

Israel-Hamas war

Israel insists on keeping troops in Gaza buffer zones after any peace

Defence minister Israel Katz says military 'is not evacuating areas that have been cleared and seized'



North Gaza: Israel has seized extensive land along the border of the enclave to create a buffer zone © Reuters

James Shotter in Jerusalem

Published APR 16 2025

Israeli troops will remain in the buffer zones they have created in Gaza even after any end to the war with Hamas, Israel's defence minister said on Wednesday, in remarks that could complicate efforts to revive a truce in the enclave.

Israel broke a two-month-old ceasefire with the Palestinian militant group last month, with troops resuming their [offensive](#), seizing new tracts of land across the enclave, and again displacing hundreds of thousands of residents.

The zones Israel now holds include extensive land along Gaza's borders, as well as the so-called Netzarim Corridor that separates the north and south, and a new buffer zone in the south. Altogether, they account for 30 per cent of Gazan territory, according to the Israeli military.

In setting out what he said was "Israel's policy in Gaza", Israel Katz said that "unlike in the past, the [Israeli military] is not evacuating areas that have been cleared and seized".

"The IDF will remain in the security zones as a buffer between the enemy and the communities in any temporary or permanent situation in Gaza," he added, "as in Lebanon and Syria" — where Israel has also recently seized territory.

Katz's comments, which also reiterated Israel's insistence that "the disarmament of Hamas and the demilitarisation of Gaza" be conditions for an end to the [war](#), underscored the significant gaps between Israel and [Hamas](#), as mediators try to revive the truce.

Hamas has repeatedly insisted Israeli forces must withdraw as part of any permanent end to hostilities, and has resisted calls to disarm. It reiterated that position after Katz's announcement.

Katz's intervention is the latest toughening of Israel's approach since it restarted the war last month, and cut off supplies of food, fuel, medicine and humanitarian aid to the 2.2mn people living in the strip.

Israeli officials argue their stance is the only way to force Hamas to capitulate and free the 59 hostages — fewer than half of whom are still thought to be alive — it holds in Gaza.

However, UN officials and aid groups have warned the [renewed fighting](#) and full-on siege have intensified catastrophic humanitarian conditions.

Israel's Gaza offensive has killed more than 51,000 people, according to Palestinian officials, as well as displacing most of the inhabitants — many several times — and reducing much of it to rubble.

Israel launched the offensive in response to Hamas's October 7 2023 attack on Israel, when militants killed 1,200 people, according to Israeli officials, and took 250 hostage.

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

Follow the topics in this article

Middle Eastern politics & society

Israel-Hamas war

Israel Defense Forces

Israel Katz

James Shotter

