

**Israel-Hamas war**

## Europe working with Arab states on alternative to Trump's Gaza plan

Foreign ministers of Germany, France, UK and Italy hold talks with key Arab states on future of enclave



Palestinian women and children stand outside their tents among the rubble of destroyed buildings in Jabalia in northern Gaza © Mohammed Saber/EPA-EFE/Shutterstock

**Andrew England** in London 5 HOURS AGO

European states are working with Arab allies to urgently devise a Gaza plan to present to Donald Trump as an alternative to his proposal for the strip to be emptied of Palestinians and taken over by the US.

The US president's idea to clear out the war-shattered Palestinian territory and turn it into the "Riviera of the Middle East" has stunned and alarmed Arab and European states.

But the initiative has also injected fresh momentum into months of faltering discussions about how Gaza should be governed and secured once Israel's 15-month war with Hamas ends.

French President Emmanuel Macron told the Financial Times that efforts to oppose Trump's plan would only be "credible if we offer something else that is smarter".

"This is what we need to move forward on. There are several very credible options," he added.

The foreign ministers of Germany, France, the UK and Italy will hold talks on the crisis at the Munich security conference with key Arab states, a European diplomat said. The US is also due to participate, but it is not clear at what level and the focus

...but the US is also due to participate, but it is not clear at what level and the focus will be on how the Arabs and Europeans can work together on a "better plan".

"The Palestinians and the Arabs need to come up with a middle way where they run Gaza, not the US and not Israel," said a European official. "That's the gap that needs to be filled, and I think the Europeans will work with the Arabs, both on the funding and the presentation of the plans. That's what we are working on now."





Egypt this week announced that it was working on a plan for the reconstruction of Gaza, much of which has been reduced to wasteland by Israel's bombardment of the strip since Hamas's October 7, 2023 attack.

Cairo is coordinating with other Arab states, particularly Saudi Arabia and Jordan, in the hope that it can prove to Trump that the strip can be rebuilt without forcing its 2.2mn population out of the enclave.

Trump has urged Egypt and Jordan to accept Palestinians from Gaza, which they have both vehemently rejected. They are loath to be seen as complicit in the forced displacement of Palestinians, as well as fearful that it would threaten regional stability and their own security.

Before any reconstruction could begin, Arab states and the Palestinians need to agree on a plan for an administrative structure that ensures Hamas does not control the strip, Arab and European diplomats said.



Nearly 60% of buildings in Gaza are estimated to have been damaged by the war

Likely building damage or destruction between Oct 12 2023 and Jan 11 2025\*





Sources: Damage analysis of Sentinel-1 satellite data by Corey Scher of CUNY Graduate Center and Jamon Van Den Hoek of Oregon State University; Microsoft building footprints; OpenStreetMap • \*Latest available damage data

© FT

The idea being pushed by Egypt and other Arab states involves establishing a governing committee made up of Palestinians that are not affiliated to any factions, but is backed by the Palestinian Authority, the body that administers parts of the occupied West Bank.

The security component is still being discussed but is likely to include the existing police force in Gaza, PA personnel that remained in the strip after Hamas took control of it in 2007 following an internal battle with rival faction Fatah, and potential reinforcements from the West Bank.

The PA, which is dominated by Fatah, could then invite regional states to participate in a security force.

An Arab official said a plan was expected to be presented at a summit in Riyadh scheduled for later this month.

“After what Trump said, the whole region is mobilising and now Europe is mobilising and trying to find a solution,” said the official. “There’s an additional sense of urgency with everybody.”

The notion of a regional force deploying in Gaza was promoted by the Biden administration. But there has never been clarity about which states would be willing to send forces.

Saudi Arabia, for example, would only consider participating after the establishment of a Palestinian state. At a minimum this would require the US and Israel to formally recognise a state, that includes Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and a sovereign Palestinian government, the Arab official said.

There is also huge scepticism about whether Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s far-right government would accept any Arab plan for Gaza.

Netanyahu has repeatedly rejected permanently ending the war, ruled out concessions to the Palestinians or any moves towards the establishment of a Palestinian state. He has also insisted that Israel would not allow the western-backed PA to run Gaza.

Diplomats fear Netanyahu and his far-right allies have been emboldened by Trump’s pronouncements on Gaza — the US president announced his plan to take over the strip while hosting Netanyahu at the White House.

Arab diplomats say there is additional urgency as they fear a fragile hostage-for-ceasefire deal could unravel.

The damage to infrastructure is estimated to be about \$30bn, according to an assessment conducted by the World Bank, the EU and the UN, with \$16bn of destruction just in the housing sector.

-----  
*Additional reporting by Leila Abboud and Ben Hall in Paris; cartography by [Aditi Bhandari](#)*

---

[Copyright](#) The Financial Times Limited 2025. All rights reserved.

---

## **Follow the topics in this article**

**Middle Eastern politics & society**

**Israel-Hamas war**

**US foreign policy**

**European Union**

**Fatah**