inside Gaza. Indeed, the Netanyahu government is now imposing new requirements on these organizations as a condition of operating in Gaza and the West Bank. Many of the INGOs warned us that “there is a real risk that they won't be operating in Gaza by the end of the year” due to “political” Israeli requirements for each to re-register. That, of course, is the goal of those imposing these new requirements. The international community should strongly push back against these efforts to muzzle and ultimately dismantle these worthy organizations.

³² Rasgon, Adam, and Saher Alghorra. “There's Barely Any Food in Gaza, and Barely Any Cash to Buy It.” *The New York Times*, 9 Aug. 2025, www.nytimes.com/2025/08/09/world/middleeast/gaza-cash-crisis.html.

³³ Lilieholm, Lucas, et al. “Israel Orders Full Evacuation of Gaza City as Netanyahu Warns ‘This Is Only the Beginning.’” *CNN*, Cable News Network, 9 Sept. 2025, www.cnn.com/2025/09/09/middleeast/israel-gaza-city-evacuation-netanyahu-warning-intl.

We also believe that any disputes regarding the conditions within Gaza could be readily resolved if the Netanyahu government allowed international journalists to enter Gaza rather than killing so many of the local journalists there. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, 189 Palestinian journalists and media workers have been killed in Gaza since the beginning of the war.³⁴

CONCLUSION

The very first public meeting of our trip took place in Hostages Square in Tel Aviv with family members who had loved ones taken hostage as part of Hamas's brutal terror attacks on October 7th. Some have had their loved ones return home as part of earlier agreements between Israel and Hamas. Others have lost their loved ones. All believe that the safe return of the remaining hostages requires an end to the war. All of them have followed very closely every twist and turn of the negotiations between Israel and Hamas, mediated by Qatar and Egypt, to end the war and bring the hostages home. And, whatever they believed about earlier stages of the negotiations, they all believed that at this point, Prime Minister Netanyahu and his extreme right-wing government are a major impediment to bringing home the hostages and ending the war. They believe that Netanyahu has placed his personal political survival above the survival of the remaining hostages and the interests of the people of Israel. Recent polling indicates that a majority of Israelis share their view.

We agree. The weight of the evidence indicates that Netanyahu fears the end of the war will bring more public scrutiny of and accountability for his actions leading up to October 7th. Even more of a factor, however, is the reality that if Netanyahu reaches an agreement to end the war against Hamas, some of his key coalition partners, including Smotrich and Ben-Gvir, have pledged to bring down his government. Some have tried to dismiss Smotrich and Ben-Gvir as fringe actors and solitary voices. That was once the case in Israeli politics, but it is certainly not true today. They have become key elements of the Netanyahu coalition, and their views regarding both Gaza and the West Bank have been ascendant in this Israeli government. We began this report by quoting some of their statements, and we end this report with the conclusion that their views have shaped the catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza today, the failure to negotiate the return of the hostages, and the goal of forcing Palestinian civilians out of Gaza.

They have used the horrors of October 7th as both the argument and the opportunity to achieve goals they held long before the war started — the realization of their long-held vision of the renewed Israeli occupation and control of Gaza as part of their vision of a Greater Israel. It is the same reason that they push for the annexation of the West Bank and are facilitating settler violence against Palestinians and their displacement from lands there.

³⁴ “Journalist Casualties in the Israel-Gaza War.” *Committee to Protect Journalists*, 4 Sept. 2025, cpj.org/2023/10/journalist-casualties-in-the-israel-gaza-conflict/.

That is why Netanyahu has embraced what he calls “Trump’s vision” to relocate Palestinians from Gaza and develop the coastline as one of Israel’s strategic war aims. Whether or not that was a goal at the start of the war, it has become one now. During the April 7 meeting in the Oval Office, Donald Trump said, “I think [Gaza’s] an incredible piece of important real estate. And I think it’s something that we would be involved in, but having a peace force like the United States there, controlling and owning the Gaza Strip, would be a good thing... And if you take the people, the Palestinians, and move them around to different countries, and you have plenty of countries that will do that... I don’t understand why Israel ever gave it up. Israel owned it.” When asked in February whether his plan envisioned the opportunity for displaced Palestinians to return to Gaza, Trump answered, “No, they wouldn’t because they’re going to have much better housing.” At the time, Prime Minister Netanyahu coyly complimented Trump, saying that he was “revolutionary and creative.” Netanyahu knew full well at that moment that the ideas expressed by Trump were neither new nor fresh thinking to the likes of Smotrich, Ben-Gvir, and others on the Israeli far right, who have long harbored those ambitions. Smotrich included expulsion as a core concept in his 2017 manifesto, “The Decisive Plan.” Indeed, Ben-Gvir, who didn’t want to be denied credit for the idea, responded to the February Oval Office meeting, stating on X: “The only solution for Gaza is encouraging the emigration of Gazans. When I said this time and again during the war that this is the solution for Gaza, they mocked me. Now it is clear: this is the only solution to the Gaza problem - this is the strategy for the ‘day after.’”³⁵ The most recent iteration of this plan, revealed in a leaked 38-page slide deck and likely discussed during a recent meeting with President Trump, former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, and Jared Kushner, envisions the relocation of 2 million people from Gaza and the construction of “AI-powered, smart cities” in Gaza.³⁶

The findings from our trip lead to the inescapable conclusion that the Netanyahu government’s war in Gaza has gone far beyond the targeting of Hamas to imposing collective punishment on the Palestinians there, with the goal of making life for them unsustainable. That is why it restricts the delivery of humanitarian assistance and uses food as a weapon of war. That is why it has killed over 63,000 Palestinians, over half of them women and children.³⁷ That’s why at least 1.9 million people, about 90% of the population, across the Gaza Strip have been displaced during the war. Many have been displaced repeatedly, some 10 times or more.³⁸ We

³⁵ @itamarbengvir. “President Trump on very important things: The only solution to Gaza is to encourage the migration of Gazans. When I said this time and again during the war that this was the solution to Gaza, they mocked me. Now it is clear: this is the only solution to the Gaza problem - this is the strategy for the “day after”. I call on the Prime Minister to announce the adoption of the plan as soon as possible and to begin immediate practical progress.” X, 4 February, 2025, 4:54 PM

³⁶ DeYoung, Karen, and Cate Brown. “Gaza Postwar Plan Envisions ‘Voluntary’ Relocation of Entire Population.” The Washington Post, 31 Aug. 2025, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2025/08/31/trump-gaza-plan-riviera-relocation/>. Accessed 10 Sept. 2025.

³⁷ “Humanitarian Situation Update #319: Gaza Strip.” *United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - Occupied Palestinian Territory*, 4 Sept. 2025, www.ochaopt.org/content/humanitarian-situation-update-319-gaza-strip.

³⁸ “UNRWA Situation Report #177 on the Humanitarian Crisis in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, Including East Jerusalem | Unrwa.” *United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East*, 27 June

heard stories like these directly, including from a woman we met accompanying her child getting cancer treatment in Jordan, who, prior to their evacuation from Gaza, had moved 11 times within the territory. That is why it has reduced the vibrant city of Rafah to rubble. That is why over 92% of homes in Gaza have been destroyed or severely damaged.³⁹ That is why approximately 92% of school buildings have been rendered unusable.⁴⁰ That is why 94% of all hospitals in the Gaza Strip have been damaged or destroyed, forcing many to close or operate under severely compromised conditions.⁴¹ That is why essential water and sanitation infrastructure have also collapsed under relentless bombing, leaving much of Gaza without access to clean water or functioning sewage systems. That is why 95% of agricultural lands are unusable or are no longer accessible.⁴²

The fact that both the Netanyahu government and now the Trump Administration are framing their plan as a call for the “voluntary” exodus of Palestinians from Gaza is one of the most fraudulent, sinister, and twisted cover stories ever told. It is a farce to suggest people who have been subjected to destruction and dehumanization on such a vast scale would be departing Gaza “voluntarily.” The plan is clearly to pressure Palestinians to leave Gaza by making life for them there virtually impossible. For some, like Smotrich and Ben-Gvir, that has been a long-held vision, just as they seek to push Palestinians from the West Bank. For others, that may have become a goal of the war along the way. And even for those that may not intend that result, it has become the undeniable reality based on the facts on the ground.

Whether or not Palestinians will ultimately be driven out of all or most of Gaza is yet unknown. The world has a moral and legal obligation to stop the ongoing ethnic cleansing there. Strong words alone will not be sufficient. The world must impose penalties and costs on those who are implementing this plan.

2025, www.unrwa.org/resources/reports/unrwa-situation-report-177-situation-gaza-strip-and-west-bank-including-east-jerusalem.

³⁹ “Reported Impact Snapshot: Gaza Strip (3 September 2025).” *United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - Occupied Palestinian Territory*, 3 Sept. 2025, www.ochaopt.org/content/reported-impact-snapshot-gaza-strip-3-september-2025.

⁴⁰ “Reported Impact Snapshot: Gaza Strip (3 September 2025).” *United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - Occupied Palestinian Territory*, 3 Sept. 2025, www.ochaopt.org/content/reported-impact-snapshot-gaza-strip-3-september-2025.

⁴¹ “Health System at Breaking Point as Hostilities Further Intensify in Gaza, Who Warns.” *World Health Organization*, World Health Organization, 22 May 2025, www.who.int/news/item/22-05-2025-health-system-at-breaking-point-as-hostilities-further-intensify--who-warns?utm_source=chatgpt.com.

⁴² “Land Availability for Cultivation in the Gaza Strip as of April 2025.” *Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations*, Apr. 2025, openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/c4be554e-170f-413e-ae57-f77030be8d09/content.

Key Terms

- Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)
- Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT)
- Egyptian Red Crescent (ERC)
- Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF)
- Israel Defense Forces (IDF)
- Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC)
- International Non-Governmental Organization (INGO)
- Jordan Hashemite Charity Organization (JHCO)
- Jordanian Armed Forces (JAF)
- Joint Training Center (JTC)
- Médecins Sans Frontières / Doctors Without Borders (MSF)
- Palestinian Authority (PA)
- United Nations (UN)
- United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)
- United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
- U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)
- World Food Programme (WFP)