

# **The Board of Peace Must Reestablish a Credible Pathway to Palestinian Statehood**

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## **Introduction**

The United States (US)–sponsored ceasefire for Gaza, endorsed by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in Oct 2025, was intended to halt hostilities and create conditions for humanitarian relief and political stabilisation.<sup>1</sup> Yet violence has persisted. Since the announcement of the truce, hundreds of Palestinians have reportedly been killed and many more injured, while Gaza continues to endure a grave humanitarian crisis. For civilians on the ground, the ‘Peace’ has appeared indistinguishable from the war that preceded it.

It was against this backdrop that the inaugural meeting of the Board of Peace (BoP)—a central component of the US and UN-backed Gaza ceasefire framework—was convened in Washington on 19 Feb 2026. The meeting was high on diplomatic optics but less persuasive on operational clarity. India attended as an observer, represented by Deputy Chief of Mission Namgya Khampa. New Delhi reiterated its longstanding support for a “Sovereign, independent and viable State of Palestine based on 1967 borders”, even as it expressed support for the broader ceasefire initiative under UNSC Resolution 2803.<sup>2</sup>

Representatives from approximately forty countries attended and pledged nearly USD 17 bn for Gaza’s reconstruction and stabilisation, including USD 10 bn from the US and substantial commitments from Gulf and Central Asian states.<sup>3</sup> However, the translation of pledges into tangible assistance remains uncertain, particularly as Israel retains control over access to Gaza.

## **The International Stabilization Force**

A key outcome of the meeting was the proposal for an International Stabilization Force (ISF) to oversee security and support demilitarisation. Major General Jasper Jeffers of the US has been nominated to command the ISF, which is expected to comprise up to 20,000 troops alongside 12,000 locally recruited police personnel.<sup>4</sup> Indonesia, Morocco, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, and Albania have reportedly committed forces, with Indonesia expected to provide the largest contingent.

Jakarta has clarified that its role would be humanitarian rather than combat-oriented, reflecting domestic sensitivities and broader Muslim world opinion.<sup>5</sup> The ambiguity surrounding the ISF’s rules of engagement underscores a fundamental tension: whether it will function as a neutral peacekeeping force or as an instrument of coercive disarmament.

In parallel, Nickolay Mladenov, appointed High Representative of the BoP for Gaza, announced the recruitment of a transitional Palestinian Police Force, with training anticipated in Egypt. A Palestinian-run National Committee for the

Administration of Gaza (NCAG), led by Ali Shaat, has been established to assume civilian governance responsibilities.<sup>6</sup>

### **Unresolved Structural Questions**

Despite these announcements, several critical issues remain unresolved. Who will disarm Hamas? Who will govern Gaza in practical terms? How will security responsibilities be divided between the ISF, local police, Israel, and Palestinian authorities? Most importantly, what political horizon underpins this arrangement?

Effective ceasefires require clear chains of coordination. The BoP, NCAG, and the proposed Civil-Military Coordination Centre must operate in a coherent framework. Yet their relationship with the Palestinian Authority (PA) in Ramallah remains undefined. This institutional ambiguity risks repeating past failures, including initiatives that bypassed established UN humanitarian mechanisms and generated confusion on the ground.<sup>7</sup>

Reports indicate that members of the NCAG have faced delays in entering Gaza pending Israeli clearance. Preventing a vetted civilian administration from taking root risks perpetuating a vacuum in which Hamas remains the de facto governing authority, thereby, justifying continued Israeli military operations. For stabilisation to succeed, a legitimate Palestinian civilian authority must be empowered without delay.

### **Humanitarian Imperatives**

Beyond governance and security, the humanitarian dimension demands urgent attention. Restrictions on construction materials, prefabricated housing, and heavy equipment necessary for debris removal continue to impede recovery. The International Humanitarian Law requires unimpeded access to aid for civilian populations in conflict zones.<sup>8</sup> Without meaningful easing of restrictions, reconstruction pledges will remain symbolic.

The humanitarian crisis also intersects with political legitimacy. Reconstruction cannot be divorced from self-determination. A population deprived of political agency is unlikely to perceive externally managed stabilisation as a pathway to peace.

### **Demilitarization and Political Reality**

President Donald Trump has asserted that Hamas's disarmament is "The only thing standing in the way" of peace.<sup>9</sup> Israel has threatened renewed military operations should demilitarisation not occur. Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar has framed the BoP plan as addressing "The root of the problem" through the disarmament of Hamas and Islamic Jihad and the deradicalization of Gaza.<sup>10</sup> Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has declared that reconstruction will not precede demilitarisation.<sup>11</sup>

While security concerns are legitimate, an approach that prioritises coercive demilitarisation without parallel political concessions is unlikely to succeed. Notably absent from the Washington meeting were concrete commitments regarding settlement expansion in the West Bank or steps toward Palestinian sovereignty.

History demonstrates that ceasefires endure only when linked to credible political processes. The 1978 Camp David Accords, for example, succeeded because they embedded security arrangements within a broader political settlement between Egypt and Israel.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, the Good Friday Agreement in Northern Ireland combined decommissioning mechanisms with institutional power-sharing and democratic consent.<sup>13</sup>

In Gaza, however, the monitoring architecture remains opaque. Israel has restricted foreign journalists and international observers, limiting transparency. Without robust, neutral monitoring and reciprocal obligations, the stronger party inevitably shapes outcomes unilaterally, undermining trust.

### **Legitimacy and International Law**

Hady Amr, former US Special Representative for Palestinian Affairs, has criticised the BoP's structure, arguing that it derives legitimacy from the UN while simultaneously marginalising it.<sup>14</sup> Questions have also arisen regarding governance transparency and representation. Peacebuilding frameworks require broad-based legitimacy to endure.

The international community has long endorsed a two-state solution grounded in the 1967 borders, most notably in UNSC Resolution 242 and subsequent resolutions affirming the principle of "land for peace".<sup>15</sup> If the BoP is to be more than a stabilisation mechanism, it must align explicitly with these legal foundations.

As geopolitical attention shifts toward Iran and other regional flashpoints, there is a risk that Gaza becomes an arena for conflict management rather than conflict resolution. Yet the persistence of instability in Gaza has repeatedly demonstrated its capacity to destabilise the wider Middle East.

### **The Central Question: Statehood**

The essential test of the Board of Peace is whether it facilitates or postpones Palestinian self-determination. Stabilisation without sovereignty risks entrenching dependency. Conversely, a credible pathway to statehood could transform ceasefire arrangements into stepping stones toward lasting peace.

Reestablishing such a pathway requires clear political benchmarks with a defined timeline for negotiations on final-status issues—including borders, security, refugees, and Jerusalem—alongside unified Palestinian governance integrating Gaza and the West Bank under a representative authority, reciprocal security guarantees that pair demilitarization with Israeli commitments to halt settlement expansion and ease movement restrictions, and a neutral international monitoring mechanism that reports transparently to the United Nations Security Council.

Absent these components, the BoP risks becoming, in Amr's words, a "control architecture" rather than a peace architecture.

## Conclusion

The Washington meeting of the Board of Peace generated optimism in diplomatic circles but uncertainty among Palestinians. While reconstruction funds and stabilization forces were pledged, the political horizon remains indistinct. Without credible steps toward Palestinian statehood, stabilisation efforts may merely freeze the conflict rather than resolve it.

Peace cannot be sustained by security measures alone. It requires legitimate civilian governance, adherence to international law, and the promise of a political future beyond occupation and displacement. The Board of Peace has the opportunity to craft a historic framework—but only if it moves beyond conflict containment to genuine conflict resolution.

The lesson of history is unequivocal: ceasefires endure when they are anchored in justice and self-determination. If the Board of Peace is to succeed, it must restore a credible pathway to Palestinian statehood.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> “Resolution 2803 (2025)”, *United Nations Security Council*, 17 Nov 2025, accessed 22 Feb 2026, [https://docs.un.org/en/s/res/2803\(2025\)](https://docs.un.org/en/s/res/2803(2025)).

<sup>2</sup> “Official Spokesperson’s Statement on Palestine (February 20, 2026)”, *Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India*, 21 Feb 2026, accessed 22 Feb 2026, [https://www.mea.gov.in/media-briefings.htm?dtl/40807/Transcript\\_of\\_Weekly\\_Media\\_Briefing\\_by\\_the\\_Official\\_Spokesperson\\_February\\_20\\_2026](https://www.mea.gov.in/media-briefings.htm?dtl/40807/Transcript_of_Weekly_Media_Briefing_by_the_Official_Spokesperson_February_20_2026).

<sup>3</sup> Michele Kelemen, Aya Batrawy, “Trump gathers members of Board of Peace for first meeting, with some U.S. allies wary”, *National Public Radio*, 19 Feb 2026, accessed 22 Feb 2026, <https://www.npr.org/2026/02/19/nx-s1-5719053/trump-board-of-peace-meeting>.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid*

<sup>5</sup> Resty Woro Yuniar, “Why Indonesia’s lead role in Gaza peacekeeping force carries high political risk”, *South China Morning Post*, 24 Feb 2026, 22 Feb 2026, <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3344477/why-indonesias-lead-role-gaza-peacekeeping-force-carries-high-political-risk>

<sup>6</sup> Mohamed Majed and Mohammad Sio, “Head of Palestinian committee to run Gaza officially announces members”, 18 Jan 2026, accessed 22 Feb 2026, [https://www.markey.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/board\\_of\\_peace.pdf](https://www.markey.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/board_of_peace.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Carol Daniel-Kasbari, “From Ambiguous Governance to Stabilization Failure in Gaza: The Limits of the Board of Peace”, *IPI Global Observatory*, 19 Feb 2026, accessed 22 Feb 2026, <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2026/02/from-ambiguous-governance-to-stabilization-failure-in-gaza-the-limits-of-the-board-of-peace/>

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<sup>8</sup> “Geneva Convention Relative To The Protection Of Civilian Persons In Time Of War Of 12 August 1949”, *United Nations*, 12 Aug 1949, accessed 22 Feb 2026, [https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/atrocities-crimes/Doc.33\\_GC-IV-EN.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/atrocities-crimes/Doc.33_GC-IV-EN.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> “President Trump delivers remarks at the inaugural Board of Peace meeting US”, 19 Feb 2026, *The White House*, accessed 22 Feb 2026, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/videos/president-trump-delivers-remarks-at-the-inaugural-board-of-peace-meeting-%F0%9F%95%8A%EF%B8%8F%F0%9F%87%BA%F0%9F%87%B8/>

<sup>10</sup> “FM Sa'ar's remarks at President Trump's Board of Peace Summit in Washington”, 19 Feb 2026, accessed 22 Feb 2026, <https://embassies.gov.il/usa/en/news/peace-summit-washington-19-feb-2025#:~:text=incitement%20and%20indoctrination.-,At%20the%20heart%20of%20President%20Trump's%20comprehensive%20plan%20are%20the,will%20work%2C%20toward%20its%20success.>

<sup>11</sup> “Israel’s Netanyahu says no reconstruction of Gaza before demilitarization”, *Alarabiya English*, 19 Feb 2026, accessed 22 Feb 2026, <https://english.alarabiya.net/News/middle-east/2026/02/19/israel-s-netanyahu-says-no-reconstruction-of-gaza-before-demilitarization>

<sup>12</sup> “Camp David Accords”, *Yale Law School*, 17 Sep 1978, accessed 22 Feb 2026, [https://avalon.law.yale.edu/21st\\_century/campdav.asp](https://avalon.law.yale.edu/21st_century/campdav.asp)

<sup>13</sup> “The Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement”, *Northern Ireland Assembly*, 10 Apr 1998, accessed 22 Feb 2026, <https://education.niassembly.gov.uk/post-16/snapshots-devolution/belfast-agreementgood-friday-agreement-1998>

<sup>14</sup> Nils Adler, Edna Mohamed, Joseph Stepansky and Fiona Kelliher, “Board of Peace updates: Trump says Gaza war ‘over’ despite Israeli attacks”, *Aljazeera*, 19 Feb 2026, accessed 22 Feb 2026, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/liveblog/2026/2/19/trumps-board-of-peace-live-representatives-converge-for-inaugural-meeting#:~:text=Israeli%20forces%20and%20settlers%20also,to%20peace%2C%E2%80%9D%20Amr%20said.>

<sup>15</sup> Resolution 242 (1967), *United Nations Security Council*, 22 Nov 1967, accessed 22 Feb 2026, <https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/default/files/document/files/2024/05/scres24228196729.pdf> .

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