

POLITICS

Trump and Netanyahu are to meet in Florida at a crucial moment for the US-backed Gaza ceasefire



BY [WILL WEISSERT, SAM MEDNICK AND SAMY MAGDY](#)

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PALM BEACH, Fla. (AP) — President [Donald Trump](#) is scheduled to meet with Israeli Prime Minister [Benjamin Netanyahu](#) on Monday, as Washington looks to create fresh momentum for a U.S.-brokered ceasefire in Gaza that could be in danger of stalling before a [complicated second phase](#).

Trump could use the face-to-face at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida to try to leverage his strong relationship with Netanyahu and look for ways to speed up the peace process. Before that, Netanyahu met separately with Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth.

The [ceasefire between Israel and Hamas](#) that Trump championed has mostly held, but progress has slowed recently. Both sides [accuse each other of violations](#), and divisions have emerged among the U.S., Israel and Arab countries about the path forward.

The truce's first phase began in October, days after the two-year anniversary of the initial Hamas-led attack on Israel that killed about 1,200 people. [All but one of the 251 hostages](#) taken then have been released, [alive or dead](#).

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The Israeli leader has signaled he is in no rush to move forward with the next phase as long as the remains of [Ran Gvili](#) are still in Gaza. Netanyahu's office said he met with Gvili's parents in Florida.

Now comes the next, far more complicated part. [Trump's 20-point plan](#) — which [was approved](#) by the U.N. Security Council — lays out an ambitious vision for [ending Hamas' rule of Gaza](#).

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Iran and other topics likely to come up

The two leaders also are expected to discuss other topics, including Iran, whose nuclear capabilities Trump insists were "completely and fully obliterated" after [U.S. strikes on its nuclear sites](#) in June. Israeli officials have been quoted in local media as expressing concern about Iran rebuilding its supply of long-range missiles capable of striking Israel.

There are many key facets of the ceasefire's second phase that Israel's leader doesn't support or has even openly opposed, said Mona Yacoubian, director and senior adviser of the Middle East program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

"This is going to be a really tall order, I think, for President Trump to get Netanyahu to agree," she said.

"How he does that, what kind of pressure he puts on Netanyahu, I think, is going to be important to watch for," said Yacoubian, who also said the two could exhibit "a broader clash of approaches to the region."

Next phase is complex

If successful, the second phase would see the rebuilding of a demilitarized Gaza under international supervision by a group chaired by Trump and known as the Board of Peace. The Palestinians would form a “technocratic, apolitical” committee to run daily affairs in Gaza, under Board of Peace supervision.

It further calls for normalized relations between Israel and the Arab world, and a possible pathway to Palestinian independence. Then there are thorny logistical and humanitarian questions, including rebuilding war-ravaged Gaza, disarming Hamas and creating a security apparatus called the [International Stabilization Force](#).

The Board of Peace would oversee Gaza’s reconstruction under a two-year, renewable U.N. mandate. Its members had been expected to be named by the end of the year and might even be revealed after Monday’s meeting, but the announcement could be pushed into next month.

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Netanyahu was the first foreign leader to meet Trump at the White House in his second term, but this will be their first in-person meeting since Trump [went to Israel](#) in October to mark the start of the ceasefire’s initial phase. Netanyahu has been to Mar-a-Lago before, including in July 2024 when Trump was still seeking reelection.

Much remains unsettled

Their latest meeting comes after U.S. [Mideast envoy Steve Witkoff](#) and the president’s son-in-law, [Jared Kushner](#), recently huddled in Florida with officials from Egypt, Qatar and Turkey, which have been mediating the ceasefire.

Two main challenges have complicated moving to the second phase, according to an official who was briefed on those meetings. Israeli officials have been taking a lot of time to vet and approve members of the Palestinian technocratic committee from a list given to them by the mediators, and Israel continues its military strikes.

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Trump's plan also calls for the stabilization force, proposed as a multinational body, to maintain security. But it, too, has yet to be formed. Whether details will be forthcoming after Monday's meeting is unclear.

A Western diplomat said there is a "huge gulf" between the U.S.-Israeli understanding of the force's mandate and that of other major countries in the region, as well as European governments.

All spoke on the condition of anonymity to provide details that haven't been made public.

The U.S. and Israel want the force to have a "commanding role" in security duties, including disarming Hamas and other militant groups. But countries being courted to contribute troops fear that mandate will make it an "occupation force," the diplomat said.

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Hamas has said it is ready to discuss "freezing or storing" its arsenal of weapons but insists it has a right to armed resistance as long as Israel occupies Palestinian territory. One U.S. official said a potential plan might be to offer cash incentives in exchange for weapons, echoing a "buyback" program Witkoff has previously floated.

Questions about Gaza reconstruction

One displaced man in Khan Younis, Iyad Abu Sakla, said Trump needed to urge Netanyahu to allow Palestinians to return to their homes. Under the agreement, most Palestinians are permitted in a zone just under half the size of Gaza.

"We are exhausted. This displacement is bad; it's cold and freezing. Enough lying to us and enough insulting

our intelligence," Sakla said.

Israeli bombardment and ground operations have transformed neighborhoods across Gaza into [rubble-strewn wastelands](#), with blackened shells of buildings and mounds of debris stretching in all directions.

Egypt, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Turkey are pressing for a negotiated deal on disarming Hamas and on additional Israeli withdrawal from Gaza before moving to next elements of the plan, including deployment of the international security force and reconstruction, three Arab officials said.

Three other officials, including two Americans, said the United Arab Emirates has agreed to fund reconstruction, including new communities, although they said plans have not been settled.

All the officials spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations between the various countries. The UAE did not respond to multiple requests for comment.

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