

# In Gaza, my homeland is being transformed into an engineering project

Rapidly turning Gaza into a managerial question is a form of amnesty. The goal is not to restore Palestinian agency but to end the emergency in the minds of outsiders.

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Amir Cohen/Reuters

Israeli construction machineries operate inside Gaza, as seen in 2025.

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For two years, Gaza has been a place of mass death, starvation, disappearances, attempted erasure, genocide. Now, almost without warning, it is being transformed, rhetorically, into a management problem. Plans have appeared. Phase one has transitioned into phase two. Committees have been established. A future is being presented, fully formed and designed, while the core questions of rights and accountability are swept under the rug as inconvenient complications.

I'm writing this from Europe while my family is still in Gaza. From here, I watch the West switch registers, from horror to "stabilisation", from mourning to "governance", from humanitarian catastrophe to "investment opportunity". Talking to my family in Gaza, I hear a different register entirely: a people trying to survive and trying to understand what kind of future is being prepared for them without their consent.

This is the true meaning of the new "Board of Peace". The public debate has treated the board as a geopolitical spectacle, an institution competing with the UN, an eccentric Trump-era initiative, a diplomatic provocation. That frame is a distraction. The world discusses geopolitics while my homeland is converted into an engineering project.

A people have rights, a project has deliverables.

Treating Gaza as an engineering project is easier than acknowledging that Palestinians in Gaza are a people: a people have rights, a project has deliverables; a people demand accountability, a project demands efficiency; a people cannot be governed without consent, a project can be

administered by appointment.

## Colonisation by committee

The Board of Peace is being put forward as an international mechanism for resolving conflicts, initially linked to Gaza. There's no mention of Israel, because apparently Gaza is the problem that needs to be solved, not the coloniser.

At the international level, there are plenty of issues with the board's structure that raise alarm bells about what kind of "order" its architects are trying to build. But, when it comes to Gaza specifically, the White House and its partners have conjured a 15-member [Palestinian technocratic committee](#) that is supposed to administer Gaza under the board's umbrella during a so-called transitional period. Ali Shaath, a former deputy minister in the Palestinian authority, has been tapped as its head.

This committee, led by Shaath, is supposed to give the board legitimacy. But labelling it "technocratic" does not mean it is apolitical. It means it is depoliticised. It means Gaza is being treated as a problem of administration and service delivery rather than as a political question of rights, sovereignty, representation, accountability, and, most importantly, the right of return.

Expertise is not legitimacy. Legitimacy comes from accountability.

Shaath's authority is not derived from elections, popular consultation, or a transparent process rooted in Gaza's public life. It is derived from appointment within an externally designed framework. That matters because expertise is not legitimacy. Legitimacy comes from accountability to a population that can grant or withdraw consent. Gaza, after two years of devastation and amid continued external control, has no meaningful mechanism for conferring such consent on a transitional committee installed from above, and by above I mean by those that have colonised Gaza and their biggest international supporter.

At a functional level, a committee that does not control borders, movement, security, and access cannot govern in any meaningful sense. It can administer within constraints set by others. That is not self-rule; it is delegated management.

The structure turns Palestinian administrators into implementers while decision-making authority remains elsewhere. And because the committee is framed as Palestinian, the broader project can claim local ownership without surrendering control. This type of mechanism has a long history in colonial and post-colonial contexts: a local face is installed to perform governance so that the true authors of the policy can claim distance from its consequences. It is not a conspiracy; it is a technique of power.

## **Slow motion dispossession**

The most revealing aspect of what the Board of Peace has in store for Gaza is what is being left out. When the international system pivots from mass atrocity to “the day after”, it is not merely changing the focus. It is changing the moral and legal posture. It is telling the world, implicitly, that there will be no consequential accounting for what has happened and that the scale of killing, destruction, and displacement can be absorbed into the background as long as a new administrative narrative takes over.

The speed at which this is being done matters: Rapidly turning Gaza into a managerial question is a form of amnesty. The goal is not to restore Palestinian agency but to end the emergency in the minds of outsiders. It is a mechanism to create psychological and diplomatic closure for those not directly affected so everyone can move on – everyone, except for Palestinians.

Once a committee exists, once investors are invited, Western audiences can believe that the catastrophe has entered a solvable stage. The crimes become past tense, even when their consequences remain in the present. For those inside of Gaza, the shift is brutal. It is the sensation of watching the world tidy up a crime scene while your family is still living inside the

ruins and while the crimes still continue.

Pretty much every day, Israel continues to bomb Gaza and kill Palestinians. It is allowing the Rafah border crossing to open, which is being presented publicly as a sign of progress. But movement will still be extremely restricted. Israel is insisting that [three times](#) as many Palestinians be allowed to leave Gaza each day than are allowed to return. It is no secret that Israel wants to force Palestinians to leave Gaza. That has not changed.

By facilitating the exit of Palestinians from Gaza and restricting their return, Israel can slowly drain the territory under the guise of allowing humanitarian movement, after creating the conditions to make it unlivable. It can convert displacement into policy without ever naming it as such.

This is why the shift towards administrative talk is so dangerous: It is taking place as mechanisms are being built to entrench permanent demographic change. A committee can administer Gaza, but if people are encouraged to leave and prevented from returning, administration becomes wallpaper covering up dispossession.

## **Laundering violence through language**

The redevelopment vision circulating alongside the Board of Peace makes the underlying logic even clearer. Donald Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner has [pitched](#) a plan for a "New Gaza", with a "New Rafah" built on the ruins of the city Israel erased as a starting point.

This comes after various proposals for "planned communities" in the south have been put forward over the course of more than a year – the first one of which the UAE is [reportedly](#) planning to bankroll. These blueprints for supposed model neighbourhoods include features such as biometric surveillance and security vetting. Former Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert [called](#) them what they are: plans for concentration camps.

Whether every element of the various proposals becomes reality is less

important than what they reveal: Gaza is being imagined as a controlled development zone in which the population is managed through surveillance and vetting, rather than empowered through rights and sovereignty. The population is an inconvenience and a liability that must be dealt with as lucrative real estate projects are pushed forward for the benefit of outsiders.

This is what it means to treat Gaza like an engineering project. The language of investment and planning is used to launder the violence that made this “blank slate” possible. Destruction is treated as unfortunate history, and the future is marketed as opportunity. The central political questions are treated as distractions: Who owns the land? Who will be allowed to return? What happens to property, memory, and the right to rebuild one’s own home? What accountability and recompense exists for the devastation that created the so-called opportunity?

A reconstruction plan that does not begin with rights becomes a mechanism of erasure. It rebuilds infrastructure while leaving the political injury intact. It produces a modernised form of containment that can be sold as progress.

Kushner has been given a central role in all of this despite having exactly zero political legitimacy of any sort, particularly among Palestinians. He is also not even a neutral businessman. The Kushner family foundation has [donated](#) money to organisations connected to Israeli settlements in the illegally occupied West Bank.

The settlement project is, at its core, a project of territorial acquisition and demographic engineering under the language of security. His role reveals what we can now expect to see as Gaza is framed as a development project rather than a political community with enforceable rights.

## **The next phase of domination**

Internationally, the Board of Peace has not been [received](#) as a fait accompli. The European Union and many of its member states have

expressed concerns. But even those are revealing in terms of what they emphasise and what they overlook.

European reservations largely focus on the board's governance structure, compatibility with EU law, and the apparent attempt to usurp the role of the UN. These concerns matter, but they are not at the heart of Gaza's predicament, which is that its future is being plotted without the consent of its inhabitants. When it comes to Gaza's future being treated as a development project, managed by outsiders with dubious or outright hostile intentions, European countries and institutions are apparently unconcerned.

For people in Gaza, however, the recent past is not an inconvenience that can be glossed over. It is an ongoing condition. The dead are not statistics; they are painful absences in families. The missing are not an administrative category; they are people whose bodies have not been recovered and whose stories have no closure. The imprisoned are not a footnote; they are lives suspended in a [system of horrific abuse](#).

When the world shifts so quickly into talk of redevelopment, it is not merely changing the subject. It is demonstrating that the cost of Palestinian suffering is politically absorbable. This is why the Board of Peace is not just controversial. It is structurally violent. It is a mechanism that takes catastrophe as given and begins planning around it instead of demanding justice for it. It treats a crime as a starting point for investment.

Management is psychologically and politically easier than justice.

This architecture will lead to a Gaza that is rebuilt as a space managed for the benefit of people who are not from there. It leads to a governance model in which Palestinian administrators manage services while sovereignty remains external. It leads to "stabilisation" metrics replacing rights. It leads to surveillance and vetting becoming normal conditions of habitation. It leads to movement policies that encourage exit and obstruct return, slowly converting displacement into permanent removal.

And because the board is framed as expandable, it leads to something larger: Gaza becomes a prototype for a new international colonial method of dealing with unwanted populations, not through the language of formal annexation or explicit ethnic cleansing, but through layers of administration, investment, and control – a polished form of domination designed to look like peace.

Management is psychologically and politically easier than justice. But from Gaza, the demand remains stubbornly political: safety, rights, return, accountability. Anything built without these is not peace. It is the next phase of dispossession, made clean, made modern, made presentable.

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