



CAMBRIDGE INITIATIVE  
*on* PEACE SETTLEMENTS

# A PALESTINIAN ARMISTICE PLAN

*Charting a Rights-Based Transition for Palestinian-Israeli Peace*

**The Palestinian Technical Working Group**

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## Executive Summary

This working paper offers a pragmatic, rights-based plan for both a permanent ceasefire in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) and Israel and for the temporary transition period until a just, durable, and comprehensive settlement is reached to end the occupation and resolve all outstanding issues between Palestinians and Israelis. The paper also recommends terms and mechanisms for Palestinian national reconciliation and political renewal to enable effective Palestinian governance, as well as a principled approach for facilitating humanitarian relief, early recovery, and reconstruction in Gaza.

The transition, as referred to herein, is aligned with frameworks advanced by the UN Development Program, the State of Palestine, local governments in Gaza and the West Bank, the Palestinian private sector, the Communique of the Extraordinary Arab Summit for Palestine, the Early Recovery, Reconstruction, and Development of Gaza proposal (Arab Plan), and Palestinian civil society organizations. It is grounded in the following principles:

*Principle 1: The parties commit to diplomacy and international law and agree to be held to account for violations.* An immediate and permanent cessation of violence is urgently required. Toward this end, the parties must agree to engage in diplomacy; be bound by international law, including with respect to the inviolability of civilians; and be held to account for any respective violations. This will allow for the unrestricted surge of humanitarian aid to Gaza at scale while the terms for a permanent ceasefire forming part of an armistice agreement to cover the entire OPT are negotiated and concluded within two months. The terms of the armistice must ensure that all those unlawfully held, and prisoners of war, are released and that the bodies of the deceased are returned to their families.

*Principle 2: Stakeholders recognize the State of Palestine as responsible for governance and security over the OPT, supported by a UN-mandated international peacekeeping force.* As per international legal pronouncements, the State of Palestine is the lawful authority over the OPT and its administration extends over the entirety of that territory. To begin to restore credibility and legitimacy, the State of Palestine must take measures toward better inclusivity and representative governance, including by holding elections when practicable.

*Principle 3: All stakeholders reaffirm the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, and the PLO agrees to take measures for institutional renewal and democratic reform while it negotiates terms with Israel for a comprehensive peace.* Palestinians established the PLO as their sole, legitimate representative. It is recognized as such by the international community and Israel. Though this paper affirms the PLO's centrality, it also recognizes that the PLO has lost much of its legitimacy and representative character over the decades of the Oslo peace process. To restore its legitimacy, the PLO must undertake reforms to include all Palestinian political factions and marginalized constituencies, engage in interim processes for institutional

renewal, and establish mechanisms for civic engagement until such time as full democratic representation can be achieved.

In accordance with the International Court of Justice advisory opinion of July 2024, any plans for the OPT and the involvement of third states and multilateral mechanisms therewith must advance the actualization of Palestinian self-determination and support Palestinian agency. Any transition plan that does not accord with the expression of Palestinian self-determination violates international law and will be viewed by Palestinians as illegitimate. Thus, plans for governance and reconstruction of Gaza must include Israel's complete withdrawal from all occupied territories and be linked to a durable and comprehensive peace that resolves all claims.

Therefore, this paper proposes the following 10-point plan:

1. All parties immediately halt all hostilities across the OPT and Israel, and Israel allows an immediate and effective surge of humanitarian aid to Gaza at scale.
2. Palestinian factions and the PLO sign a Factions Agreement for Cooperation to implement the Beijing Declaration, thereby integrating all political factions—including Hamas—within the PLO thereby ensuring the PLO's ability to negotiate a permanent ceasefire on behalf of all armed groups. The agreement should include the following provisions:
  - a. the mandate of the unified national leadership, including for its consultation during the PLO's negotiation of an armistice agreement with Israel;
  - b. suspension of all armed activity during negotiations;
  - c. selection of a technocratic government for the State of Palestine; and
  - d. acknowledgment that the PLO is responsible for all foreign affairs and that the positions of PLO chair and president of the State of Palestine will continue to be held by the same individual until a peace agreement is signed with Israel.
3. The PLO on behalf of the State of Palestine requests UN-mandated international peacekeeping forces be dispatched to the OPT to enforce and monitor the armistice during the transition, in line with the March 2025 Communique of the Extraordinary Arab Summit. U.S., Arab, and European stakeholders and others contribute forces and political support for the mission and encourage Israel to allow the mission to operate inside the OPT. The European Union Border Assistance Mission resumes facilitating and inspecting border crossings under an expanded mandate that includes the Allenby Bridge in the West Bank.
4. Within two months, the PLO and Israel sign an armistice agreement encompassing the entire OPT and Israel. This agreement contains Israel's consent to the peacekeeping forces.
5. The technocratic government—fully detached from the defunct Oslo framework—functions as the governing body for the State of Palestine (the whole of the OPT) for two years until elections are held. Hamas relinquishes political and security authority over Gaza to the State of Palestine.

6. Oversight mechanisms are established for the technocratic government for the duration of the two-year mandate, including the following:
  - a. a tripartite Transition Council, composed of the PLO, a Citizens Oversight Board, and the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee;
  - b. an Independent Auditing Commission, created to conduct management and financial audits, assess impacts, and provide oversight over donor funding; and
  - c. other specific citizen bodies are established to monitor particular state institutions and ministries and to ensure civic participation prior to legislative elections.
7. The technocratic government establishes the Palestine Reconstruction and Development Council to coordinate the reconstruction and development of Gaza and the West Bank as one territorial unit and implements a humanitarian framework that includes a multiphase response plan. International aid is organized under a blockchain structure to ensure transparency. The Ad Hoc Liaison Committee is repurposed to support the State of Palestine, including to encourage political recognition of the State and its full membership in the United Nations, support governance, and create a transparent mechanism to track and audit donor aid to the OPT.
8. From the beginning of the transition period, the PLO adopts preliminary measures following civil society consultations to better represent all political factions and civil society within the Palestinian National Council (PNC). Palestinian civil society groups organize civic assemblies to support PLO renewal.
9. Two years into the transition, State and PNC elections are held to ensure full democratic renewal and representation. The renewed PLO, supported by ongoing civil society mechanisms, enters into dialogue with Israel regarding a permanent peace.
10. Prior to entering into a permanent peace agreement with Israel ending the transition period, the PLO convenes a National Convention.



## I. Introduction

This working paper presents a pragmatic, rights-based plan for advancing Palestinian self-determination from the point of a permanent ceasefire resulting from what we refer to as an armistice agreement, and following that agreement, a time-limited transition period. The transition period is intended to remain in place until a just, durable, and comprehensive peace agreement consistent with international law is concluded. The paper offers prescriptions for Palestinian national reconciliation, institutional renewal, and governance during the transition. It also offers recommendations on how to best facilitate humanitarian relief, early recovery, and reconstruction efforts in the destroyed parts of the Occupied Palestinian Territory (or OPT, which the United Nations defines as the land occupied by Israel on June 4, 1967, encompassing Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem). To facilitate reforms and restore public trust and accountability in Palestinian national institutions while elections are impracticable in the near term, the paper also suggests immediate mechanisms to activate civic engagement. The prescriptions offered here are meant to dovetail with other initiatives and proposals to the extent the political assumptions and vision for reconstruction align with the principles set out herein.

While this paper assumes that a successful transition to a political solution begins with stakeholders recognizing that the State of Palestine exists and is the authority for governance over the OPT, it does not presuppose the end point of the transition period. It does not preempt the outcomes of negotiations, consultations, and discussions facilitated by and during the transition. It envisages that the transition period, enabled by United Nations (UN)-mandated peacekeepers, will offer space and time for democratic renewal for Palestinians (and also for Israelis) without constant fear of the return of violence and war. When negotiations take place in the context of safety within and between communities, the parties at the table are better able to pursue outcomes that respect the equal dignity and rights of both peoples. It is up to Palestinians and Israelis themselves to decide whether there will be (1) two independent states, where the rights of all citizens are guaranteed regardless of national origin, religion, or race and where Palestinians are free from occupation and apartheid rule and a just resolution to refugeehood is implemented and reparations are provided; (2) a binational state with equal rights for all; (3) a confederal arrangement between Israel and the State of Palestine; or (4) some other solution consistent with international law.

As a working draft, this paper leaves for later iterations how and when to incorporate transitional justice mechanisms. It also does not expound on the specific mandate for the peacekeeping force, the deployment of which was also recommended by the [Council of the League of Arab States](#) in May 2024 and [reaffirmed by the Extraordinary Arab Summit](#) for Palestine (or Palestine Summit) in March 2025.

The paper's co-authors are a group of leading Palestinian academics, experts, and professionals from throughout the OPT and the Palestinian diaspora. The Cambridge Initiative on Peace Settlements convened the group over the course of 2024 to develop this comprehensive proposal. The result is a work in progress that will be refined following intensive dialogue with representatives of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the State of Palestine, Palestinian political factions, civil society, and interested international stakeholders. The dialogue will create an opportunity for deeper and more inclusive civic engagement about the future of the Palestinian

national movement and will help inform stakeholder conversations about the “day after” in Gaza and Palestine/Israel more generally.

In this section, the paper argues that any transition plan must be grounded in Palestinian self-determination, which has become a matter of some urgency following the events of October 7, 2023 and its aftermath, and sets out the principles and assumptions undergirding the paper’s proposals and recommendations.

### **Efforts to Undermine Palestinian National Representation and Governance**

Palestinians are facing genocide, ethnic cleansing, and renewed and systematic opposition to the assertion and actualization of their rights as a people—the most fundamental of which is their right to self-determination. Meanwhile, certain foreign governments and actors are advancing various plans for the OPT’s future, seeking to determine who is and who is not an acceptable Palestinian representative to administer Gaza. Their plans recommend the appointment of multinational entities, externally vetted Gaza-based personalities, or wealthy Palestinian businesspersons untethered to either the Palestinian Authority (PA) or the PLO to govern the OPT, undermining Palestinian national representation and presenting a serious risk to the continued recognition of Palestinians as a national group. Their opposition to the PA’s assumption of governance in Gaza reinforces long-standing Israeli policies aimed at entrenching the political and geographic fragmentation of the West Bank and Gaza and consolidating Israeli control over the OPT.<sup>1</sup>

To stabilize Gaza, the plans call for a consortium of states to oversee Arab forces and/or private military contractors to provide security—but for whom and for what remains unclear. While these “day after” plans recognize the need for international engagement in rebuilding and governing Gaza, that engagement prioritizes Israeli security rather than Palestinian freedom and rights. Since Israel has defined its security as existing in conflict with Palestinian self-determination and sovereignty—and it is unwilling to relinquish overarching control over the OPT—the multinational authority envisioned in some plans would inevitably become a partner in Israeli occupation rather than a replacement for it, as well as become a target for militant groups. Far from guaranteeing Israel’s security in the long term, such plans would only guarantee its continued insecurity.

Where the various plans do call for a Palestinian national body to govern, the area appears to be reduced to parts of Gaza and the West Bank. According to other plans, Palestinian governance would be possible in the future, when new leaders emerge who are acceptable to Israel and various donor countries. In other plans, the issue would simply be deferred.

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<sup>1</sup> Israel’s rejection of the PA, whom it has had a very close security relationship with for the better part of three decades, is more complicated: Israel opposes PA governance because the PA represents the last vestige of the Oslo peace process and the international consensus around a two-state solution. In July 2024, Israel’s parliament voted overwhelmingly (sixty-eight to nine, with some center and center-left parties abstaining or not voting) to oppose Palestinian statehood.

Against this backdrop, the need for a solution that expresses and recognizes Palestinian agency is paramount to supporting a permanent peace for Palestinians, Israelis, and the region as a whole.

## **The Unfolding Catastrophe in the OPT and the Urgency to Respond**

### ***In Gaza***

Following the October 7, 2023, Hamas attack, Israel's governing coalition and virtually all parties in the Israeli political opposition became united in the belief that Hamas is an existential threat and must be prevented from governing Gaza ever again. The then Israeli Minister of Defense Yoav Gallant announced that Israel could cut off essential supplies to Gaza, an escalation of the restrictions that began seventeen years earlier when Gaza was originally sealed off by Israel. Since then, humanitarian aid has been severely restricted and intermittent. While the 6-week ceasefire that began in January 2025 brought some reprieve, the humanitarian situation remains catastrophic, and famine conditions now exist. Israel has not heeded the [January 2024 provisional measures ruling](#) of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), which required it to surge humanitarian aid into Gaza at scale. Instead, [new Israeli legislation](#) treats the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), the largest and most essential aid provider in Gaza, as a terrorist organization, banning it from operating anywhere in the OPT and prohibiting the Israeli military from communicating with the agency for the purposes of deconfliction.

Since Israel breached the January 2025 ceasefire with Hamas and resumed its attacks in March 2025, Gaza has been experiencing an unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe. The scale of the crisis is staggering, with over [50,000](#) confirmed Palestinians killed and more than 110,000 injured. Thousands more remain trapped under the rubble of bombed homes and buildings. Confirming casualties in such chaotic conditions is extremely challenging, as it requires specific personal details and evidence, which are often unavailable in a war zone. Thus, the actual number of casualties may be far higher than reported, potentially over [62,000](#).

The entire population of [2.3 million people](#) in Gaza is in dire need of humanitarian assistance. Israeli mass displacement has forced families to flee from northern Gaza and Gaza City to areas such as Deir al-Balah, which is already a refugee camp, as well as to central Gaza and then further into the south, often moving back and forth in search of safety. This displacement has compounded the crisis, leaving people without adequate shelter, food, or basic necessities. The situation is further exacerbated by severe shortages of clean water, medicine, fuel, and irregular access to or the destruction of communication service and infrastructure—all of which are critically limited due to Israeli restrictions on supplies entering Gaza as well as Israeli blockages of Gaza's borders. The collapse of public health and education systems has deepened the humanitarian disaster. Israel has [destroyed most hospitals](#) in Gaza. The lack of medical supplies and equipment has led to a surge in chronic diseases, cancer cases, and urgent surgical needs. Schools have either been damaged or repurposed as emergency shelters, disrupting education for at least [625,000 children and youth](#). Essential services, including electricity, water, sewage management, and telecommunications, are barely functional, leaving the population in a state of extreme vulnerability and poverty.

Due to the targeting of humanitarian personnel, the United Nations has announced that it will have to [reduce its footprint](#) in Gaza. This comes as [Israel imposes onerous restrictions](#) on international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) as part of an effort to control humanitarian aid delivery. A new Israeli-backed mechanism for humanitarian relief, the [Gaza Humanitarian Foundation \(GHF\)](#), seeks to bypass existing UN-supported aid systems to utilize [private contractors working with the Israeli Defense Forces to centralize aid distribution](#) inside certain Israeli-controlled zones. Facial recognition technologies would be used to determine who may receive the regular aid packages. The [United Nations](#), [Save the Children](#), and other humanitarian actors have refused to cooperate with the GHF asserting that it violates humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence. With these new measures to limit who receives aid in Gaza and the loss of UN staff and robust humanitarian relief, more [Palestinians will suffer](#) and starve and the injured and infirm will succumb to otherwise treatable diseases and injuries in the weeks and months to come.

As confirmed by numerous [reports](#), starvation and a humanitarian [catastrophe](#) unfolding in Gaza is due to Israeli restrictions on the flow of aid and a failure to abide by the deconfliction efforts of relief organizations attempting to provide essential assistance. In northern Gaza, only a small fraction of humanitarian assistance was being delivered before the ceasefire from January 19 to March 18, 2025, leaving many residents struggling to find food and necessities. Civil defense and police forces, which were crucial in protecting aid convoys, were also targeted and prevented from fulfilling their role. The situation became dire enough that the [U.S. secretaries of state and defense](#), [Antony Blinken and Lloyd Austin](#), [penned a letter to Israel](#) with a deadline for it to lift restrictions and impediments to the entry of humanitarian aid to Gaza. The deadline passed without any change or consequences until U.S. President Donald Trump assumed office and secured the ceasefire deal in January 2025. Upon the deal's collapse in March, however, Israel [resumed blocking all humanitarian aid](#) and has created a new directorate in the defense ministry to [enable the “voluntary” migration](#) of Palestinians from Gaza.

According to the Interim Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment ([IRDNA](#)) of Gaza and the West Bank—conducted in February 2025 by the World Bank, the European Union, and the United Nations—massive recovery efforts will be required to restore critical services such as health care and education, which have suffered losses of \$6.3 billion and \$3.2 billion, respectively. Addressing the housing crisis for the displaced population and restoring essential infrastructure, including water, energy, and telecommunications, will be challenging and must consider the environmental hazards posed by the destruction, including debris and unexploded ordnance. Although the true cost of Gaza's reconstruction cannot be accurately determined until an on-the-ground assessment is conducted, the IRDNA assessment has estimated that the total physical damages incurred are around \$29.9 billion and the economic and social losses amount to \$19.1 billion, with the total recovery and reconstruction needs being an estimated \$53.2 billion.

### ***In the West Bank***

Not only does the indiscriminate killing of Palestinian civilians in Gaza continue, but Israel has also launched an intensive military offensive in the West Bank that has thus far seen tens of

thousands of Palestinians forcibly displaced from [four refugee camps](#) in the West Bank, perhaps [permanently](#). Furthermore, Israel has been making plans to [expand settlements and settler municipal governance](#), and has [taken over the West Bank land registry](#). The pervasive and widespread Israeli attacks across the OPT tend to increase support for militancy and [swell the ranks of militant groups](#). Without an armistice, high-intensity conflict is likely to ebb and flow into the indefinite future across the OPT and Israel.

### ***Recent Developments and the Broader Implications for Peacemaking***

The unprecedented challenges and threats facing Palestinians stand in stark contrast to recent authoritative pronouncements from international bodies that reaffirm and preserve Palestine's entitlements in international law. These include the July 2024 [advisory opinion of the ICJ](#), which found Israel's presence in the OPT illegal and its regime over Palestinians consistent with apartheid and which called for Israeli troops to be withdrawn, settlements to be evacuated immediately, and reparations to be provided to Palestinians. The ICJ also ruled in a separate case that Israel's actions in Gaza since October 7, 2023, [plausibly amount to genocide](#). To hold the individual perpetrators responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Gaza, the International Criminal Court (ICC) [issued arrest warrants](#) in November 2024 for the Israeli prime minister and the former defense minister for murder, persecution, and the use of starvation as a method of warfare. By reaffirming the illegality of Israeli actions and practices in the OPT, these cases strengthen the political and moral case of the Palestinian people and reaffirm their right to self-determination.

Israel's disregard for international law and the rules-based order in the prosecution of its war on Gaza has posed a serious challenge to regional stability and the post-World War II architecture created to maintain international peace and security. As a result, many states have been spurred to actively engage with international legal mechanisms. [More than fifty states](#) submitted interventions and presented oral arguments before the ICJ on the question of the legal consequences of Israel's prolonged occupation of Palestinian territory. [Dozens have backed the ICC's](#) pursuit of accountability against Israeli officials following Trump's imposition of sanctions on the body and its staff, [twelve](#) have joined South Africa's case against Israel under the Genocide Convention (Nicaragua has since [withdrawn as intervenor](#)), and nine have formed [the Hague Group](#) to support accountability for war crimes and to prevent the transfer of weapons to Israel or the docking of ships carrying cargo to Israel to support its war on Gaza with the "twin imperatives" of "end[ing] impunity and saving humanity."

Global civil society has likewise understood the threat posed to the international system from Israel's conduct and impunity in Gaza and the escalation throughout the OPT. Hundreds of mass protests and student encampments have been organized [in the United States](#) and [around the world](#) to move policymakers and private companies to end complicity in war crimes. Boycott and divestment campaigns in support of Palestinian human rights and a ceasefire have also become widespread, creating real [economic costs](#) for Israel and [multinationals](#).

The devastating nature of Israel’s campaign against Gaza and of its actions to displace Palestinians in the West Bank has also reinvigorated international interest in finding a durable political solution, particularly among key Western states and the Global South. This has revived the once moribund two-state solution, in which a sovereign Palestinian state exists in peace alongside the State of Israel. In 2024, four European countries—[Ireland](#), [Norway](#), [Spain](#), and [Slovenia](#)—recognized the State of Palestine, joining more than 75 percent of the membership of the United Nations.

Key stakeholders, particularly in Europe and the Arab Middle East, are also indicating that they will not provide financial, material, or diplomatic support for any plan for Gaza that does not include a transfer of control to Palestinians and a [credible path](#) to a Palestinian state. This stance was reaffirmed in the [communiqué](#) adopted on March 4, 2025, by the Arab League during its Palestine Summit. An [Early Recovery, Reconstruction, and Development of Gaza proposal](#) (Arab Plan)—which also calls for a technocratic government to govern Gaza under the PA and a political process consistent with the [Arab Peace Initiative of 2002](#) to establish an independent Palestinian state—was presented at the summit and has been endorsed by the [State of Palestine](#), [Hamas](#), the Arab League, and the [Organization of Islamic Cooperation](#), as well as [France](#), [Germany](#), [Italy](#), and [the United Kingdom](#).

## **A Rights-Based Framework and Principles for the Transition**

### ***The Framework***

The framework informing this paper’s prescriptions is grounded in international legitimacy, human rights, and Palestinian self-determination while also affirming the importance of UN mechanisms and multilateralism. It calls for an All-of-Palestine and All-of-Palestinians approach—that is, one that encompasses the entire OPT, is inclusive of refugees, relies on Palestinians and Palestinian businesses in early recovery and reconstruction, includes local communities in making decisions that affect them, requires robust donor funding and diplomatic support for the UNRWA as an indispensable humanitarian relief body and employer in the OPT, engages civic society (particularly women, youth, and victims of the recent violence), and pursues accountability for war crimes and crimes against humanity as a deterrent and to support transitional justice. The framework thus aligns with those advanced by the [UN Development Program](#), the [State of Palestine](#), [local governments](#) in Gaza and the West Bank, and the [Palestinian private sector](#). It is also consistent with principles adopted in the [communiqué](#) during the Palestine Summit and with the [Arab Plan](#). This paper is, however, additionally informed by the experiences of Palestinians themselves and by [Palestinian civil society organizations](#), who must live with the consequences of the policy choices being made but who have been largely excluded from the decision-making process.

### ***Transition Principles***

Within this framework, the prescriptions advanced adhere to the following principles:

*Principle 1: The parties commit to diplomacy and international law and agree to be held to account for violations.*

In calling for an immediate armistice leading to a long-term durable peace, this paper aims to address the underlying causes for violence in the region, ensure the protection of all civilians—Palestinians and Israelis—to prevent further trauma and injury, and facilitate the release of all those illegally held by the respective parties. Toward this end, from the start of the armistice and throughout the transition period, all parties commit to diplomacy; agree to be bound by international law, including with respect to the inviolability of civilians; and agree to be held to account for any respective violations.

This paper calls for an immediate halt to all hostilities in the OPT and Israel to allow for unrestricted humanitarian aid to be surged at scale to Gaza. The provision of humanitarian aid must be ensured regardless of an agreement between the parties to the conflict as per the legally binding [ICJ provisional measures ruling of January 2024](#). Humanitarian protection and deconfliction is both a legal requirement and an essential prerequisite to ensure uninterrupted aid delivery.

With regards to the armistice agreement, the terms should cover the entirety of the OPT, be negotiated within two months, and ensure that the parties release all unlawfully held persons and prisoners of war and that the bodies of the deceased are returned to their families in the OPT and Israel.

Though the paper calls for an end to violence on all sides, it also recognizes the right of a people under military occupation [to resist](#) and of a state under foreign attack or domination [to self-defense](#), which are both well-established rights in international law, as are the legal limitations on how those rights may be exercised.

The threat or use of violence against civilians as a tactic and the deliberate targeting of protected groups, such as journalists and humanitarian workers, or of civilian infrastructure—whether by a state or a subnational group—violates international humanitarian law, as does the detention or imprisonment of civilians (to be distinguished from combatants) or the disappearing of persons. According to the [ICJ's advisory opinion of July 2024](#), though Israel's presence in the OPT is illegal, it remains duty bound to protect and provide security to the Palestinian population under its control; it can claim no right to use force to maintain its occupation and or to facilitate its annexation or colonization of the OPT.

*Principle 2: Stakeholders recognize the State of Palestine as responsible for governance and security over the OPT, supported by a UN-mandated international peacekeeping force.*

This paper acknowledges an extant Palestinian state encompassing the entire OPT and assumes that the Oslo agreements are null and void. The basis for this lies in the following: (1) in 1988, the PLO proclaimed the independent State of Palestine based on the pre-June 4, 1967, green line as the territory for expression of Palestinian self-determination; (2) at least [147 countries](#) around the world have recognized the state; (3) in April 2011, the [United Nations, World Bank, and](#)

International Monetary Fund (IMF) determined that the PA is “above the threshold for a functioning state” and only foreign occupation hinders its independence; (4) the UN General Assembly conferred [nonmember observer state](#) status on the State of Palestine in November 2012 and, in May 2024, [recommended that the Security Council](#) admit the State of Palestine as a full member to the United Nations; (5) in June 2024, the UN Security Council reiterated its commitment to the two-state solution—the states of Israel and Palestine living side by side within secure and recognized borders consistent with international law and UN resolutions—and stressed the importance of “unifying the Gaza Strip and the West Bank under the Palestinian Authority” in Resolution 2735; (6) in July 2024, the ICJ ruled that Israel’s presence inside the OPT is unlawful and that Gaza and the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) constitute one territorial unit; and (7) recognition of Palestinian statehood is the basis for regional and international peace initiatives including the [Global Alliance for the Implementation of the Two-State Solution](#) (or Global Alliance) established in 2024 and co-led by Saudi Arabia, the European Union (EU), and Norway. Thus, the government of the State of Palestine alone is responsible for the administration of the OPT and the reconstruction of Gaza.

Because Israel’s presence and control over the OPT is unlawful, any reconstruction plans must also support a withdrawal of Israeli troops and settlers and be part of a durable and comprehensive peace that resolves all claims between Israelis and Palestinians. As confirmed by the ICJ’s July 2024 advisory opinion, the redeployment of Israeli troops from Palestinian territory is not contingent on a bilateral agreement in which Palestinians guarantee Israel’s security. In fact, Israel demonstrated that it is capable of redeploying troops without Palestinian agreement when former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon pulled Israeli troops and settlers out of Gaza and from four locations in the northern West Bank in 2005. In Section II, this paper recommends that in place of Israeli troops, a UN-mandated international peacekeeping force be positioned along the pre-June 4, 1967, green (armistice) line and between Palestinian communities and Israeli settlements to ensure the safety and security of both Israelis and Palestinians until a permanent peace agreement is signed.

While precise borders and other issues can be negotiated later between the two states, the recognition of the State of Palestine and its government can no longer be held hostage to the whims of the occupying power, which has [taken steps to annex](#) much of the OPT and has [memorialized its intentions](#) to oppose Palestinian sovereignty in law. Recognition of Palestinian statehood must be the prerequisite for launching comprehensive peace negotiations, providing some leverage to stakeholders pursuing peace initiatives such as the Global Alliance. In other words, Israeli acceptance of the State of Palestine along the pre-June 4, 1967, green line is not the outcome of the transition; it is the starting point and the foundation for a political settlement.

Israel and stakeholder recognition of the State of Palestine at the start of the transition rather than as the end goal avoids the permanence of the temporary, which has bedeviled previous attempts at peacemaking. It guarantees the [widest Palestinian acceptance](#)—just as [Palestine’s statehood bid](#) in 2011–2012 united Palestinians around the world—and creates a level playing field for negotiations in the future. Since this paper also calls for a UN-mandated peacekeeping force across the OPT during the transition, assertion of Palestinian statehood provides clarity: the consenting state for

international forces is the State of Palestine and the geography over which peacekeepers will be dispatched is the territorial unit encompassing the OPT (and not the interim, and by now irrelevant, jurisdictional lines associated with the Oslo Accords).

In line with international humanitarian law and legal rulings, this paper presupposes that there can be no transfer of populations, no permanent fragmentation of the OPT into statelets or isolated jurisdictions, and no partial or separate political solutions prejudicing the collective rights and claims of Palestinians, whether within the OPT or in the diaspora. A peace agreement with Israel should be comprehensive and consistent with international legal parameters, addressing the claims of all Palestinian people and encompassing all the final status issues. These issues should now also include the moral, legal, humanitarian, and financial repercussions of October 7, 2023, and its continuing aftermath.

*Principle 3: All stakeholders reaffirm the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, and the PLO agrees to take measures for institutional renewal and democratic reform while it negotiates terms with Israel for a comprehensive peace.*

The PLO is the representative of the Palestinian people everywhere. The PLO represents Palestinians in the pursuit of accountability, in advancing their rights, and in asserting their national identity as a people. A framework that centers the PLO as the national representative of Palestinians necessarily hews to the basic tenets of the PLO's founding: **unity of the land, the people, and their cause**. Consistent with this framework, in 1974, the United Nations formerly recognized the organization as the legitimate representative of Palestinians, and almost two decades later, Israel followed suit and accepted it as the interlocutor for peace talks. In an agreement concluded with Israel, the PLO established the PA as its agent to govern the OPT. Following steps taken at the United Nations and pursuant to a Palestinian presidential decree adopted in 2013 discussed below, the State of Palestine replaced the PA. The PLO, as the PA's principal, has ultimate authority over matters of governance in the State of Palestine, while also answering to the Palestinian nation within and outside the borders of the OPT.

Though this paper affirms the PLO's centrality, it also recognizes that the PLO has lost much of its legitimacy and representative character over the decades of the Oslo peace process. To address this problem, it calls for the PLO's umbrella to be cast wider to include all Palestinian political factions and marginalized constituencies and recommends urgent interim processes for the PLO's political renewal and mechanisms for civic engagement until elections are possible. Palestinian national reconciliation and democratic reforms are not only critical to credible PLO representation; it has proven to be indispensable for international peace and security and regional stability. Thus, this paper takes the position—one borne out of experience from the last nineteen months—that no ceasefire can endure and no transition can begin toward a comprehensive political settlement without all Palestinian political factions supporting it and without the PLO as the interlocutor.

Many international donors have indicated that they will not provide financial support for any plan involving the handover of governance responsibilities to Islamist factions responsible for the attacks on Israel on October 7, 2023. In recognition, these factions memorialized a willingness to

relinquish governance to the PA in the [Beijing Declaration on Ending Division and Strengthening Palestinian National Unity](#) (or Beijing Declaration) discussed below. Other stakeholders, however, have taken a more maximalist position, calling for Islamist factions and others who have participated in armed operations to be completely eliminated from the enclave. As will be discussed below, such a position is impractical and inconsistent with lessons learned from other successful agreements to end political violence and conflict. A ceasefire agreement that not only enables a temporary lull to allow for a captive and prisoner exchange, but also supports a permanent end to violence and a political process, requires a unified Palestinian position and leadership.

## II. Requirements for a Permanent End to Violence

This section calls for an immediate cessation of violence, followed by an armistice agreement within two months, immediate reinstitution of effective humanitarian aid at scale, and the deployment of an UN-mandated peacekeeping force during the transition phase. The deployment of such peacekeepers is essential for ensuring the safety and security of both Palestinians and Israelis.

### An Armistice Agreement

An armistice, understood herein as a permanent ceasefire that begins with a signed agreement and endures until a comprehensive Palestinian-Israel peace settlement, is crucial for supporting a calm and secure transition period and achieving long-term peace. It must go beyond the failed January 2025 Hamas-Israel ceasefire agreement to take an All-of-Palestine and All-of-Palestinians approach. It should be concluded between the PLO and Israel and enforced by UN-mandated international peacekeepers. Such an armistice would then open space and time for relief and reconstruction of the OPT and for negotiations between the PLO and Israel on a comprehensive political settlement. But getting to a permanent ceasefire embodied in an armistice agreement—rather than renegotiating a time-limited agreement with no commitment toward a lasting halt to violence—requires much more stakeholder investment. It requires active and committed international engagement from key stakeholders, such as Saudi Arabia and the United States, who have considerable leverage over Israel, and Egypt and Qatar, who have influence over Hamas.

### *Why the Previous Ceasefire Failed*

On January 15, 2025, Israel and Hamas announced that a ceasefire agreement had been reached. The agreement included three six-week phases, starting with a ceasefire and ending with the termination of the Israeli blockade of Gaza and the commencement of a three-to-five-year reconstruction plan. As a part of the first phase that began on January 19, 2025, Hamas and Israel traded captives and prisoners.<sup>2</sup> When phase one concluded without an agreement on phase two,

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<sup>2</sup> Hamas released thirty-three Israelis held in Gaza, including eight bodies, and five Thai captives. In return, Israel partially withdrew Israeli forces to a security buffer zone along the Israeli border, released [nearly 2,000 Palestinians](#), allowed hundreds of thousands of forcibly evacuated Palestinians to return to their places of residence, and

Israel unilaterally cancelled the ceasefire and resumed its assault on Gaza and its blockade of all food and humanitarian aid. While it is unsurprising that the ceasefire collapsed, there are important lessons therein for any hoped-for future ceasefire.

One reason the ceasefire failed was that it was limited in geographic scope to Gaza, which meant that members of Israel's government bent on preventing a viable Palestinian state and with enough seats to bring down the government, could and did use the opportunity to escalate violence and land seizures in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Within days of the start of the ceasefire in Gaza, Israel launched [operation "Iron Wall"](#) in the West Bank, which brought back the use of tanks and gunships against refugee camps and civilian infrastructure and displaced entire communities. Israel is currently preparing a plan for the "[voluntary migration](#)" of Palestinians out of Gaza while [escalating attacks](#) on civilians and civilian infrastructure.

Another reason was that the lack of terms related to governance in Gaza and its reunification with the rest of the OPT undermined any notion that the ceasefire agreement might become a catalyst for reunifying the parts of the OPT under one authority to enable a political process. Moreover, the lack of direct involvement of any Palestinian national body—whether the PLO or the PA—in the ceasefire agreement left in question whether the ceasefire could help launch a political process with Israel or whether the legitimate negotiating representative for Palestinians remained the PLO. For similar reasons, the use of private security forces under contract from third states, without either the PLO's explicit agreement or as a substitute for an UN-mandated peacekeeping force subject to international law and best practices, was also deeply problematic. It risked creating a pilot for a security mechanism favored by those with a political agenda bent on the erasure of Palestinians as a national group.

A third reason was that the ceasefire agreement did not include provisions for enforcement, dispute resolution, and monitoring, which are critical given the profound inequality in the strength and abilities of the respective parties. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu asserted ahead of the start of the ceasefire that he had an [understanding with the incoming U.S. administration](#) that Israel was not obliged to enter negotiations on phase two unless Israel alone decided it would be

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facilitated the entry of humanitarian supplies. [Egyptian private forces](#) supervised by a U.S. contractor vetted Palestinians as they returned to the north of Gaza. Forces with the [EU Border Assistance Mission \(EUBAM\)](#) resumed monitoring the Rafah Crossing pursuant to a 2005 agreement, and un-uniformed Palestinian border officials [vetted by the PA](#) stamped passports. Problems riddled phase one of the agreement, however. While Hamas ended virtually all military activity, Israel continued attacks on Palestinians, [killing 170 during the six weeks](#) of the first phase of the ceasefire. Since then, Israel has [blocked all humanitarian aid](#) from entering Gaza, [cut off electricity](#), and redeployed troops inside Gaza; and it has indicated that it [will not withdraw](#) Israeli troops from the Philadelphia Corridor (the strip of land running along Gaza's border with Egypt) as required to start phase two.

Negotiations on phase two were supposed to begin on the sixteenth day of phase one, which would have resulted in a permanent cessation of military operations, the further exchange of detainees and prisoners, a complete withdrawal of the Israeli military from Gaza, and Hamas's return of all remaining living Israeli captives. Instead, Israel insisted that it would only consider an extension of phase one to allow the release of all the remaining captives. When Hamas refused to renegotiate the ceasefire agreement and give up all leverage, Israel resumed its aerial bombardment, resulting in [one of the deadliest single days of conflict](#) in Gaza since October 2023.

useful. Given that phase two would have meant a key member of the Israeli prime minister's coalition exiting the government, thereby forcing elections, Netanyahu had an important disincentive. He would not risk his premiership while on trial for corruption and especially while polling shows that he is deeply unpopular; [60 percent of Israelis want him to resign](#). But even without the machinations of Israeli internal politics, a phased approach without any leverage deployed to compel Israel to reach an agreement on the next phase allowed for prisoner exchanges, but not much else. A much more active and present international community is required to uphold the agreement. Although various arrangements had been made for implementation of the ceasefire that involved stakeholders such as Qatar, Egypt, the EU, and the United States, they did not include ways to ensure compliance with the terms of the ceasefire or to resolve issues between the parties when they arise.

The PLO—as the national representative of the Palestinians and the political address for negotiations with Israel—must be the party to conclude this armistice on behalf of all Palestinians, including Hamas, in order for the end of violence to provide a launching pad for a durable comprehensive peace to facilitate regional integration.

### **Immediate Humanitarian Relief and Early Recovery for Gaza**

Parallel to any efforts to end the violence and reach an armistice agreement, and irrespective of whether such efforts and negotiations are successful, aid must be immediately surged into Gaza. This section outlines an urgent humanitarian delivery framework and presents implementation strategies to address the current crisis in Gaza. Post armistice reconstruction for the OPT as a whole is discussed later, in Section V.

#### ***Requirements for Effective Relief Delivery***

The following are the essential requirements for effective delivery of urgent humanitarian relief.

- 1. Humanitarian protection:** Ensuring the safety and protection of those delivering and receiving aid is a first order requirement. All barriers must be removed—chief among them, the Israeli siege and internal fragmentation of the Gaza Strip—in order to facilitate aid delivery and adhere to international humanitarian law. Establishing temporary housing units in safe zones will help mitigate harm to civilians and ensure that aid reaches those most in need. The framework proposed here recognizes that beyond delivering aid, addressing structural challenges such as restrictions on movement and access is critical to breaking the cycle of suffering and building long-term stability in Gaza.
- 2. Provision of immediate relief:** The immediate relief phase focuses on urgent, life-saving assistance, including the provision of food, clean water, shelter, and medical care. An assessment of the health care system's existing capacities and gaps is essential in this regard, including identifying what is working, what is failing, and what requires immediate intervention.

3. **Restoration of critical services:** The permanent restoration of essential services, including health care, education, water, and sanitation systems is urgently needed. Infrastructure damage has significantly disrupted these services, requiring rapid repair and temporary alternatives. Mobile clinics, temporary classrooms (for both primary and higher education), and emergency water distribution points must be deployed while more permanent solutions are developed.

### *Local and International Responses*

Cross-sectoral efforts to address the humanitarian crisis in Gaza face challenges due to the political fragmentation between Gaza and the West Bank, which has led to fragmented governance structures. No unified Palestinian administrative or political body exists with responsibility for coordinating humanitarian aid. A lack of coordination is also a problem between local and international aid organizations, making it difficult to implement a cohesive response.

### *Core Commitments and Practical Directions*

First, humanitarian aid must be surged as per the January 2024 ICJ provisional measures decision and not linked to agreements for the release of captives and prisoners or for a permanent ceasefire. Humanitarian protection and deconfliction is required and is an essential prerequisite to ensure uninterrupted aid delivery.

Second, a multisectoral approach should be adopted that addresses urgent and immediate needs with a view toward long-term recovery, including for rebuilding health care and education systems and essential infrastructure.

Third, a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation mechanism should be created to (1) track aid flows to ensure accountability and transparency in resource allocation and aid distribution; (2) conduct impact assessments to evaluate the effectiveness of relief and recovery efforts; (3) publish financial and impact reports that are easily accessible; and (4) establish a community feedback loop to allow affected populations to voice concerns and influence aid priorities.

Fourth, the aid delivery framework should be based on an All-of-Gaza strategy, situated within the All-of-Palestine approach outlined in this paper. Given the pressing, urgent humanitarian crisis in Gaza, the current focus should be on ensuring that humanitarian aid reaches all areas where it is needed in Gaza, while also providing a mechanism to address needs across the OPT. No community should be left without support, and relief efforts must be evenly distributed to prevent further marginalization and reintegrate all parts of the OPT under one governance structure.

Lastly, the framework must emphasize the importance of providing both material and psychological support to local communities throughout Gaza, recognizing that recovery must address not only physical needs but also the deep psychological trauma endured by the population. In this sense, humanitarian aid should align with the broader concept of human security, which includes access to food, clean water, health care, education, and sanitation.

### ***Stakeholders and Key Roles***

The humanitarian delivery framework advanced in this paper calls for Palestinian stakeholders, including the transitional technocratic government and local NGOs, to coordinate humanitarian operations. This will ensure that aid efforts remain relevant, culturally sensitive, and aligned with local needs. These stakeholders should work alongside international actors, including the UNRWA, UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), World Health Organization (WHO), Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), World Food Program (WFP), Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF), the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), among other UN and international NGOs (INGOs). It should be noted that as of April 2025, [Israel has banned the UNRWA](#) from operating in Gaza and other territories under its control under a [law](#) that also criminalizes any coordination with the agency. Stakeholders must use their leverage with Israel so that UNRWA is allowed to resume its work in full throughout the OPT.

To streamline relief efforts, the technocratic government should establish a National Humanitarian Coordination Task Force within the proposed Palestinian Reconstruction and Development Council that will coordinate the assessments of needs and mobilization of resources and oversee aid distribution and delivery. Engaging international donors will also be crucial to securing funding for both emergency relief and long-term recovery.

The members of the Global Alliance and the State of Palestine should coordinate diplomatic efforts to coordinate a plan to encourage Israeli cooperation. A multinational contact group—including key stakeholders such as the United Nations, United States, European Union, Qatar, Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), along with representatives from humanitarian organizations—should work together to encourage Israel to remove restrictions and ensure that humanitarian aid flow is prioritized. This diplomatic mechanism would serve as a platform for dialogue, bringing together humanitarian, political, and military perspectives in order to work toward solutions that may balance security concerns with the urgent need for aid delivery. Without such a platform, aid efforts will continue to be hampered.

Furthermore, local organizations, municipalities, refugee camp committees, and grassroots initiatives should coordinate under the framework to ensure that relief efforts are community-driven and effectively implemented. Local organizations play an essential role in humanitarian aid due to their deep understanding of community dynamics and their ability to provide context-specific responses. They often work alongside municipalities, serving as trusted intermediaries between international aid organizations and the local population, conducting needs assessments, and organizing, monitoring, and distributing aid. They play an important role in fostering discussions and laying the foundation for future political and social rebuilding efforts. Additionally, to maintain the dignity and morale of the served communities, they help resolve disputes over aid distribution, ensuring fairness and reducing tensions within communities, and provide culturally appropriate support, such as facilitating burial rites or offering spiritual counseling.

Finally, to improve the effectiveness of humanitarian interventions, leading community-based organizations (CBOs) and municipalities should be encouraged to participate in feedback mechanisms established by the citizen monitoring bodies described in Section IV, allowing residents to express concerns and suggestions about aid distribution and overall relief efforts. Under the framework, partnerships between Palestinian stakeholders and INGOs are encouraged to help fund the work of CBOs and build their capacities to support the effective local management of aid distribution, including by training volunteers in disaster response. INGOs can also provide technical expertise, open up access to global networks, and help identify gaps in assistance and develop innovative solutions. CBOs also play a critical advocacy role, ensuring that the voices of affected communities are heard and that humanitarian response plans reflect their needs.

### **A UN-Mandated Peacekeeping Force**

Fundamental to sustaining the armistice and launching a transitional phase is the presence of UN-mandated international forces to ensure that Palestinians and Israelis are safe and have the space and time to rehabilitate and rebuild their lives. Stabilization efforts during the transition period should also deter violations of the armistice agreement and prepare the ground for Palestinian self-determination.

#### ***Political Support for Forces***

The deployment of UN-mandated peacekeeping forces in the OPT has been called for in several UN resolutions and is a regular request of the PLO. The appeal for deployment was also repeated in the Communiqué of the Extraordinary Arab Summit on March 4, 2025, which referenced the [Bahrain Declaration](#) of May 2024 which made it a basis for normalizing relations with Israel. The PLO, as the principal over the State of Palestine and the recognized representative of the Palestinian people, once again should formally request that UN forces be provided to protect civilians in the OPT and ensure the State's integrity and to safeguard Israel's security. Without such a presence, Israeli military and settler attacks against Palestinian civilians, the destruction of Palestinian homes and infrastructure, and the ethnic cleansing of communities in Gaza and the West Bank will continue unchecked.

#### ***Past Experiences with International Forces in Gaza and the West Bank***

Israelis and Palestinians have some experience with international forces inside the OPT. The [UN Emergency Force](#) was established after Israel, supported by the United Kingdom and France, attacked Egypt in 1956 in response to Egypt's nationalization of the Suez Canal. Both Egypt and Israel consented to establishing the peacekeeping mission called for by a UN General Assembly resolution—in no small measure due to U.S. pressure, which allowed for the orderly withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza by March 1957. The [Temporary International Presence in Hebron \(TIPH\)](#) was established in 1994, in a bilateral agreement between Israel and the PLO following a [UN Security Council resolution](#) calling for such a presence in compliance with the Oslo I Accord. Israel finally signed an agreement to establish the civilian observer force after an Israeli-American settler [opened fire on Palestinian worshipers in the Ibrahimi Mosque](#) and the PLO suspended peace

talks. The agreement provided only monitoring and nonpublic reporting about the human rights situation on the ground and international law violations. However, the Danish, Italian, and Norwegian observers discouraged some of the worst impulses of Israeli settlers and some soldiers and allowed for peace talks to continue. After more than two decades, Netanyahu [refused to renew the TIPH mandate](#) in 2019 and forced the TIPH's withdrawal from Hebron.

The lessons drawn from the two past experiences with international forces in the OPT are threefold. First, a mandate exclusive to only part of the OPT, or only to monitor violations without enforcement and protection capability, cannot support a transition to a long-term peace; it is simply not fit for this purpose. Second, a bilateral agreement between occupier and occupied, without meaningful international engagement and accountability mechanisms built into it, will not endure. Third, if a successful mission is defined as one ending in the mission's obsolescence, then it ought to be linked directly with a comprehensive peace process.

### ***Requirements for a UN-Mandated Peacekeeping Force***

To support the transition to Palestinian self-determination, the peacekeeping force's mandate should cover the entire OPT, allowing the troops to maintain security and act as a buffer between Israelis and Palestinians. Its mandate should be to not only monitor violations, but also enforce the peace; its troops should therefore replace all Israeli forces within the OPT, as well as work with Israeli forces at the borders between the OPT and Israel. The peacekeeping force should also support Palestinian law enforcement and internal security in the OPT until Palestinian forces have been reconstituted and are able to take over.

Palestinian consent is required for a successful peacekeeping mission and to avoid resistance to it. The PLO, on behalf of the State of Palestine, should request the force and agree to the mandate, in order to bind all Palestinian political factions currently excluded from governance. The PLO will have to first conclude an agreement with all the Palestinian political factions, as discussed in Section II.

### ***Potential Opportunities for Peacekeeping in the OPT Today***

While experiences with the use of international peacekeeping forces have been varied in the effectiveness of execution of their mission, no better alternative exists in the case of Israel and the OPT. And though Israel has opposed the presence of international peacekeepers in the past, it showed some willingness during the recent six-week-long ceasefire to accept private contractors from the United States and Egypt to operate inside Gaza. Public sentiment domestically may be creating an opportunity now for Israel to support the entry of international peacekeeping forces requested by Palestinians. According to a May 2025 poll by the Pew Research Center, [only a third of Israelis support](#) Israel taking over Gaza. [Between 40 percent and 50 percent of reservists](#) are failing to show up for active duty, forcing Israel to [call up soldiers with post-traumatic stress disorder](#) to deal with troop shortages. [Almost 70 percent](#) of Israelis support a hostage deal and a permanent end to the war, and [more than 60 percent](#) want to see Israeli-Saudi normalization.

In practice, obtaining Israeli consent (as the occupying power) to this mission will also be needed. The United States will be critical to ensuring Israeli agreement and compliance with the terms of the mandate. Arab Gulf countries, particularly Saudi Arabia, will also be essential; they must be willing to use their leverage with both Israel and the United States to incentivize acceptance of a peacekeeping force in the OPT. They can do this by making acceptance a condition for launching a process for comprehensive regional peace and a plan for Arab-Israeli normalization. They should also offer their troops for the purpose, given that Israel showed its willingness to accept U.S. and Egyptian private security in Gaza during the ceasefire. International donors, particularly Arab League members and EU members, should provide financial support for peacekeepers.

To encourage Israel to accept the peacekeeping mission, Arab states should contribute forces and the mission should be linked to future Saudi normalization with Israel. Gulf countries are keen to stabilize the Middle East and work with the Trump administration to bring about regional economic integration. They have already expressed their willingness to support peacekeeping operations in the OPT in the communique adopted at the Palestine Summit.

The EU and its member states also have a vested interest in stabilizing the Middle East and ensuring the respect of international law given the region's proximity. Individual European states and the EU have participated in previous iterations of peacekeeping and security support mechanisms (such as the UN Interim Force in Lebanon, TIPH, and the EU Mission for the Support of Palestinian Police and Rule of Law—EUPOL COPPS) and have the experience and willingness to deploy troops under a UN mandate.

### ***Why Private Security Contractors Would Not Be Effective***

Peacekeeping duties should not be entrusted to an unaccountable multinational force composed of private security contractors. Although private Egyptian troops positioned inside Gaza—under the supervision of U.S. security contractors—have had some success in their limited mission to vet internally displaced Palestinians returning from the southern parts of Gaza to the north, such forces are not suitable as peacekeepers during the transition. While this paper takes no stand on the nationality of the troops, nor on the nationality of their leadership—indeed, a U.S.-led force could have many advantages, as could an Arab-led one—private contractors are [not specially trained as peacekeepers](#) and are unregulated by any international framework. Given the required enforcement and monitoring duties of the peacekeeping force, and in light of the high-intensity violence the OPT has seen in the last nineteen months, the peacekeepers must be well-trained and subject to a specific mandate, international standards, and UN best practices.

Foreign mercenaries, operating under contract rather than pursuant to a UN mandate and subject to international law, [will face opposition](#), including from armed groups, if deployed for the long-term recovery and reconstruction of the OPT. A peacekeeping mission that Palestinians will accept is one to which the PLO has consented and has a clear objective to support the end of occupation. Foreign forces with the primary objective of ensuring Israeli security as Israel maintains its illegal occupation and with no timeline for transferring authority to internationally recognized Palestinian national bodies also stands in direct opposition to the ICJ advisory opinion of July 2024.

### III. Unity Under Palestinian Governance

This section outlines a plan for the unification of Palestinian governance under the PLO after the conclusion of a Palestinian Factions Agreement on Cooperation, as well as recommendations for greater civic participation in the PLO until elections and institutional renewal become practicable.

#### Self Determination as a Priority

As a matter of law, and most recently reaffirmed by the ICJ in its advisory opinion of July 2024, Palestinians have a right to self-determination in the OPT and third states have an obligation to support that right. Thus, the only legitimate governance system in the OPT is one led by Palestinians for Palestinians. As a practical matter, foreign governance over Palestinians would also face significant challenges.

#### *The Problem with Foreign Governance, Vetted Palestinians, or Multinational Consortiums*

Nonindigenous governance structures imposed by foreign powers and backed by foreign troops will be perceived as a continuation of military occupation and will face Palestinian resistance. Whatever this arrangement is called, Israel will maintain ultimate authority over security control in Gaza. A multinational consortium would only serve as a mechanism to relieve Israel of its moral, legal, and financial responsibility for the civilian population of Gaza, while still allowing Israel the ability to exert its will over Palestinians.

Nothing will be perceived as more illegitimate by Palestinians than a plan that not only excludes Palestinian national bodies and political factions from governance, but also calls for their replacement with new institutions and leaders vetted and acceptable to Israel or other foreign powers. Palestinians have repeatedly rejected efforts to have their leadership chosen for them in the past and are likely to do so again. Palestinians are also likely to reject efforts to replace national institutions such as the PLO because it would have serious implications for the rights of refugees and the pursuit of accountability and reparations against Israel. Undermining the PLO as the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people is effectively an attempt to erase Palestinians as a national group.

If the purported objective for such plans is to preserve a part of the historic Palestinian homeland for the expression of Palestinian self-determination, then Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, must be treated as one territorial unit in the transition period under a single Palestinian national body. Israel's aim has long been to fragment the occupied territories and treat Gaza as an island unto itself. Palestinians understand that Israel's attacks on their communities and refugee camps in the West Bank is an attempt to reduce the land area for Palestinian residence and further disconnect populations to bolster Israeli colonization. Any transitional mechanism must put an end to these practices by placing governing responsibility for the entire OPT under a Palestinian national body and providing international support to ensure this. Otherwise, the mechanism risks

condemning Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank to indefinite isolation inside enclaves. More than three decades of the Oslo peace process have proven that interim periods tend to linger well beyond their expiration date. A transitional mechanism that undermines Palestinian self-determination and does not have as its objective an end to occupation will become a permanent fixture for maintaining Israeli control over Palestinian land.

Plans for foreign governance that do not provide any off-ramp or timeline for an end to the transition period beyond vague references to a point in the future when new Palestinian leaders emerge or new Palestinian institutions are reformed seem to imply that the enduring nature of Israeli occupation stems from poor Palestinian leadership or the inadequacies of Palestinian governance. In fact, the enduring nature of the occupation is intimately tied to Israel's ambitions for a Greater Israel. Israel's claim that it has "no partner for peace" has been the excuse used to suspend negotiations with the PLO and continue settlement expansion. For some time now, successive Israeli governments, and [Jewish Israeli society, have preferred the status quo](#) over an end of occupation. Particularly since the events of October 7, 2023, the prevailing view in Israel has been that a sovereign Palestinian state is an existential threat. For the immediate future, leaving Israel to decide when the occupation and the transition period will end and Palestinian sovereignty will begin would mean indefinite occupation and annexation—or worse, ethnic cleansing.

According to the 2024 ICJ advisory opinion, Israel's presence in and effective control over Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is illegal and must end as soon as possible. A UN General Assembly [resolution adopted a few months later](#) overwhelmingly affirmed the ICJ's opinion and called for the withdrawal of Israeli forces by September 2025. The engagement of third states, including any multinational consortium, on peacemaking between Israel and Palestine must be done in support of Palestinian self-determination and facilitate an end to Israel's occupation, not prolong it. The Global Alliance convening in June 2025 offers an opportunity to begin plans for an orderly withdrawal of Israeli forces and their replacement with UN-mandated peacekeeping forces.

### ***Palestinian-Supported Plans and Their Limitations***

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi has prepared an alternative proposal titled the [Early Recovery, Reconstruction and Development of Gaza](#), which was adopted as the Arab Plan by the Arab League in March 2025. It would allow Palestinians to remain in the largely destroyed enclave during its reconstruction, which would be overseen by a Palestinian administrative committee under the authority of the State of Palestine for six months until certain institutional reforms are possible. It envisions Gaza reconstruction as step in an overall process to end occupation and establish a sovereign Palestinian state.

The Palestinian president has accepted the Arab Plan and [released principles](#) for Gaza's reconstruction that include reunification with the West Bank, national reconciliation, PA reforms, a ceasefire encompassing all of the OPT, state assumption of authority over both internal and external security with support at the border crossings in Gaza from EUBAM, and continued pursuit of accountability for war crimes.

A few Palestinian-led [civil society](#) and [private sector](#) proposals for rebuilding Gaza have a spatial vision that supports Palestinian sovereignty over the West Bank and Gaza as one territorial unit. These proposals recommend sequencing catalytic projects to rehabilitate the fragmented communities and reconnect them to each other and the rest of the world.

Left unaddressed in these plans, however, is how Hamas would come to relinquish governance over Gaza and security control—though recent [direct talks](#) held between Hamas officials and United States’ envoys indicate that the Islamist organization may be inclined to do so with an agreement for a long-term truce. The plans also do not detail how a ceasefire and the reconstruction of Gaza could contribute to Palestinian self-determination. This paper posits that an effective, rights-respecting plan must have three essential elements: Palestinian national reconciliation; active, sustained international engagement; and mechanisms for repairing public trust in Palestinian national bodies, including for oversight (see Sections IV and V).

Although authors of some day-after plans assert that the answer to the legitimacy problem concerning the governance of Gaza after Hamas is for foreign actors to assume control, Palestinians have categorically rejected such a solution. Polling shows that a majority would prefer a return of Hamas over any other choice, but when the choice is between the PA and a foreign actor, without exception, Palestinian residents of Gaza and the West Bank say they [would rather have the PA](#) or national unity government administer the enclave than see a foreign authority install a new face of Israeli occupation. In a recent popular conference held in Doha, Qatar, in February 2025, which brought 450 Palestinian civil society and political party members together around the question of PLO reform, [attendees affirmed their rejection](#) of any foreign governance over the OPT. However, most Palestinians are then quick to say that the PA’s return should be linked to an internationally backed commitment for its political renewal and democratic reform. Direct elections are not the priority for now. Most Palestinians are acutely aware of the urgent need for a united Palestinian response to the situation in Gaza and the deteriorating state of affairs in the West Bank. They understand that, in the short term, addressing the situation will require the PA to assume responsibility until direct elections are possible.

### **The Palestinian Authority and Its Reform**

A major challenge in advancing a plan supportive of Palestinian self-determination and governance is the lack of public trust in the PA as an institution. To be clear, the [calls in some foreign capitals](#) for a “new Palestinian leadership” or PA reform are not calls for democratic elections; rather, they seek to change the particular individual holding the office of the presidency in the PA. These calls assume that what has crippled effective governance the most is the personality or agedness of the current Palestinian president or the corruption that the PA has allowed to set in over decades. But this assumption ignores what the PA has come to represent to Palestinians in the occupied territories.

What has primarily undermined the PA’s credibility and legitimacy and led to its slow death as an institution is coded in its DNA. The PA was only meant to be a transitional body, existing for a

five-year term to see Palestinians from occupation to statehood. More than three decades later, the PA has failed to achieve its one *raison d'être*. Instead, the peace process has provided cover for the expansion of Israeli settlements and the entrenchment of occupation and apartheid. For years now, the PA has not been able to provide reliable municipal services or protection against Israeli settler pogroms and military incursions, which have leveled some West Bank refugee camps and parts of Palestinian urban areas, forcing the displacement of tens of thousands of Palestinians.

That the PA does not enjoy public trust should be unsurprising. Palestinian residents of the OPT have had neither presidential or legislative elections since they were held in 2005 and 2006, respectively. Authority has become centralized in the presidency, the PA legislature has been sidelined since Hamas won legislative elections and took over as the *de facto* authority in Gaza in 2007, and in 2018, parliamentarians were officially relieved of their duties and the legislature was officially disbanded. Neither meaningful checks and balances nor mechanisms for accountable governance exist today. Effective mechanisms do not exist to address corruption or to remedy government repression against activists and reformers.

### **The Relationship Between the Palestinian Authority, the State, and the PLO**

In 2013, following the UN General Assembly vote conferring nonmember observer state status on the State of Palestine, the Palestinian president decreed that the “State of Palestine” would replace the “Palestinian National Authority” (referred to also as the PA) in official government documents and signage. Although many countries have recognized Palestine as a state, the government, or the PA, has not consistently asserted its statehood due to key international donors. These donors oppose recognition of the state until Palestinians have signed a peace agreement with Israel. Thus, the 2013 name change did not constitute a meaningful shift away from the Oslo peace process or from the notion that Palestinian governance is subject to Israeli agreement rather than derived from the Palestinian right to self-determination.

This failure to assert Palestinian statehood is no longer tenable following the developments on the ground since October 7, 2023, and following the authoritative ICJ rulings and opinions in 2024 supporting Palestinian sovereignty and self-determination. In the face of existential challenges and to take advantage of the recent legal determinations, the Palestinian leadership must end all prevarication, assert its status as a state, redefine the Palestinian government’s purpose separate from the defunct Oslo framework, and mount an international campaign with like-minded stakeholders to preserve the Palestinian right to self-determination. As a state with legitimate authority over the OPT, it must assume governance over Gaza while it engages in a process for national reconciliation with political factions not part of the government or included within the PLO.

### ***Reasserting the Primacy of the PLO and Advancing Its Renewal***

The PLO is the body representing Palestinians both within the occupied territories and abroad. It is recognized by the international community and Israel. As the legitimate representative of Palestinian people everywhere, the PLO plays a crucial role at the legal and diplomatic levels and

in pursuing accountability, advancing Palestinian human rights, and asserting the national identity of the Palestinian people. The PLO stands above the State of Palestine: it created the PA as its agent to govern over the OPT for a limited time. Though the PLO is not responsible for the day-to-day administration of the OPT, it is responsible for external relations affecting the state and is tasked with concluding a peace agreement with Israel.

Over the course of the Oslo peace process, the PLO lost much of its legitimacy and representative character. [When the PA was established](#) and became the address for donor funding toward state-building efforts, the PLO was hollowed out and its responsibilities were shared with or handed over to PA officials with mandates overlapping with those of the members of the PLO Executive Committee (effectively the PLO cabinet). The PLO's crisis of legitimacy is not only a problem for Palestinians; it is also a problem for Israel. Losing an internationally recognized national representative for Palestinians would make reaching a peace deal, and binding Palestinians as a collective, impossible. And consequently, Israel's full normalization in the Middle East—and thus its security—would remain elusive.

While [Israeli policy choices](#) aimed at keeping Gaza politically and geographically separate from the West Bank have exacerbated internal Palestinian political divisions and factional competition, the two main Palestinian political parties, Fatah and Hamas, are also responsible for maintaining this state of affairs. And although successive Israeli governments in the last decades have been keen to prevent a Palestinian national body from reasserting itself—and have actively supported Palestinian disunity as a cover for continued territorial aggrandizement—October 7, 2023, has shown that the lack of a unified Palestinian leadership can also have a profound impact on Israeli security, Israel's foreign policy objectives, and the state's relationship to the region and the rest of the world. The fragmentation also creates significant costs for immediate neighbors and the international rules-based system. Palestinian national reconciliation is therefore not just a Palestinian priority; it is also essential for achieving regional stability and international peace and security.

Therefore, action must be taken to restore the PLO's legitimacy. The organization's umbrella must be cast wider to include all Palestinian political factions and marginalized constituencies, and it must also undergo processes for political renewal and adopt mechanisms for civic engagement to restore its credibility.

### ***Representing All Palestinian Factions Within the PLO***

While Israel asserts an intention to eradicate Hamas and to force its disarmament, such a position is unachievable and impracticable, as recognized by military experts including [Israel's own former military spokesperson](#) and in new [reporting on the U.S. position](#). For more than fifteen years, Israel has tried to destroy this Islamist organization through a siege and blockade over Gaza and its people; and for nineteen months has been conducting a merciless military campaign that is decimating the greater part of Gaza. And yet, Hamas still stands and has [managed to renew its ranks](#), an outcome consistent with experience in other cases involving insurgencies in the Middle East.

The Palestinian president, who chairs the PLO and heads the government for the State of Palestine, has been reluctant to bring Hamas into the PLO, partly due to concerns related to negative repercussions from the United States and Israel. He is also insisting that Hamas must disarm before the PA takes over governance in Gaza and that the State of Palestine must gain a complete [monopoly over security and law enforcement](#).

Arab stakeholders—Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE—as well as the EU and European states, must leverage their diplomatic and financial support for the State of Palestine to encourage the Palestinian president and Hamas to come to an agreement, while also working together on a comprehensive regional peace proposal.

For its part, Hamas understands that while it remains the governing authority funders will not support the rebuilding of Gaza. Hamas has offered a [five-to-ten-year truce](#) with Israel, and up until October 7, 2023, Hamas had generally abided by long-term truce agreements. Hamas has also repeatedly indicated that it would relinquish authority in Gaza in exchange for an agreement with Fatah that would allow it to come under the PLO umbrella. It formally accepted the two-state solution and the PLO political platform when it signed the [Beijing Declaration on Ending Division and Strengthening Palestinian National Unity](#) in July 2024 along with Fatah and a dozen other Palestinian factions. Parties to the [Beijing Declaration](#) affirmed support for a Palestinian state in the OPT and pertinent UN Security Council resolutions; recognized the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people; agreed to establish a unified interim leadership mechanism until the PLO parliament is renewed; and agreed to form a temporary national consensus government over Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, to allow for reconstruction until elections are held.

The Beijing Declaration, like many other agreements concluded between Hamas and Fatah since 2011, has not been implemented since it was signed. The interim unified leadership structure it called for is not making collective decisions, steps have not been taken for the PLO's renewal, and an interim consensus government has not been negotiated. The Palestinian leadership blames Hamas for refusing to hand over weapons to the PA. Hamas insists that it will only suspend armed activity following a long-term truce with Israel. Instead of implementing the terms of the Beijing Declaration, the Palestinian leadership is implementing a succession plan for the Palestinian president without meaningful consultation and agreement with the political factions ([mainly due to external pressure](#) from Western governments and key Arab Gulf stakeholders). Meanwhile, the bombardment and blockade of Gaza continues.

The PLO—as the national representative of the Palestinians and the political address for negotiations with Israel—must be the party to conclude an armistice. However, Hamas is not under the PLO umbrella yet. Thus, in order to bind Hamas and other Islamist organizations to an agreement (and later in a comprehensive Palestinian-Israeli peace treaty), all Palestinian political factions and civil society must be integrated into and represented within the PLO. As the Beijing Declaration did not include many implementation details in this regard, this paper proposes an immediate mechanism for unified leadership as part of a factions agreement.

## Factions Agreement for Cooperation

For an armistice agreement signed by the PLO to be binding on all Palestinian political factions, and for credible transitional governance, Hamas and all other factions not currently represented by the PLO must be brought under its umbrella. Thus, this paper proposes an agreement between the factions on implementation of the Beijing Declaration. The Factions Agreement on Cooperation should provide a mechanism for the decommissioning of weapons and clarify outstanding issues concerning the PA's fate and the relationship between the PLO and the State of Palestine. Six essential terms should be included in the agreement:

1. The political factions agree to suspend all armed activity during the transition while negotiations are taking place with Israel on a comprehensive peace.
2. The mandate for the interim unified national leadership structure is clarified. Until such time as the democratic renewal of the PLO, any matters concerning the constitutional structures within the PLO or the State of Palestine, or presidential succession, are left to the unified interim leadership.
3. To support a process for PLO renewal, the political factions agree to civil society consultations to determine how to reapportion seats on the PLO parliament and chief policymaking body, the Palestinian National Council (PNC). The factions agree to support mechanisms for civic engagement and deliberative democracy, including the use of citizen assemblies, and create citizen advisory and oversight bodies to help restore the social contract and build consensus between the political factions until PLO renewal and state elections are possible. The factions agree to a timetable for holding full PNC and state legislative elections.
4. The parties agree that (1) the PLO chairperson may only sign agreements with Israel following approval from a renewed and more inclusive PNC; (2) foreign relations are the exclusive province of the PLO; and (3) the PLO chairperson will continue to also hold the position of head of state until a peace agreement with Israel is signed to avoid a conflict between the PLO and the State on matters of foreign policy and international relations.
5. To preserve refugee claims, the factions stipulate that only following implementation of a comprehensive peace agreement resolving refugee claims and status may the government of the State of Palestine replace the authorities of the PLO, which would then be dissolved as a liberation movement or be repurposed to take on a different role for Palestinians residing in the homeland and the diaspora. In addition, the factions agree that the PLO exists above the State as its principal until a peace agreement is signed with Israel, the Israeli occupation ends, and the rights and claims of Palestinians, particularly of refugees, have been resolved.

6. The factions explicitly assert that the Palestinian state derives its legitimacy from the people and that the PA must be replaced with the new technocratic government for the State of Palestine as envisaged in the Beijing Declaration until elections are practicable, in two years following the armistice agreement.

Once the Facts Agreement on Cooperation is signed, the Palestinian president sitting as head of state should issue a presidential decree incorporating its terms into the law of the State of Palestine and then submit the decree to the PNC for a vote.

#### **IV. Transitional Leadership and Governance for the Palestinians**

This section recommends that the unified national leadership called for in the Beijing Declaration establish a Palestinian transitional administration made up of technocrats and professionals to govern the State of Palestine and manage its reconstruction and development during the transition phase. It also calls for preparations for holding elections in two years and provides recommendations for the creation of interim mechanisms for democratic expression and citizen participation and oversight.

##### **The Technocratic Government**

The Palestinian political factions agreed in the Beijing Declaration to establish a government of national consensus. The PA has stated that it intends to install a technocratic government. This paper recommends that, as per the Beijing Declaration, the unified national leadership agree on the formation and membership of a technocratic government for the State of Palestine following the armistice. The mandate for the transitional administration should last two years until elections for the PLO and the state legislature are held. Mechanisms for deliberative democracy and civic engagement will support the transitional phase and inform decision-making concerning governance reforms, elections, and reapportionment of seats on the PNC.

This State of Palestine's technocratic government should consist of nonpartisan professionals with specific competency in the ministry to which they have been appointed. The number of ministers should be minimized and focused on the relief, recovery, and reconstruction of Gaza and the development of the State and its democratic institutions and processes in preparation for elections after two years.

In the absence of a legitimate elected body to oversee the technocratic government and its particular ministries, an independent mechanism should be immediately established to ensure transparency and accountability. The technocratic government should be required to report monthly to a Transition Council made up of representatives from the (1) PLO, (2) a Citizens Oversight Board (COB) comprised of respected Palestinian community-based organizations, and (3) the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC) that [the international committee](#) created thirty years ago to mobilize and coordinate development assistance to the Palestinians and the PA. In addition

to receiving reports and reviewing priorities, this tripartite council should be empowered to remove any minister for cause by majority vote.

E-government mechanisms should be developed to ensure improved access to information and services during the transition and beyond. Countries with best practice experience, such as Estonia or the UAE, should be requested to share best practices and support in their implementation. The government should make public records available online and easily searchable, including its budget and monthly reports. An online portal for submitting citizen complaints and concerns to the COB should also be created. The COB should investigate and respond to credible information in a timely fashion. An Independent Auditing Commission should be created to provide citizen oversight over donor funding managed by the Ministry of Finance. To support greater transparency and accountability and to avoid the possible negative impacts of a massive influx of donor funding, an “aid blockchain” should be established so aid flows can be tracked from inception through final disbursement. This blockchain verification mechanism should be applied to all revenue received by the government, including to income and clearance taxes.

The technocratic government should immediately establish an emergency committee for Gaza, the Palestine Reconstruction and Development Council. It should be headed by the prime minister selected by the unified national leadership and comprised of relevant ministers in health, education, international cooperation and planning, and the national economy as well as representatives of relevant sectors of civil society and international humanitarian organizations. This council would be the central locus for the planning, management, and implementation of all plans concerning Gaza’s recovery and reconstruction, thereby ensuring Palestinian ownership and agency and citizen involvement and oversight to guarantee accountability. As discussed in Section VI, the council would absorb the current Gaza Municipal Fund.

The AHLC, created as a part of the Oslo peace process to support the PA in its state-building efforts, should be repurposed and its mandate expanded in line with Palestine’s status as a state, albeit one under occupation. As part of its remit, it should work to encourage all donor countries to extend political recognition to the State of Palestine and actively advocate the state’s admission to the United Nations as a full member.

### **Interim Measures for Democratic Renewal**

This section discusses how to ensure more short-term legitimacy, transparency, and inclusive decision-making within the PLO and the State of Palestine. It recommends civic engagement mechanisms for this purpose. It addresses the need to renew PLO institutions during the transition period to allow for better inclusion and representation of civil society actors in the PLO parliament as Islamist and marginalized factions are brought under the PLO umbrella. It also proposes using citizen assemblies as one mechanism for deliberative democracy to facilitate a fair reapportion of seats on the PNC to better reflect Palestinian society.

### ***The PLO***

Although the PNC is the primary policymaking body of the PLO, meeting approximately every seven months in its first decade, it now rarely meets (in the last thirty years, it has met three times) except to replace deceased members. Because the PLO has never included Islamist factions under its umbrella and has failed to update its antiquated method for allocating seats on the PNC—which would enable Palestinian civil society organizations, unions, and political parties to be more accurately represented—the claim that the PLO represents all Palestinians is subject to debate. Although Fatah is only allocated forty seats in the PLO, its cadres hold many more than that in the [747-seat parliamentary body](#) due to inclusion of representatives from Fatah-associated unions, professional associations, and civil society organizations, as well as other notable individuals sympathetic to Fatah or members of the party. Hamas as a party is not represented in the PNC, though individual members hold seats by virtue of their election to the PA legislature. Even among the political factions with seats in the PNC, the number allocated to them does not necessarily reflect their actual numbers. In fact, some of these factions [exist only on paper](#).

Since the start of the genocide and mass forced displacements in Gaza, a number of civil society organizations have been established and have called for the PLO’s renewal and effective response to the crisis. Conferences have been held in the OPT, Qatar, the United Kingdom, the United States, Türkiye, and other locations in Europe, with several hundred Palestinians attending from around the world. The PLO and PA have [opposed such efforts](#), even preventing Palestinians from the West Bank from attending a recent conference in Doha in February 2025—though the [conference’s aim](#) was to support the PLO as the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and not to replace it with a new organization.

Despite the best efforts and intentions of conference organizers, they have yet to advance recommendations on how exactly to support the PLO’s renewal or what mechanisms or modalities might help gauge the preferences of Palestinians within and outside the historic homeland.

### ***Citizen Assemblies***

A citizen assembly is a form of popular deliberation that involves bringing together a small, representative sample of a specific population to study a problem and devise a solution that can then be shared with the policymaking body for consideration and adoption. Alternatively, the citizen assembly’s solution could become part of a campaign to generate popular support, which could then be used to influence policymakers. With most of Palestinian society plagued by factionalism, polarization, or political apathy, citizen assemblies can also help facilitate greater social cohesion and sociopolitical awareness within a fractured community. Finally, they can be held anywhere—in or outside Palestine—or virtually.

The assembly process could be initiated by the PLO’s parliament, the PNC, or by a group of trusted Palestinian civil society actors or community-based organizations. In 2018, for example, in order to fill empty seats on the PNC, the PLO asked civil society groups among the diaspora to choose delegates who could be accredited and vetted by Palestinian embassies and missions abroad to

serve on the council. A similar process could be used to initiate a citizen assembly, though not with embassy vetting.

The benefit of such a process is that it can be done in a relatively short period of time (three to six months). It also allows for informed decision-making in an inclusive, representative, nonpartisan, and transparent manner. Because of this, it can help alleviate factionalism, fragmentation, and polarization within a community. Unlike elections that are determinative, citizen assemblies are consultative in nature. Where elections cannot be held and when the political competition associated with them would only exacerbate intracommunal tensions or produce problematic outcomes, recommended actions from a citizen assembly can be more politically palatable for both those holding power and those in the opposition who seek a more inclusive, civil society–driven process. The process also provides an important way to credibly ascertain the popular Palestinian will in various settings and conferences where Palestinian futures are being discussed. Civil society deliberative mechanisms, such as citizen assemblies, should be tasked with identifying how to reallocate seats on the PNC in a way that is fair, inclusive, and reflective of the Palestinian people wherever they may reside.

Among the most pressing issues for discussion are how to (1) ensure and protect civic freedoms, including freedom of expression and the press, (2) address disinformation and misinformation campaigns ahead of elections, and (3) roll back or prevent government censorship of ideas and criticism. Another priority issue concerns judicial and security sector reforms and how to ensure that the protection of human rights and universal values is incorporated in any measures adopted.

### *The State*

Since the political schism in 2007 between Hamas and Fatah, the social contract between Palestinians and their leadership has been in steep decline. The intra-factional fighting that resulted in the political fragmentation of Gaza, governed by Hamas, and the West Bank, governed by the Fatah-led PA, has hindered the functioning of the legislature and prevented PA legislative and presidential elections. In 2018, the president disbanded the parliament entirely and dismissed lawmakers. And both [Hamas](#) in Gaza and the [PA](#) in the West Bank have taken additional authoritarian measures over the years. Palestinians in the OPT—particularly in occupied East Jerusalem, which Israel officially annexed in 1980 and where it governs—have little meaningful say on matters affecting their day-to-day lives or on plans made about their future as a nation. Thus, for example, when in 2019 the PA sought to implement the social security law passed three years earlier—which would have required deductions from worker salaries—mass mobilizations [forced the president to suspend](#) its implementation. PA initiatives to redress the public trust deficit, largely at the behest of donor countries who have been calling for PA democratic reforms, have been met with mistrust from Palestinians. In contrast, Hamas faces little internal or external push back that would change its policies.

PA presidential and legislative elections were held last in 2005 and 2006, respectively. When elections were called, in 2021, they were cancelled only weeks before the election and after [93 percent of eligible individuals](#) had registered to vote, many of whom were youth voting for the

first time. [Palestinians have little confidence in the judiciary](#) to act as a counterweight to the growing authoritarianism in the West Bank, as the Palestinian president has passed decrees giving him power over appointments and oversight over the constitutional court.

This situation in the OPT contributes to and deepens mistrust not only between civil society and the government but also between the people and the various security and law enforcement bodies that have [increasingly deployed repressive tactics](#) to silence dissent. Repression of political dissent is prevalent in both the [West Bank](#) and [Gaza](#), involving such tactics as offline and online harassment, arrests, attacks on peaceful protests, and even physical assaults, torture, and the killing of a critic during his arrest. Inter-factional rivalry and intolerance to opposing views has permeated beyond public spaces, resulting in conflict and disharmony within families and households. Party affiliation has become central to identity politics.

### ***Citizen Advisory Bodies and Oversight Mechanisms***

Another tool that could facilitate citizen engagement in decision-making and increase public trust and legitimacy until elections are practicable are citizen advisory bodies or oversight mechanisms. Civil society representatives should select among themselves individuals who will participate in these quasi-public bodies that would offer recommendations to and/or provide oversight over public institutions. The citizen bodies could also be appended to particular state ministries or agencies to ensure transparency, accountability, and good governance or to provide civil society consultation on decision-making. Given their function, citizen advisory and oversight bodies should be comprised of residents of the OPT.

### **Effective and Sustained International Engagement**

International engagement is the linchpin of any successful plan for rebuilding Gaza and for enabling a durable political solution between Israelis and Palestinians. The quality of that engagement is crucial, however. Relevant stakeholders, including the United States, the European Union, and Arab states, must be willing to impose redlines on Israel to prevent the entrenchment of occupation and apartheid and the further expansion of settlements. States must distinguish between bilateral relations with Israel and bilateral relations with the State of Palestine, comply with ICC arrest warrants, pursue war criminals under the principles of universal jurisdiction, and ban arms sales supporting Israel's attacks on its occupied population. Stakeholders must also be willing to leverage budgetary support for the Palestinian government in the West Bank on its assumption of governance over Gaza and its commitment to democratic reforms and human rights.

Recognizing that the eradication of Hamas as a political force is not a practical, productive, or a viable goal, international engagement now must focus on moderating Israel's position on armed militant groups. Even various U.S. officials, including one who has held [direct talks with Hamas](#) representatives, have recognized that negotiating with the [Islamist organization is pragmatic](#) and that diplomacy is preferred over military solutions.

International stakeholders—from Arab and European states, the United States, and other countries—should vigorously support a process for Palestinian national reconciliation. The State of Palestine will not resume governance over Gaza without international pressure and certain guarantees. International donors should leverage their financial and material support for reconstruction and the reintegration of Gaza with the rest of the OPT, while Arab stakeholders should help support Palestinian security forces with personnel, equipment, training, and monitoring during the transition period and until Palestinian capacity is restored. During this time, UN peacekeeping forces should provide external security for Palestine to ensure the armistice with Israel holds. International pressure should be brought to bear on Hamas and Fatah to agree on terms for the gradual integration of militias and brigades into Palestinian state security forces pursuant to best practices. Arrangements made for the decommissioning of weapons between the Irish Republican Army and Loyalist paramilitaries in the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, including the creation of the Independent International Commission on Decommissioning, present important lessons learned in this regard. The United Nations should support the creation of mechanisms and modalities to overcome the specific challenges between the State of Palestine and armed political factions in this regard.

Given the critical role Arab stakeholders have played in ceasefire negotiations over the years, they should continue to act as a bridge and a catalyst for negotiations concerning the transition period and its linkage to a credible, durable, and just political solution that will open the door for regional integration and normalization.

The process for transitional governance should begin with Arab stakeholders facilitating negotiations for the aforementioned Factions Agreement for Cooperation which will focus on implementation of the Beijing Declaration. This will enable the establishment of an agreed technocratic government for all of the OPT, the dissolution of the PA and its replacement with the State of Palestine in substance and not only in form, the confirmation of the PLO as standing above the State as its principal to protect refugee rights and claims, and the process for renewal of the PLO parliament to bring in factions existing outside of its umbrella and to more accurately reflect and represent Palestinians everywhere, particularly in terms of gender and age. The PLO chair, acting also as the head of state, should then engage with international stakeholders, particularly Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE, on a plan for supporting Palestinian self-determination and ultimately unlocking regional integration.

At the same time, the State of Palestine must agree with international stakeholders on the mandate of the UN peacekeeping forces to support the transition period until a treaty with Israel is agreed and implemented. As discussed earlier in the paper, the forces should provide security for Palestinians and Israelis and monitoring and reporting functions. Border inspection authorities should continue to be under the purview of EUBAM at the Rafah Crossing, working with the responsible authorities of the State of Palestine. Since this paper recommends an All-of-Palestine approach for the transition period, the UN and EUBAM mandates should include the entire OPT, not just Gaza. Thus, EUBAM's mandate should be extended to the border crossings in the West Bank. Freedom of movement across Gaza and the West Bank, as one territorial unit, should be ensured.

## V. The Medium Term: Aid and Reconstruction in the Transition

According to the [UN Secretary-General](#), the “true foundation” of recovery and reconstruction in Gaza must be based on a clear and agreed political framework grounded in international law. Similarly, the EU has stated that large-scale recovery requires certain political and operational [conditions](#), including effective security and governance frameworks. Thus, the political and economic impediments imposed by Israel over Gaza and the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) for almost six decades must be removed in order to avoid the *déjà vu* of “[bomb, rebuild, repeat.](#)”

This section provides concrete medium-term good governance proposals for rebuilding the State of Palestine, with a focus on Gaza. It also details the next key phases—following immediate humanitarian relief efforts—for short-term recovery and long-term resilience to ensure that humanitarian interventions are not only responsive to urgent needs but also lay the groundwork for sustainable development. It then details specific mechanisms for the coordination of Gaza’s reconstruction and how to link it to development efforts throughout the OPT.

### After the Surge

#### *Short-Term Recovery (Postwar)*

As conditions stabilize, the focus should shift toward rebuilding critical infrastructure, revitalizing the local economy, and addressing the needs of displaced populations.

1. **Cluster-based implementation for recovery:** As detailed below, a dedicated cluster system led by key humanitarian organizations, will closely coordinate with local municipalities and community networks under the authority of the National Humanitarian Coordination Task Force to ensure context-sensitive implementation and long-term sustainability:

- Food security cluster (led by WFP and FAO): Ensuring food aid distribution and supporting agricultural recovery.
- Health cluster (led by WHO and MSF): Delivering emergency health care services and restoring medical infrastructure.
- Shelter cluster (led by UNHCR and local councils): Developing temporary and permanent housing solutions.
- Protection cluster (led by UNICEF): Safeguarding the rights and well-being of vulnerable populations, particularly children and displaced persons.
- Education cluster (led by UNICEF and UNRWA): Restoring primary and higher education, with a focus on vocational training for affected youth.

2. **Economic revitalization and social stability:** To support livelihood restoration, targeted programs should provide the following:

- Cash assistance and microfinance programs to help small businesses and self-employed individuals recover.
- Job creation initiatives, focusing on infrastructure reconstruction and essential public services.
- Vocational training for displaced workers, particularly in fields such as construction, health care, and agriculture.

### *Preparing for Long-Term Recovery and Resilience*

This phase aims to transition from recovery to sustainable development through comprehensive reconstruction efforts and governance reforms, as discussed in the next section. It relies on building sustainable livelihoods and strengthening local systems, as part of a reconstruction process for Gaza that centers on Palestinian lives, agency, and prosperity, with an aim toward achieving a sovereign Palestinian economy and fulfilling Palestinians' right to live in safety and freedom in their lands. As such, this section proposes, with an economic focus, basic principles and mechanisms for ensuring a reconstruction of Gaza that reinforces Palestinian sovereignty over the land and natural resources.

According to the [IRDNA assessment](#) noted earlier in this paper, Gaza's agriculture has suffered \$835 million in damages and \$1.3 billion in losses, leading to severe food shortages and dependency on aid. Commerce and industry have experienced \$5.9 billion in damages, with businesses and markets destroyed, worsening the economic downturn. Meanwhile, the financial sector has suffered \$14 million in damages, with nearly 98 percent of Gaza's banking infrastructure affected, thirty-three out of fifty-six bank branches completely destroyed and nineteen partially damaged, and only two of ninety-four ATMs remaining semi-functional. Assuming the end of Israeli military operations in Gaza, the renewed freedom of movement of goods and people, and a significant level of investment—and a population growth of 2.8 percent per year—the [UN Conference on Trade and Development](#) estimates that Gaza's GDP per capita could return to its 2022 level by 2050, to its 2006 level by 2057, and to its 1994 level by 2059.

Although an assessment of the reconstruction and development needs of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is necessary, such an assessment is beyond the scope of this paper. It is worth noting here, however, that Israel has been pursuing a policy of violence and destruction—of homes, businesses, and infrastructure, including that built with international donor funds—as it implements a de facto annexation of the territory and the further isolation and ethnic cleansing of East Jerusalem. A complete reconstruction and development plan for Palestine and the Palestinians needs to comprise the strengthening of the authority and control of the Palestinian state over the whole of the OPT. This will support Palestinian governance and connect the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and Gaza as a single social, economic, and political unit and addressing the needs of Palestinian refugees. The separated economic systems, which have arisen since Israel's severing of East Jerusalem from the rest of the OPT and its siege on Gaza in 2006, must be reunited: if they

are not, Palestinians will be forced to continue to depend on Israel, which will undermine the viability of Palestinian sovereignty, safety, and livelihoods.

Therefore, as stated in the 2025 report by the [Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute](#), it is pointless and harmful to analyze or plan for a Palestinian socioeconomic tomorrow that is decontextualized from (1) the political structures that have made the Palestinian economy dependent on the Israeli economy since 1967 and (2) the thirty-year-old processes that have created a matrix of economic and political control of Palestinian space, geography, and resources. Such processes contributed, by 2022, to an estimated [unemployment rate in Gaza](#) of 50 percent (72 percent for youth).

### ***Acknowledging the Economic Restraints of Israeli Rule Over the OPT***

In 2016, the [IMF reported](#) that real GDP per capita in Palestine would be 40 to 83 percent higher, depending on the methodology utilized, if there were no Israeli occupation. The economic effects of Israeli control over Palestinian territory are worsened by the separation between Gaza and the West Bank and, moreover, by the division of the latter into three major enclaves and several isolated areas. The [World Bank has called](#) the Palestinian economy an “archipelago economy,” which confines Palestinian companies and workers to isolated small segments. As such, any endurable reconstruction effort that aims to contribute to a peaceful solution in the region needs to overcome the restraining effects of the decades-long Israeli control over Palestinian land and maritime access, air space, subsoil, underground water, electromagnetic sphere, and population record, as well as the territorial limitations on Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

### ***Land Access to Gaza***

For several years, Israel has kept strict control of all the crossings for goods and pedestrians into and from Gaza. In addition, it has maintained a list of banned “dual-use” items—goods that it claims could have both civilian and military applications, which require special coordination for their entry to Gaza and which are often denied or delayed. Such [items are constantly changing](#) and have included medical equipment (thermometers, incubators, and crutches); construction materials (pipes, cement, paint, steel, and iron); and even certain household goods (coriander, cumin, biscuits), ropes for fishing, and musical instruments.

However, according to the Geneva Conventions, as the Occupying Power, Israel is not only legally obligated to refrain from restricting the entry of goods required to ensure normal life, but it must also actively guarantee their continuous supply. Thus, any adequate reconstruction plan should include ending the Israeli closure and restrictions in Gaza, in accordance with international law.

### ***Palestinian Territorial Waters***

Since 1967, Israel has exercised control over Gaza’s territorial waters. Under the Oslo Accords of the 1990s, Palestinian fishing was to be permitted up to twenty nautical miles offshore. However, [according to the OCHA](#), Israel has imposed a fluctuating limit between three and fifteen nautical

miles, enforced with the threat of military action. These restrictions have been subject to sudden and frequent changes; and fishermen who venture beyond the authorized zones risk confrontations with the Israeli navy, including detention, confiscation of boats, and, in some instances, live fire.

In September 2019, the State of Palestine declared its maritime boundaries in accordance with the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, establishing its territorial sea, contiguous zone, exclusive economic zone, and continental shelf. [Under that Convention](#), within the exclusive economic zone, Palestine has “sovereign rights for the purpose of exploring and exploiting, conserving and managing the natural resources, whether living or nonliving, of the waters superjacent to the seabed and of the seabed and its subsoil, and with regard to other activities for the economic exploitation and exploration of the zone, such as the production of energy from the water, currents and winds.”

A reconstruction plan should require an end to the Israeli use of maritime blockades, restrictive fishing zones, and enforced buffer areas as measures for collective punishment of Gaza’s population. Furthermore, the plan should recognize the Palestinian exclusive economic zone and the right of its inhabitants to benefit from, and manage and conserve, its maritime resources according to international law.

### ***Gas, Agriculture, and Minerals***

Gaza’s offshore natural gas reserves hold significant potential to bolster the Palestinian economy and address energy needs. However, while Israel has become a gas exporter, it has prevented Palestinians from tapping Gaza’s gas field, [Gaza Marine](#), for nearly [two decades](#), which forces Palestinians to rely on Israeli energy imports. On October 29, 2023, the Israeli Ministry of Energy illegally [awarded licenses](#) to six Israeli and international companies to explore for natural gas within Palestinian maritime areas under the aforementioned UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. Although the winning companies could find themselves guilty of the crime of pillage, and despite [several efforts by local law and human rights organizations](#) (for example, Adalah, Al Mezan, Al-Haq, and the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights), there is no evidence that the exploration within Palestinian maritime borders has ceased.

The control and restraint of Palestinian natural resources has also been an Israeli practice in the West Bank. As [reported](#) by the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, the expansion of a network of Israeli colonies and exclusive roads and a multilayered system of physical and administrative constraints for the Palestinian population—in contravention to the Fourth Geneva Convention—has meant further land confiscation. This has limited the availability of land for Palestinian agriculture and development, contributed to the displacement of Palestinian communities, and undermined the feasibility of a Palestinian state. Furthermore, Palestinians have faced stringent planning and building regulations, imposed by the entity that controls over 60 percent of the West Bank—the Israeli Army’s Civil Administration. Obtaining construction permits has been exceedingly difficult; between 2016 and 2018, only 2 percent of Palestinian permit applications were approved. Consequently, many Palestinians resorted to building without permits, rendering their structures susceptible to demolition. [From October 2023 to August 2024](#),

over 2,000 Palestinian structures were demolished, leading to the displacement of numerous families and exacerbating the housing crisis. In addition, Palestinians in the West Bank have often been denied access to natural resources, such as water, oil and gas, and minerals, while Israeli companies have regularly exploited and benefited from them, especially in the Jordan Valley and the Dead Sea area, in contravention of Article 55 of The Hague Convention of 1907, Article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, and Articles 8(2)(a)(iv) and 8(2)(b)(xvi) of the Rome Statute.

As such, building a sovereign Palestinian economy will require developing an internationally backed policy that sanctions (not only condemns) Israel's destruction of Palestinian housing and livelihoods and ends its [appropriation of Palestinian natural resources](#). Palestinians must have access to natural resources within the OPT, in accordance with international law.

## **Mechanisms for the Coordination of Gaza Reconstruction**

### ***The Palestine Reconstruction and Development Council (PRDC)***

After the 2014 Israeli war on Gaza, the United Nations set up the [Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism \(GRM\)](#) as a temporary agreement between the State of Palestine and the Government of Israel. Among other stipulations, the GRM regulated the entrance of construction materials and the approval of dual-use items. Far from being a temporary measure for a humanitarian crisis, the GRM gave the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories, or COGAT (Israel's military body dealing with Palestinian civilian affairs), a [disproportionate amount of power](#) over the approval of construction materials that [hindered progress on reconstruction](#) and [institutionalized the Israeli blockade](#).

Consistent with the principles undergirding this framework, the State must lead the reconstruction and development of its territory. Therefore, the Gaza Municipal Development and Lending Fund, which served as a mechanism to avoid involvement of the de facto authority in Gaza from playing a role in donor funded projects, should be included within the national Palestine Reconstruction and Development Council (PRDC) to be established by the prime minister of the technocratic government as discussed above. The PRDC should work with and supervise the National Humanitarian Coordination Task Force proposed in this paper, as well as establish a reconstruction working group—including professionals (engineers, economists, lawyers, and urban planners), local governments and municipalities, and NGOs—to coordinate the reconstruction of Palestine and identify catalytic projects to support the short-, medium-, and long-term reconstruction efforts requiring international donor funding. Such a model aims to boost the spaces for coordination and unification of development policies, while keeping and making use of the local knowledge and experiences in order to address the specific needs of each region. The PRDC and its bodies should also make use of public-private partnerships. The council would be subject to control, citizen oversight, and independent audit mechanisms.

In this vein, it is worth considering the institutional design and priorities of the “[Global Palestine, Connected Gaza](#)” report developed in 2016 by major Palestinian private sector entities. The report presents a comprehensive vision for regional development in Gaza, including a four-pillar

development strategy that integrates efforts around (1) urban development, (2) transportation, (3) energy and water, and (4) environment and open space. Additionally, as also proposed in this paper, the report promotes a single authority, tasked with overseeing all aspects of development with a streamlined approach; the integration of investment and development planning; and the implementation of strong accountability mechanisms.

But as the Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute [reported back in 2022](#), to be successful, any vision for reconstruction and sustainable development in Palestine has to support “the resilience of local actors, small producers, and small businesses through enhanced flexibility to manage crises, to meet the emerging needs of people, and to prevent them from being squeezed out by larger market actors and businesses.” And this support will require the use of legal and economic frameworks that lead to local job creation and restoration, as well as the provision of financial aid for small businesses.

### ***The Development Impact Bond***

Within this context, in addition to the traditional donation model and private investment efforts, the [development impact bond \(DIB\)](#) model could be applied to boost coordination and incentives of the involved parties, with measurable reconstruction goals, proper governance agreements, and coordination with Palestinian and international public institutions. The DIB model relies on the work of (1) outcome funders (multilateral organizations and donor states willing to allocate monetary resources for successful reconstruction outcomes); (2) local service providers (construction firms and NGOs capable of rebuilding infrastructure and creating jobs while engaging with local communities and authorities, which also serves the purpose of integrating the final beneficiaries in the planning and implementation of the reconstruction process); (3) private investors (those willing to provide initial capital that is recovered in the form of payments made by the outcome funders, as certain outcome milestones are achieved); and (4) external auditors (those who can develop independent audits and evaluations to verify completion of the DIB’s goals regarding infrastructure projects and employment creation and to ensure that the funds are used efficiently and in compliance with the agreements, which ultimately increases donor confidence and reduces opportunities for mismanagement).

Stakeholders of this model and the proposed PRDC would align their priorities for defining the bonds’ objectives (for example, kilometers of road reconstructed and number of housing units completed), which would be inserted in performance-based contracts. Once these contracts are agreed and signed, the private investment that funds reconstruction efforts would be disbursed. The accomplishment of the outcome milestones and the investment would be evaluated and audited by external entities, minimizing waste and corruption. And when the agreed milestones are achieved, funders of the outcomes would send the private investors their payments, released based on achieved milestones rather than projections.

Unlike traditional grants, where funds are spent regardless of outcomes, DIBs tie financing to measurable success. Thus, they contribute to optimizing resource distribution by streamlining aid

delivery, reducing financial leakage, and ensuring that resources are directed to effective interventions. In addition, job creation and vocational training are integrated into reconstruction efforts. Notably, use of a DIB model could boost the participation of Palestinian diaspora and Arab investors interested in contributing to the reconstruction efforts.

As mentioned in the previous section, the AHLC should be repurposed to support aid coordination for the State of Palestine while continuing to act as clearinghouse for international funding in support of the State and Gaza's reconstruction. The AHLC should create and assist the work of the Independent Auditing Commission proposed earlier in this paper to track and audit donor aid to the OPT. This commission should conduct management and financial audits, as well as impact assessments, ensuring that there is accountability and transparency around the budgets of all government (and PLO) entities and the financial statements of the involved organizations. Results of the audits should be reflected in public documents that are easily accessible and searchable online.

### **Reparations and Transitional Justice**

While third states may support humanitarian relief and reconstruction efforts in the OPT, reparations are the moral, legal, and financial responsibility of Israel. It must not be relieved of its responsibility under international humanitarian and criminal law. Reparations will be central to a lasting peace agreement. Making Israel bear the burden of its actions is critical to disincentivizing further wanton and indiscriminate attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure in the future.

This also underscores the need for transitional justice mechanisms to be built into the period between an armistice and a political resolution; international best practices should be applied to overcome the trauma of the occupation and violence inflicted upon Palestinians over decades of dispossession and occupation.

### **VI. Conclusion: A Palestinian State and Beyond**

This working paper concerns the transition period leading to a long-term, durable peace between Israelis and Palestinians. It offers a pragmatic and realistic way toward the ending of the current violence today. It affirms that the State of Palestine exists and that its territory, comprising Gaza and the West Bank (including East Jerusalem), is occupied by Israel. It then builds on this *de jure* two-state reality as a springboard for negotiations to a permanent settlement between the PLO, representing all Palestinians, and Israel. The paper analyzes the recent failing ceasefire arrangements in Gaza and proposes a remedial framework for an armistice between Israel and Palestine, during which a durable peace agreement can be reached. It asserts that the armistice must be holistic, encompassing the entire OPT, and be preserved and monitored by international peacekeeping forces under a UN mandate. The proposed framework refers to and incorporates the Arab Plan— informed by the State of Palestine, the recent Arab League communique and civil society—as a lever for regional peace and the long-term integration of Israel into the Middle East.

The framework also addresses the urgent humanitarian needs of Gaza, as well as transitional elements for the longer-term reconstruction of the OPT, with a focus on Palestinian agency and governance throughout the transition and beyond. It includes detailed suggestions for the necessary reform and renewal of representative Palestinian institutions during the transition, starting with the PLO, as well as a mechanism for the incorporation of all factions under the PLO's umbrella. It also suggests an invigorated and innovative form of citizen participation in decision-making by Palestinians inside and outside the OPT during this period; this engagement will enhance legitimacy and credibility until such time as full, fair, and free elections can be held for the PLO and the State of Palestine and a national convention can be held.

Throughout, the framework is grounded in the building blocks of international law and international best practice to enable the most optimal and pragmatic outcomes, without dictating what the parameters of that long-term peace agreement should be—two states, one state, or another mutual agreed configuration.

A durable, rights-based, and equitable outcome between Palestinians and Israelis is fundamental to international peace and security and regional stabilization. All other plans aimed at sidelining Palestinian agency or dividing the Palestinian population or territory will fail to achieve lasting peace and therefore are also bound to lead to further conflict and instability. The approach advanced in this paper calls for a holistic Israeli-Palestinian armistice for the transition, supported by UN-mandated peacekeepers that would allow necessary aid, reforms, and reconstruction to occur throughout the OPT and would ultimately enable constructive and representative negotiations toward a fair permanent settlement.

No doubt this plan of action will take active and unrelenting international engagement. Opportunities for such engagement do exist today where they have not for some time. The United States has made Saudi-Israeli normalization a foreign policy priority. And during the course of Israel's war on Gaza, Saudi Arabia has clarified its position on Israel's regional integration: it will not be possible without a sovereign Palestinian state. But since December 2022, Israel has been governed by an ultra-right-wing coalition that is bent on *de jure* annexation of the West Bank and possibly part of Gaza. Israel is not inclined to accept the Saudi government's return to the Arab Peace Initiative, most recently reaffirmed in the Arab League communique, which prioritizes an end of Israeli occupation and a just resolution of Palestinian displacement consistent with UN General Assembly Resolution 194. Egypt and Jordan have also made their position clear in the face of an American proposal to relocate Palestinians in Gaza to their respective countries. While the United States may have aimed to spur Arab states to devise a plan for Gaza of their own, having the world's superpower normalize Palestinian displacement is not only dangerous to Egyptian and Jordanian national security but also to what remains of the international rules-based order. Thus, key stakeholders from outside the region—the EU, UN, and the AHLC—have every incentive to take concerted action with states inside the region to resolve the Palestine-Israel conflict consistent with international legitimacy.

## Final Word: A National Convention and Permanent Peace

Rebuilding public trust and the social contract between Palestinians and their leadership is critical to a healthy, democratic State of Palestine. It is also critical for reaching a durable permanent peace settlement with Israel. Following the State and PNC elections, which should take place two years into the transition phase, a National Convention should be convened to reach consensus on the contours of a Palestinian-Israeli peace agreement.

The civic mechanisms proposed in this paper are designed to enable an inclusive national dialogue throughout the transition period, bringing together the widest spectrum of Palestinian civil society representatives from the OPT and the diaspora, and inclusive of women and youth and include representatives from CBOs, social movements, trade unions, the syndicates, academics, thought leaders, the private sector, people with special needs, and the many thousands of individuals now suffering from mobility and health challenges due to the Israeli bombardment and attacks since October 7, 2023. Special arrangements should be made to ensure the full participation of Palestinian residents of Gaza, the internally displaced, those people made refugees from the OPT recently, and refugee and diaspora communities worldwide. These populations, as well as the youth, have suffered most from the lack of representation and have expressed a strong sense of abandonment by the leadership.

These forms of civic interaction and expression (whether in person or virtually) are designed to offer Palestinians a space to rebuild their social cohesion and a sense of national identity. They should also offer an opportunity for frank and honest debate about the efficacy of various tools and strategies to achieve national self-determination and about how to redefine the concept of national identity as above and separate from party affiliation. By embracing the voices of the people, fostering grassroots dialogue, and prioritizing unity over factionalism, a foundation can be built for legitimate governance and a shared future.

## Recommendations

### To the Palestine Liberation Organization (and where appropriate, the State of Palestine)

1. Negotiate a Factions Agreement for Cooperation establishing modalities for implementing the Beijing Declaration with all Palestinian political factions (within one month). Essential terms should include:
  - a. the mandate of the unified national leadership, including for its consultation during the negotiation of an armistice agreement between the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel;
  - b. suspension of all armed activity during negotiations;
  - c. selection of a technocratic government based on consensus for the State of Palestine; and



- d. acknowledgment that the PLO is responsible for all foreign affairs and that the positions of PLO chair and president of the State of Palestine will continue to be held by the same individual until a peace agreement is signed with Israel.
2. Establish a unified national leadership structure as per the Beijing Declaration and the Factions Agreement. Repurpose the Palestinian Authority into the State of Palestine, clarify the relationship of the PLO and the State as principal and agent (within one month).
3. Coordinate with stakeholders—Arab states, the European Union, the United Nations, and the United States—to ensure that both reconstruction efforts and the political process for Palestinians are aligned with internationally accepted development frameworks and the Arab League Communiqué, and center Palestinian national priorities and development goals informed by civil society and local governments (immediately and on an ongoing basis). Adhere to the following principles:
  - a. **Principle 1:** The parties commit to diplomacy, international law, and agree to be held to account for violations.
  - b. **Principle 2:** Stakeholders recognize the State of Palestine as responsible for governance and security over the occupied Palestinian territories (OPT) supported by a UN-mandated international peacekeeping force.
  - c. **Principle 3:** All stakeholders reaffirm the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and the PLO agrees to take measures for institutional renewal and democratic reform while it negotiates with Israel for a comprehensive peace.
5. Implement a humanitarian framework that includes a multiphase response plan with donor aid tracked through a blockchain structure, and establish more effective mechanisms for local stakeholders to coordinate aid delivery in alignment with local needs, and empower community-led efforts (within two months).
6. Establish a National Humanitarian Coordination Task Force to review needs assessments, mobilize resources, and distribute aid; a Palestine Reconstruction and Development Council for coordinating the reconstruction process in Gaza and the West Bank as one territorial unit; a Transition Council, composed of the PLO, a Citizens Oversight Board and the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC) to ensure accountability; and an Independent Auditing Commission to ensure transparency and assess impact and outcomes (within two months).
7. Adopt preliminary measures following civil society consultations on how to increase the inclusivity and representative character of the Palestine National Council prior to elections;

and support civil society-led efforts to convene civic assemblies and national dialogues. Create mechanisms for civic engagement within state institutions including citizen advisory and oversight bodies (within two months and ongoing).

8. Hold Palestinian National Council and state parliamentary elections two years from the start of the transition phase (in two years).
9. Convene a National Convention prior to signing a peace agreement with Israel (after two years, following state and PLO elections).

### To Stakeholders

1. Encourage the signing of a Factions Agreement for Cooperation, Palestinian national reconciliation, and the creation of a technocratic government based on the consensus of Palestinian factions (immediately).
2. Recognize and/or encourage others to recognize the State of Palestine and take measures in support of the State's admission to the United Nations as a full member (immediately).
3. Repurpose the AHLC so that it fosters government and international NGO partnerships in support of the State of Palestine, and increase international donor engagement for emergency relief and long-term recovery and development (within two months).
4. Take steps to dispatch a UN-mandated international peacekeeping force to the OPT and encourage members of the Security Council to adopt a mandate for one (immediately).
5. Reject all efforts to undermine UN operations in the OPT, support the work of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees, and refuse to participate in mechanisms for the provision of humanitarian relief that contravenes principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence (immediately).
6. Provide robust funding and political support for the Palestinian-driven reconstruction plan for the OPT and reform of the PLO and state institutions; and leverage state budgetary support on its assumption of governance over Gaza and its commitment to democratic reforms and human rights (following the signing of the armistice agreement through to the end of the transition).
7. Take measures under national law and policy to end the land and maritime blockade, restrictive fishing zones, and no-go zones in Gaza; recognize an exclusive Palestinian

economic zone; and create a multinational contact group for the purpose of ending Israeli movement and access restrictions on Gaza and the rest of the OPT and ensuring that dual-use lists comport with international standards (immediately).

8. Establish a development impact bond instrument to facilitate reconstruction projects (following the armistice agreement through to the end of the transition).
9. Distinguish in all dealings between the State of Israel and the State of Palestine based on the internationally recognized pre-June 4, 1967 green line, comply with International Criminal Court arrest warrants, pursue war criminals under principles of universal jurisdiction, impose an arms embargo, and sanction war crimes (immediately and ongoing).

#### **To Palestinian civil society**

1. Explore modalities for convening a national dialogue, including through new technologies, to allow for greater participation of Palestinians in different geographic locations (immediately).
2. Convene citizen assemblies to provide ideas on how to facilitate PLO institutional renewal and expand the umbrella of the organization to be more inclusive of civil society and political factions (following the armistice agreement through to the end of the transition).
3. Participate in citizen advisory and oversight mechanisms, Palestinian National Council and State parliamentary elections, and the Palestinian national convention (following the armistice agreement through to the end of the transition).

## List of Contributors

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\* As this paper went to publication, Iriqat was appointed to the National and Central councils of the PLO.

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