

# **Security Council Resolution 2803 and Challenges to Ensuring Lasting Peace in Gaza**

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## **Introduction**

United States (US) President Donald Trump's Gaza peace plan was endorsed on 17 Nov 2025 by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) as per Resolution 2803, with both Russia and China abstaining.<sup>1</sup> The resolution features a framework that seeks to link a permanent ceasefire with transitional arrangements for governing the Gaza Strip, marking gradual steps toward an Israel's military withdrawal and mechanisms to address Hamas's disarmament.

It also contains an important reference to the Palestinians' right to an independent state as the outcome. This reference provides the resolution with a strategic dimension that calls upon regional actors, mainly chiefs of Arab states, mainly Egypt, to play an active role in moving Gaza along a viable political trajectory rather than allowing it to dissolve into administrative, security, and service-delivery details.<sup>2</sup>

The resolution treats Trump's plan as a binding roadmap that would shift Gaza from a state under conflict and humanitarian collapse to an interim phase led by the International Stabilization Force (ISF) and the Board of Peace, a multiparty supervisory body. The text notes that this phase is transitional for reconstruction and provision of basic services. The Board and the ISF would guarantee the flow of humanitarian assistance, manage border crossings, and implement security measures to prevent a relapse into violence.

Russia proposed an alternative draft resolution which reflected the concerns of several other UNSC members. However, the US deployed a countermove, summoning the original supporters of the Trump plan.<sup>3</sup> Qatar, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Pakistan, Jordan, and Turkey supported the US draft resolution in a formal joint statement. That communique was, in turn, welcomed in a separate statement by the Palestinian Authority (PA).

A United Nations (UN) mandate offers legitimacy. Even if headed by the US, the operation can be presented as an effort by the international community, undertaken in the interest of the people of Gaza and regional peace.

The danger, however, lies in the possibility that this interim stage could easily evolve into a long-term trusteeship. To avoid this, the phase's mechanisms and components need to be designed in a manner that ensures meaningful Palestinian participation in day-to-day governance. Clear timeframes need to be specified for every transitional step—including Israeli military withdrawal without partitioning the Gaza Strip and, simultaneously, addressing the weapons of Hamas and other factions. It must ensure that any necessary extension is not solely an Israeli request or a US decision, but also receives Palestinian and regional consent.<sup>4</sup>

Francesca Albanese, Special Rapporteur with the UN working on human rights in the Palestinian territories, rightly stated, "Rather than charting a pathway toward ending the occupation and ensuring Palestinian protection, the resolution risks entrenching external control over Gaza's governance, borders, security, and reconstruction. The resolution betrays the people it claims to protect".<sup>5</sup>

### **The Issues that are Stumbling Blocks**

There are a few issues that present themselves as stumbling blocks. First is the absence of credible Palestinian representatives in the process. Resolution 2803 endorses Trump's peace plan without placing any legally binding expectations in Israel. It establishes a transitional administration that entirely excludes Palestinians, including the PA. This absence is significant, as the lack of serious and legitimate Palestinian involvement in previous 'Peacemaking' efforts historically contributed to their demise. The current situation does not depart from the precedents. The proposed participation of a 'Reformed' PA in the process of governing Gaza also failed to win significant support in the region.<sup>6</sup>

Second, Israel's official statements and policies on 'The Day After' the Gaza War have not been conducive enough to build confidence. In highly publicised declarations, their leadership, including Israeli Minister of National Security Itamar Ben-Gvir, Minister of Defense Israel Katz, and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, has stated that Israel will never allow the establishment of a Palestinian state under any circumstances, rendering such suggestions as meaningless in the UNSC resolution.<sup>7</sup>

A survey result released by the Jerusalem Center for Security and Foreign Affairs (JCFA) reveals that 70 per cent of Israelis oppose the establishment of a Palestinian state. In other words, most Israelis are adamantly opposed to the

‘Political Horizon’ hinted at in Trump’s 20-point plan and UNSC resolution.<sup>8</sup> Further, most Palestinians do not see the Israeli government as a potential peace partner. This is evident in the continual aerial strikes on Gaza.

Third, this resolution omits the historically established parameters for genuine peacemaking in Palestine. This gap has not helped generate confidence among all parties to move forward. By ignoring terms of reference such as the baseline of the 1967 borders, the illegality of Israeli settlements, the inadmissibility of acquiring territory by force, the centrality of the UN and its institutions, and the definition of Palestinian statehood, the document shifts the discussion away from long-standing international norms and reframes the terms of negotiation. Hence, the UN resolution stands a slim chance of achieving its professed objectives.

By declining to reaffirm Resolutions 242, 338, 1860, 2334, 2712, 2720, 2728, and UN General Assembly Resolution 67/19, the UNSC has produced a text that weakens the ‘Constant Reaffirmation’ on Palestine and provides a more conditional, security-led Palestinian statehood and Gaza governance. In other words, it softens the normative environment in which the older resolutions are applied.

Finally, beyond maintaining the ceasefire, Resolution 2803 does not provide clear obligations for Israel. The timing for a complete withdrawal of Israel is yet to be agreed.

### **The Critical Role of Arab States**

The Arab states—notably Egypt, which is Gaza’s neighbour—are central actors in the region. They possess the capacity, expertise, and depth of relationships necessary to ensure that this transitional process in Gaza is part of an effort, both to empower Palestinians (not marginalise them) and to lead to a lasting settlement (not perpetual external control). As demonstrated over recent years, Egypt views the stability of Gaza and the restoration of Palestinians’ political and security rights as integral to its own national security and a prerequisite for preventing the fragmentation of the Palestinian cause.<sup>9</sup>

The resolution offers Arab states and the Palestinians several opportunities to exert influence. Foremost among them is the establishment of a clear international framework for reconstruction for the first time. This framework

ensures the flow of resources according to defined priorities under international oversight and aims to limit corruption, prevent politicising aid, and block Israel's continued criminal use of starvation as a weapon.<sup>10</sup>

There needs to be a formal Arab participation in overseeing the transitional phase through clear Arab representation on the Board of Peace and other supervisory bodies, which will help prevent other international actors from monopolising decisions affecting Gaza's future. In addition, Egypt should push for a clearly defined timeframe for the international mandate—one which is extendable only with Palestinian approval and neutral regional—and international assessment to avoid a long-term external administration.

The resolution also provides a mechanism linking Israeli withdrawal to measurable security steps, such as the permanent decommissioning of weapons from Hamas and other Palestinian factions in Gaza. This is an important development. Such a move enables Palestinians, Arab states, and the international community to exert pressure for Israel's compliance while also allowing for the monitoring of weapons inside Gaza.

Furthermore, the resolution opens a window for rebuilding Palestinian civilian and security institutions through a phased approach. This approach allows for direct Palestinian administration of security, administrative, and service functions under limited and temporary international supervision and ensures that Palestinian institutions become active partners rather than passive recipients of directives. Palestinian capacities need to be built in these areas. This would enable Palestinian cadres to manage their affairs effectively from the earliest weeks of the transition and strengthen the shift from an international to full Palestinian governance.

### **Significant Challenges**

At the same time, the resolution presents significant challenges. One primary area is the decommissioning of weapons from Hamas and other factions. It is a complex political and security process requiring a phased vision, guarantees acceptable to Palestinians, and economic and political incentives that give real meaning to the shift from factional authority to institutional governance and from armed resistance to non-violent tools of negotiation.

Initial containment measures can halt production, smuggling, and the use of heavy weaponry, while subsequent steps may involve weapons storage arrangements under joint international, Arab, and Palestinian oversight.

Further, there needs to be a framework that prevents a security vacuum from leading to chaos or enabling the rise of new armed groups. The role of Arab nations, particularly Egypt, is central to ensuring implementation and calibrating the complex balance between gradual Israeli withdrawal and mechanisms for disarmament of Hamas and other factions due to the trust they command, ensuring that each step is coordinated, monitored, and matched with concrete incentives for Palestinians and local communities.

The ISF's makeup is another dilemma—Many states are hesitant to deploy ground troops in such a sensitive environment, resulting in a force that is unable to carry out its mandate. Moreover, the visible international division evidenced by abstentions from Russia and China in the UNSC resolution vote could erode the consensus that is essential for a successful transition. The Arab nations such as Egypt, Jordan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Türkiye, as well as the European Union, can create a regional and international environment friendly to the formation and deployment of ground troops.

Finally, Palestinian institutions need to be rebuilt to prevent temporary international authorisation metamorphosing into a de facto permanent arrangement. The Arab states must work to protect Palestinian political legitimacy from erosion during the transitional period. This means ensuring that Palestinian institutions, once reformed and broadened, are genuine partners in decision making and not merely a symbolic cover for international administration.

Internal Palestinian reforms are essential for fostering trust between Palestinians and their restructured institutions. The ultimate objective is not the management of Gaza, but a just and comprehensive peace in the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem.<sup>11</sup>

## **Conclusion**

UNSC Resolution 2803 represents a political crossroads—one path heads toward a long-term settlement that ends the conflict, rebuilds Gaza, and establishes the foundation for a Palestinian state, while the other marches toward a permanent

transitional administration that strips Palestinians of their right to self-determination and plunges Gaza into competing authorities and conflicting security regimes.

The resolution offers hope for the first path and a genuine first step toward a just and comprehensive peace, but thereafter positive steps are needed to solidify the precarious Gaza ceasefire into an enduring peace. For the people of Gaza, who are still facing unbearable living conditions and seemingly insurmountable destruction, it is the first glimmer of respite from the near constant bombardment.

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations Security Council, "Security Council Authorizes International Stabilization Force in Gaza, Adopting Resolution 2803 (2025)", *United Nations*, 17 Nov 2025, accessed 23 Nov 2025, <https://press.un.org/en/2025/sc16225.doc.htm>

<sup>2</sup> Amr Hamzawy, "The Gaza Plan Just Hit a Crucial Juncture. Egypt Is Critical for Its Success", *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 20 Nov 2025, accessed 22 Nov 2025, <https://carnegieendowment.org/emissary/2025/11/gaza-un-security-council-plan-egypt-success?lang=en>

<sup>3</sup> Marc Weller, "What Is Security Council Resolution 2803, and What Does It Mean for the Trump Gaza Plan?", *Chatham House*, 17 Oct 2025, accessed 23 Nov 2025, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2025/11/what-security-council-resolution-2803-and-what-does-it-mean-trump-gaza-plan>

<sup>4</sup> Hamzawy, "The Gaza Plan Just Hit a Crucial Juncture".

<sup>5</sup> Press Release, "UN Security Council resolution a violation of Palestinian right of self-determination and UN Charter, UN expert warns", *UN OHCHR*, 19 Nov 2025, accessed 23 Nov 2025, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/11/un-security-council-resolution-violation-palestinian-right-self>

<sup>6</sup> Khalil E Jahshan, "UNSC Resolution 2803: A Shaky Step toward the Unknown", *Arab Center Washington DC*, 19 Nov 2025, accessed 23 Nov 2025, <https://arabcenterdc.org/resource/unsc-resolution-2803-a-shaky-step-toward-the-unknown/>

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Hamzawy, "The Gaza Plan Just Hit a Crucial Juncture".

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

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