



Middle East crisis — explained

Trump says he wants the U.S. to take ownership of the Gaza Strip

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Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and U.S. President Donald Trump speak during a joint press conference in the East Room of the White House on Feb. 4. Netanyahu is the first foreign leader to visit Trump since he returned to the White House last month.

Chip Somdevilla/Getty Images

President Trump and Israeli leader Benjamin Netanyahu met Tuesday at the White House where Trump floated the idea of the U.S. taking ownership of the Gaza Strip and redeveloping the territory.

During a press conference between the two leaders, Trump said they talked about relocating some 1.8 million Palestinians and leveling the Gaza Strip, which he suggested could become the "Riviera of the Middle East" under U.S. ownership.

"We'll own it and be responsible for dismantling all of the dangerous unexploded bombs and other weapons on the site," Trump said as Netanyahu looked on. "Level the site, and get rid of the destroyed buildings. Level it out, create an economic development."



MIDDLE EAST CRISIS — EXPLAINED

Rebuilding Gaza will be a massive project. Here are 5 things to know

Netanyahu is the first foreign leader to meet with President Trump since he was sworn in last month, a point that Trump emphasized by describing an "unbreakable" bond between them.

Trump's comments follow repeated statements that neighboring countries should agree to take in Gazans because of the destruction there caused by the Israel-Hamas war. Trump has specifically named Egypt and Jordan, which have rejected the plan. Trump insists they'll eventually agree to it.

Trump did not share details how he anticipated the U.S. would take control of the strip, but during the press conference, also didn't rule out sending U.S. troops to support the reconstruction.

He added that he planned to visit Israel and Gaza.

When it was time to speak, Netanyahu smiled and praised Trump's work on behalf of Israel. And, regarding Gaza, Netanyahu said Trump has an idea that is worth paying attention to.

"I think it's something that could change history. And I think it's worthwhile really pursuing," Netanyahu said.



MIDDLE EAST CRISIS — EXPLAINED

Trump has a deal for Netanyahu when they meet Tuesday. Will he take it?

Netanyahu's visit comes amid negotiations over Phase 2 of a ceasefire deal between Israel and Hamas. Phase 1 of the deal focused on the release of Israeli hostages and

Palestinian prisoners.

Trump officials say the administration is focused on making sure that Phase 1 is completed and that all of the hostages are returned home, including the deceased. They say Phase 2 would end the war with Hamas and return all remaining Israeli hostages from captivity in Gaza.

But Trump's envoy said Phase 3 of the ceasefire deal — reconstruction of Gaza — would get complicated because it's "physically impossible" to rebuild the area in five years. A 10- to 15-year timeline would be more likely, he said, because of the damage to Gaza during the war.

Trump has also cast doubt on how durable the ceasefire deal is.

"I have no guarantees that the peace is going to hold," he told reporters in the Oval Office on Monday.

Trump did not share details amid U.S. involvement

Asked who he envisions living in a U.S.-remade Gaza, Trump said, "I envision the world people living there. The world's people. I think you'll make that into an international, unbelievable place."

He said he also imagines Palestinians living there.



MIDDLE EAST CRISIS — EXPLAINED

A U.S. dual citizen is among 3 Israeli hostages exchanged for Palestinian prisoners

"You have to learn from history. History is – you just can't let it keep repeating itself. We have an opportunity to do something that could be phenomenal," Trump said.

New executive orders on the region

On Tuesday, Trump signed two executive orders related to the Middle East. One puts "maximum" pressure on Iran. Trump said he was "torn" about signing it.



MIDDLE EAST CRISIS — EXPLAINED

Thousands of Palestinians begin returning home to a devastated Gaza

"I'm signing this and I'm unhappy to do it but I have not so much choice because we have to be strong and firm," Trump said, and added that he hopes he doesn't have to use it.

"To me, it's very simple. Iran cannot have a nuclear weapon," Trump said. He said the U.S. has the right to block the sale of Iranian oil to other countries.

The [other order pulled the U.S. out of the United Nations Human Rights Council and cut off aid to the United Nations Relief Works Agency](#), which is the main group providing aid to Palestinians.

The UNHRC has been criticized by both Democrats and Republicans for being biased against Israel.

That order also considers pulling the U.S. out of UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.



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