

[Israel-Hamas war](#)

Israel unveils plan for complete postwar control of Gaza



Benjamin Netanyahu's document on vision for Palestinian state will be at odds with US aims

Mehul Srivastava and **Neri Zilber** in Tel Aviv and **Heba Saleh** in Cairo 3 HOURS AGO

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has finally unveiled Israel's plans for Gaza after hostilities end in the enclave, submitting to his war cabinet a formal proposal that directly contradicts the objectives of the US.

The one-page document, released overnight by his office, makes no mention of any role for the Palestinian Authority, the West Bank-based rival to Hamas that the Biden administration wants to see take over control, and rejects unilateral international steps towards recognition of a Palestinian state.

It also foresees a sizeable security buffer within the besieged enclave, an outcome the US has made clear it opposes.

While vaguely worded, and appealing to his domestic rightwing political base, the document entitled "The Day After Hamas Principles" is the first official distillation of Netanyahu's prior statements on the issue. It is not clear if the war cabinet was asked to vote on it.

Dividing Gaza's future into near, medium and long-term phases, it makes clear that Israel will continue its long-running blockade of the territory, and intends to remain involved in civilian issues, from how the local police operate and what the schools and mosques teach in the predominantly Sunni Muslim territory.





A Palestinian woman gestures amid the rubble of the al-Faruq mosque following an Israeli air strike in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip © Said Khatib/AFP/Getty Images

In practice, it could see a full-scale resumption of Israel's control of the enclave and its 2.3mn population, combining elements of its decades-long occupation with the punishing blockade that was instituted two years after the 2005 disengagement, when the Israeli military pulled out of Gaza.

The US, Israel's closest ally, and the EU have been pushing a different postwar plan. It envisages the relatively secular Palestinian Authority, headed by President Mahmoud Abbas, taking over control, nearly two decades after it was ousted by the Islamist [Hamas movement](#) , setting the grounds for talks that would lead to the establishment of a Palestinian state.

Netanyahu released the plan around the visit to Israel of Brett McGurk, the US Middle East envoy. The US administration has yet to publicly comment on the document.

Israel's medium-term plans will only come into play after it declares victory in its [military campaign against Hamas](#) and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, a smaller Iran-backed militant group, is over — a process that could still take many months.

The operation has already claimed the lives of at least 29,000 Palestinians, most of them women and children, according to local health authorities, and the widescale destruction of Gaza's civilian infrastructure. The total death toll is estimated to be far higher, with thousands buried in the rubble.

Israel launched its war, now in its fourth month, after Hamas mounted a cross-border raid on October 7, killing 1,200 people and taking more than 240 hostages, according to Israeli authorities.

In the medium term, Israel will build a "security area" within the Gaza Strip, running along its entire border. It also intends to build an over- and underground "security flank" or barrier along its border with Egypt to prevent weapons smuggling, and enforce land, sea and air control over the strip, the document said.

Israel will only allow weapons required "to maintain public order", an opaque reference to a police force that has largely vanished after being targeted by Israeli air strikes, resulting in a [chaotic law and order situation](#) that has forced humanitarian organisations to curtail aid deliveries.

It said that in the civilian sphere, Israel will only allow “local actors with management experience” to enforce public order, and that this undefined group of people “will not be identified with states or bodies that support terror, and will not receive salaries from them.” The latter reference is a rightwing Israeli catchphrase for the PA, the impoverished body set up by the 1993 Oslo peace accords to administer civilian life in pockets of the occupied territories.

Any reconstruction of the devastated Gaza Strip will be delayed to an unnamed date, when Israel considers its military objectives to be completed.

That indefinitely delays plans for the return of more than 1mn Palestinians who have been displaced from the north of the Gaza Strip, and are seeking shelter in the south, near the Rafah border crossing, many sleeping in sprawling tent cities.

The document said Israel intends to choose who is allowed to lead Gaza’s reconstruction, and will embark on a “comprehensive deradicalisation programme in all religious education and social institutions in the Gaza Strip, done with involvement and assistance of Arab states”.

Israel will also work to close the 75-year-old UNRWA, the primary UN relief agency for some 5mn Palestinians which employs about 13,000 people in Gaza, and replace them with “responsible international aid organisations”. Israel has accused at least a dozen [UNRWA employees of taking part in the October 7 raid](#), and claims more than a tenth of its employees are members of either Hamas or the PiJ.

“Calls by Israel for UNRWA’s closure are not about the agency’s neutrality,” Philippe Lazzarini, the UNRWA commissioner-general, said in a letter to the UN General Assembly released on Friday. “Instead, they are about changing the long-standing political parameters for peace in the occupied Palestinian territory.”

Lazzarini said Israel had submitted to the UN two weeks before the October 7 attacks a map that had included “a future Israel that encompassed all of Palestine”, and that UNRWA’s mandate “is an obstacle to that map becoming a reality”.

In the long term, the document rejects any internationally imposed solution, including the prospect of the recognition of a Palestinian state, but leaves open the possibility of direct negotiations for “a final status agreement”.

That is how Israel refers to the long-dormant peace talks sparked by the Oslo accords, and mothballed by Netanyahu for more than a decade.

“Israel utterly rejects international diktats in the matter of a final status arrangement with the Palestinians,” the document said. “Such an arrangement will only be reached in direct negotiations between the sides without preconditions.”

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