



PODCAST | POLITICS

# Gaza Ceasefire Challenges & Future Scenarios in Palestine

By: Yara Hawari, Abdaljawad Omar, Al-Shabaka: The Palestinian Policy Network · February, 2025

*The transcript below has been lightly edited for brevity and clarity.*

## **Yumna Patel 1:02**

We are entering the fourth week of the ceasefire agreement in Gaza. People have been holding their breath since day one, unsure whether the ceasefire would hold. But it seems to be at its most fragile right now. Hamas recently announced that it would not release the remaining Israeli captives due to Israeli violations of the ceasefire agreement, particularly regarding the number of fuel trucks and the entry of tents and other reconstruction materials into Gaza. These supplies are supposed to be allowed in daily.

Israel's violation of the ceasefire protocols comes just as negotiations for phase two were supposed to take place. None of this feels like a coincidence. The dominoes seem to be falling in the wake of Netanyahu's visit to the U.S. I want to pose this first question to both of you: What do you make of these latest developments?

Yara, let's start with you.

## **Yara Hawari 2:26**

When the ceasefire deal was announced, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu assured his ministers that the deal would never reach phase two. He implied that either the



agreement would remain in phase one indefinitely or that he would return to war.

So it's not surprising that he has stalled at this point. I believe it's deliberate that Israel has violated the terms of the ceasefire.

In terms of violations, we're talking about less than half of the stipulated aid trucks entering Gaza. The same goes for fuel trucks, which are essential for hospitals, bakeries, and other services. Dozens of Palestinians have been killed by Israeli forces since the ceasefire began.

While the carpet bombing has halted, the genocide is still very much underway. Netanyahu promised his ministers from the start that he would stall towards the end of phase one. There is absolutely no good faith on the Israeli side to see the ceasefire through.

Now, President Trump has given Israel the green light to resume its war by Saturday if all the hostages are not returned. Not only is Trump derailing the ceasefire timeline, but he is also ignoring the fact that Israel has already violated the agreement.

Of course, this is a talking point being parroted by Western mainstream media. I haven't seen any breakdown in mainstream outlets detailing the multiple ways Israel has violated the ceasefire.

## **Yumna 4:02**

That's an interesting point, and I'd like to ask Abdaljawad to expand on it. Yara pointed out that from the beginning, Netanyahu assured his government that phase two of the ceasefire wasn't going to happen.

So in a sense, was this predictable? Do you think Netanyahu's meeting with Trump and the statements they made at the press conference in Washington emboldened him to sabotage the ceasefire?



## **Abdaljawad Omar 4:41**

Yes, of course. Having someone like Trump in the White House — someone who openly talks about ideas like ethnic cleansing in Gaza — energizes Netanyahu's right-wing base. This incentivizes Israel to undermine the ceasefire, strip it of its substance, and move toward re-engagement in war.

But we should also remember that this isn't new. Historically, Israel has not honored agreements with the Palestinians, whether it's the Oslo Accords or Camp David. It has always found ways to make these agreements symbolic while emptying them of real content in daily implementation.

This is a long-standing tendency within Israeli settler colonialism. Agreements are temporary — used to achieve specific goals. In this case, Israel wanted its prisoners back. Now, it is pursuing its own political and military objectives in Gaza, which may include ethnic cleansing and removing as much of Gaza's population as possible. This is how Israel operates. It's not new.

## **Yumna Patel 5:45**

You describe this as part of Israel's playbook. As you mentioned, we're also seeing a total failure of mainstream Western media to frame this story properly. Most headlines and reports would suggest that Hamas is breaking the ceasefire and that Israel has no choice but to resume its war. This has been the narrative throughout history — that Palestinians simply can't accept or uphold a deal, and Israel is left with no other option.

It's extremely frustrating to see this pattern play out yet again, especially under such extreme circumstances. The people of Gaza have survived 16 months of genocide and now face the threat of returning to that reality.

I just can't believe we're watching this same scenario unfold yet again.



## **Abdaljawad Omar 7:01**

Yes, and regarding mainstream media, we've seen them sanitize crimes like ethnic cleansing or genocide through their language. It goes even deeper than just biased framing.

One other point to keep in mind is that Biden also proposed a "humanitarian corridor" for Palestinians to leave Gaza. This was just a different framing of the same policy objective. While Democrats use humanitarian discourse, Trump takes a more overt approach, suggesting Gaza be turned into a commodity, a "Riviera of the Middle East."

And I don't know if you agree, but it seemed like there was also a sleight of hand against Netanyahu when the U.S. proposed taking control of Gaza rather than Israel itself.

So he wasn't backing Israel to take Gaza as much as the Americans doing it. So there is that tension between Netanyahu and Trump that still operates on some level. It's that we'll take over the ethnic cleansing, we'll turn Gaza, and Gaza will be an American territory in the Middle East. I thought that was interesting.

## **Yara Hawari 8:08**

Yeah, you notice that in the press conference when Trump comes out with his plan for U.S. ownership over Gaza. Netanyahu tries to hide it, but if you look very closely, you can see that Netanyahu looks surprised. And then when he's asked about it, his response is that it's an interesting proposal. So I think, in reality, it's not going to happen. It's not something that the Israelis want to happen. The Israelis want it [Gaza] for themselves.

But interestingly, since that press conference, it has evolved from a U.S. takeover to Trump's own personal takeover. He said that he personally will own Gaza, and his administration, or at least some members in his administration, are trying to



backtrack on that because they certainly don't want boots on the ground in Gaza. That's something that Trump promised throughout his campaign — that the U.S. would no longer be involved in these kinds of conflicts.

It will be interesting to see how this plays out. But in all of this, what has been absent is Palestinian agency. Gaza is being talked about as if this is inevitable, as if the people there have not survived 15 months of carpet bombing and have not been absolutely determined and resolute to stay on their land.

## **Yumna Patel 9:21**

That's something that has been underestimated this entire past year and a half. There was this expectation that after all these months of bombardment and genocide, the Palestinians in Gaza, in particular, would just give up and submit. Clearly, we've seen that is not the case. In the aftermath of those very first days of the ceasefire and the images that we saw, whether it was of fighters from the Al-Qassam Brigades showing up in huge numbers in the middle of Gaza City, or tens of thousands of Palestinians marching and returning back to the north, it was very clear that Israel's objective of forcing Palestinians to submit to its will once again didn't work.

It seems like there are two scenarios in front of us right now. One in which the ceasefire crumbles and Israel uses whatever it wants as a pretense to return to its active genocide in Gaza. Or, the ceasefire not only holds temporarily, but we see phase 1, 2, and 3 come to fruition. In both of those scenarios, the question at hand remains: what does the future of Gaza look like? Before we dig a bit deeper into that question of the future, I think the question that is on everyone's mind is: Given the present conditions, how does this play out? What does the near future look like in Gaza?

## **Abdaljawad Omar 11:30**



I think that one of the fundamental issues at stake for Hamas now — and this is why it announced on Sunday that it will not release prisoners on Saturday — is that it's allowing room for negotiations.

It's allowing for some sort of entry of vital elements that would sustain people's ability to live, like caravans, fuel, and other items that Israel has been reluctant to allow into Gaza, despite the fact that they're part of the agreement.

But at the same time, from the perspective of the Palestinian resistance, they have one card, which is the Israeli prisoners they hold captive. And they are not going to easily give in and release these prisoners, thereby freeing the Israeli policymakers from the pressure that comes with maintaining this situation. So, in many instances, what we're seeing now, to put it in a nutshell, is negotiations on expanding the negotiations.

This is the strategy that the Palestinian resistance is trying to push on those who are brokering the agreement — the Americans, the Israelis, the Qataris, the Egyptians. They're trying to force their hand and ensure that negotiations don't stop at 42 days. And you should think about it: if Israel is going back to war, why should they release more prisoners?

If Israel is going back to war, shouldn't they keep these cards close? This is the strategy: to push Israel and the negotiators into a second and third phase, ensuring that a prisoner exchange agreement happens. This could risk the fragility of the situation. Israel has ways to respond to this resistance, but it also reveals the extent to which Israel is willing to risk returning to war.

## **Yara Hawari 13:34**

Right now, if we consider the scenario that the ceasefire crumbles, presumably, we'll see a return to Israeli bombardments. This will be catastrophic for Palestinians in Gaza, who have already been through so much. They will literally



be bombing what is already destroyed- bombing rubble. And I don't think we can take for granted what kind of effect that will have on Palestinians in Gaza.

I also think it's important to look at the Israeli public and how they will respond in this scenario. Netanyahu's popularity is plummeting. It's gone through ebbs and flows throughout the genocide, but the ceasefire deal has had a large impact on how he is viewed in Israeli society.

For the far right, and I don't particularly like that term to describe Israeli society because most are fascists, he's seen as someone who has capitulated and not come through on what was promised, which is the destruction of Hamas' military capabilities. For others, particularly the families of the hostages, they're really angry because they think the ceasefire could have been achieved at the very beginning. And they're not wrong.

Another important element is the fatigue of the Israeli army and soldiers. Of course, we've all seen videos of soldiers boasting and bragging about committing war crimes. But we don't see the other side – the heavily censored information that within the army ranks, morale is low, there are a lot of injuries, and there is general fatigue.

All of this plays into the scenario of returning to the war, returning to genocide. It's a crucial factor that we can't overlook.

Now, the other scenario is that the ceasefire holds, goes through all of its phases, and eventually leads to a reconstruction process. Over the last year, we've seen many nefarious plans and projects for reconstruction — nearly all without Palestinian input. The ones with Palestinian input have been a few Palestinian capitalists, not from Gaza. So, in both of these scenarios, things do not look good for Palestinians in Gaza. But I think there are other scenarios also worth considering.



## **Abdaljawad Omar 16:06**

There's still a struggle to allow this temporary ceasefire to become more permanent.

This is the current strategy of the Palestinian resistance. Israel could return to war but not necessarily invade; it could rely on air power instead. So, Israel still has leverage over what form of reconstruction happens in Gaza, what it allows in and out.

From the perspective of Palestinians and the current leadership or resistance, their objectives are clear: first, ensuring a longer-term ceasefire; second, reconstruction; and third, making sure that the destruction of Gaza does not lead to its emptying. That in itself is a political objective.

Not because Palestinians will not survive or insist on remaining on their land, but because if Israel prevents Gaza from being rebuilt, it strengthens the claim that Gaza can be ethnically cleansed.

Gaza is destroyed, but the political objective is to reconstruct it, or at least, in the near term, to ensure that as many essential resources as possible are available. Infrastructure, hospitals, universities – everything needed for people to remain steadfast, stay in Gaza, and start rebuilding their lives after the devastation.

There's a lot of work to be done on that front. That's why this is such a critical phase. The Palestinian resistance has chosen this moment after successfully removing the Netzarim corridor and allowing people from the south to move back north. Now, it is pushing Israeli mediators to implement the second and third phases of the agreement, leading to a wider prisoner exchange. At the same time, Israel is backed into a corner — if it wants its prisoners back, it will have to abide by the terms stipulated in January.

## **Yumna Patel 18:20**





Right, and in this hopeful scenario, the ceasefire holds, and reconstruction begins. But rebuilding Gaza is a monumental task. Some estimates say it will take more than a decade just to clear the rubble. And beyond that, as you mentioned, we're talking about rebuilding hospitals, universities, and the entire infrastructure of a society.

Let's say, for argument's sake, that this happens — the ceasefire holds, and Gaza is allowed to rebuild. But as that unfolds, a power struggle is inevitable. In reality, it's already happening. Trump has said he wants to "own" Gaza and turn it into a "Riviera," whatever that means. Netanyahu and the Israelis have made their position clear: they claim they want Hamas gone, but the reality is they want all Palestinians gone. They want to expand their settler colony and take more land.

What's less apparent — and what the general public has less information on — is where different Palestinian political factions stand. To start, I want to ask about Hamas and their vision. There's a global conversation about what Israel and the U.S. plan to do, but little discussion about what Palestinians themselves will do.

Hamas is still very much present — it hasn't been eliminated, despite Israel's stated aim. Given that reality, how would you describe Hamas's level of control and power after 16 months of genocide? What does Hamas envision for post-war Gaza based on its statements and the information available?

## **Abdaljawad Omar 21:15**

The best-case scenario for Hamas is proving that Israel could not achieve its goal of eliminating them through war. If Israel couldn't defeat Hamas militarily, it won't be able to do so politically. So, in a post-war scenario, Hamas will remain a resistance movement within Gaza.

There are two possible paths. One is that Hamas retains governance. The other is that it allows a different governing body to take control while still maintaining



leverage over matters of war and peace. This would mean separating governance from resistance — allowing a technocratic or political entity to manage daily affairs while Hamas continues accumulating power and maintaining relevance as a resistance force.

The second scenario is Hamas continuing as both the governing body and the resistance movement, using negotiation tactics and the situation on the ground to ensure that neither Israel nor the U.S. can challenge its authority.

### **Yumna Patel 22:30**

Right, so those would be the most favorable outcomes for Hamas. But realistically, how possible are they?

### **Abdaljawad Omar 22:43**

I think they are possible because Israel couldn't destroy Hamas militarily. Why would it be able to do so through diplomacy? However, there is a contradiction that Israel might try to exploit — between the resistance movements and the immediate needs of the people in Gaza. Reconstruction is a top priority for Palestinians, but if Israel uses it as a bargaining tool to weaken Hamas politically, that could be a challenge.

That said, the discourse from the U.S. and Israel has largely been focused on ethnic cleansing. Their open rhetoric about wanting Palestinians out of Gaza is counterproductive to their own goals. In fact, many people who might have considered leaving before now refuse to do so, simply because their displacement has been politicized. The insistence from Israel and the U.S. that Palestinians must leave has strengthened people's determination to stay.

So far, this rhetoric has not helped Israel drive a wedge between reconstruction efforts and the resistance.



## **Yumna Patel 24:38**

During ceasefire negotiations and leading up to an actual agreement being reached, Hamas had floated the idea of a shared governance mode with other Palestinian political factions. That's where the Palestinian Authority comes in. When ceasefire negotiations were underway, there were reports of potential reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah, the ruling party of the PA, for a power-sharing agreement, but those seem to have fallen through.

Where does the PA stand now? What does it want regarding Gaza? Is it open to a unity government with Hamas?

## **Yara Hawari 25:43**

It's important to remember that the PA is not a unified body; there are multiple factions, different political perspectives, and internal power struggles. But overall, its leadership sees itself as the natural governing authority in Gaza.

We've seen leaked reports of PA officials assuming they will take over Gaza, partly because they believe they proved themselves in Jenin. To remind everyone, the PA laid the groundwork for the Israeli invasion of Jenin by besieging the camp for over a month and clearing out weapons. They seem to think that because of this, they will be rewarded with control over Gaza.

But the PA isn't even being mentioned by Trump or Netanyahu. The only actors discussing it are Arab regimes, and even they insist that the PA must undergo political reform before assuming control of Gaza. That's code for changing its leadership.

Meanwhile, Netanyahu and the Israeli government have explicitly stated they will not allow the PA to govern Gaza. So, in reality, the PA holds no political weight here. Its relevance and legitimacy are dwindling.



## **Yumna Patel 27:20**

It does seem like a pipe dream on the PA's part. Even if they believe they proved themselves in Jenin, that move actually increased public animosity toward them, since they positioned themselves against the resistance, which is arguably more popular than the PA in the West Bank. Given all that, how realistic is it that the PA could come out of this in control of Gaza?

Regarding the leaked reports of PA officials saying they'd be willing to take power by force in Gaza – is that even feasible?

## **Yara Hawari 29:13**

With Netanyahu's current coalition government, it's very unlikely. But things can change quickly. Trump is unpredictable, and some reports suggest he actually likes Abbas and isn't a huge fan of Netanyahu. That's hard to believe given recent events, but it's not impossible.

Netanyahu's government has been very clear: they will not allow the PA to govern Gaza. However, if Netanyahu were no longer in power, the situation could shift.

That said, Palestinian agency is crucial here. Regardless of outside plans, Palestinians in Gaza have a say. Even without elections, they are not likely to accept the PA as a comprador leadership imposed upon them. It's difficult to predict, because everything can change overnight. But as things stand, the PA's expectations are delusional. Many things would have to change for their ambitions to become a reality.

## **Abdaljawad Omar 30:38**

The PA is focused on three things. First, preventing unity. If the PA were to unify with other Palestinian factions, it would have to change its entire political paradigm — from cooperation with Israel to confrontation with settler colonialism.



The current PA leadership does not want that. They always find an excuse — whether it's elections in Jerusalem or something else — to avoid real unity.

Second, the PA sees the growing power of Israel's far-right settler factions as a threat. Figures like Smotrich and Ben-Gvir even view the PA as an obstacle to their goal of cleansing the land.

## **Yumna Patel 33:31**

We've discussed the different powers at play and their visions for Gaza — America, Israel, Hamas, and the Palestinian Authority. But as you've mentioned, the last people to be asked about the vision for their homeland are Palestinians themselves.

Yara, you recently spoke about Palestinian agency, so I want to ask: how do we re-center Palestinian agency in this conversation?

What are the questions people need to be asking? What conversations need to happen to promote Palestinian agency over their own lives and their future?

## **Yara Hawari 34:48**

That's a really important question. There's a trap we fall into — talking about Palestinian futures within frameworks set by non-Palestinians. Even Palestinians fall into this trap because it's designed that way. The future becomes this mythical place we can't talk about because the present is so horrific.

And in that void, there's so much noise from others talking about the future, which in many cases isn't about a Palestinian future at all — it's about ensuring there isn't one. For Palestinians, imagining the future can feel like a luxury. How can we even begin to imagine a future free of colonial domination and subjugation?

We barely have living conduits of memory from before — the Nakba generation is fading. But it's crucial that we do this work. It's like exercising a muscle that hasn't



been used in a while.

We can turn to our history; Gaza was not always what it is now. It was a thriving part of Palestine, deeply connected to the region through trade, sea routes, and culture. Imagining the future doesn't mean romanticizing the past, but the past helps us envision what could be.

In recent decades, Gaza has become the beating heart of Palestine. It embodies the Palestinian struggle of refugeehood, resistance, and resilience. The Egyptian writer and political prisoner Alaa Abd El-Fattah once wrote that he had visited Gaza but always said he visited Palestine because Gaza is the heart of Palestine. That resonates with me. I grew up just a few hours away but have never been there.

When I imagine a Palestinian future, I see one where we are no longer separated, where partitions are a thing of the past. Palestine was never meant to be fragmented into open-air prisons. We are a people who love each other and our communities. Being separated like this is the ultimate punishment.

Even if it sounds romantic, imagining a future is essential.

## **Yumna Patel 38:42**

I want to sit with your words for a moment because they're really striking. You emphasized that this shouldn't have to be a romanticized vision, but it does feel that way because of the unfortunate reality we live in. Yet, at its core, it's such a simple vision.

I also want to acknowledge something you mentioned — the trap of these conversations around Palestinian future. As journalists, we easily frame narratives within these limited frameworks, thinking only within the binary of "war" and "ceasefire". But that only cages our conversations and imagination. Recognizing that is crucial – I myself fell into that trap in this very conversation. And you're



absolutely right, we need to move beyond these confines when thinking about Palestine and its future.

Abdaljawad, I want to ask you the same question: how do we center Palestinian agency in this conversation? How can we envision a future free from colonial shackles, where Palestinians have the right to life and freedom? What does that look like to you?

## **Abdaljawad Omar 41:14**

For me, it's about everyday life — being able to see each other without being divided by checkpoints and walls. As a person living in Ramallah, I should be able to see Gaza, just as someone in the Galilee should. Palestinians have normalized things that should never be normalized.

No other people in the world wake up to find a friend arrested or hear that a loved one has died and know they can't even say goodbye. Just this week, a friend of mine lost his father in Jerusalem but couldn't be there because of Israeli bureaucracy. Another friend, currently imprisoned, doesn't even know her father has passed because the news hasn't reached her.

These things may seem small compared to the massacres and destruction we've seen in the last 15 months, but they define our daily lives.

So how do we achieve a different future? Resistance. *Sabr* (patience) and *sumud* (steadfastness) are the only ways for Palestinians to move forward. We need to dismantle the colonial structures that seek to erase us. Settlers must be confronted with our humanity because right now, they refuse to recognize it.

Historically, anti-colonial struggles have only succeeded through resistance — through acts of *sumud*. And this is why resistance is deeply tied to imagination. It opens up the possibility of a different future.



Some might ask about policy — one state, two states, three states. But for me and Yara, liberation is about something more fundamental: not suffering. Not normalizing what should never be normal.

Al-Shabaka: The Palestinian Policy Network, is an independent, non-profit organization. Al-Shabaka convenes a multidisciplinary, global network of Palestinian analysts to produce critical policy analysis and collectively imagine a new policymaking paradigm for Palestine and Palestinians worldwide.

Al-Shabaka materials may be circulated with due attribution to Al-Shabaka: The Palestinian Policy Network. The opinion of individual members of Al-Shabaka's policy network do not necessarily reflect the views of the organization as a whole.