



POLITICS

Trump won't rule out deploying US troops to support rebuilding Gaza, sees 'long-term' US ownership

1 of 16 | President Donald Trump said he won't rule out deploying U.S. troops to support reconstruction of Gaza and that envisions "long-term" U.S. ownership of a redevelopment of the territory. Trump added, "We'll do what is necessary."

BY [AAMER MADHANI](#), [TIA GOLDENBERG](#) AND [ZEKE MILLER](#)

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WASHINGTON (AP) — [President Donald Trump](#) suggested that displaced Palestinians in Gaza be permanently resettled outside the war-torn territory and proposed the U.S. take "ownership" in redeveloping the area into "the Riviera of the Middle East."

Trump's brazen proposal Tuesday appears certain to roil the next stage of talks meant to extend the tenuous ceasefire between Israel and Hamas and secure the release of the remaining hostages held in Gaza.

The provocative comments came as talks are ramping up this week with the promise of surging humanitarian aid and reconstruction supplies to help the people of Gaza recover after more than [15 months of devastating conflict](#). Now Trump wants to push roughly 1.8 million people to leave the land they have called home and claim it for the U.S., perhaps with American troops.

"The U.S. will take over the Gaza Strip, and we will do a job with it too," Trump said at an evening news conference with Israeli Prime Minister [Benjamin Netanyahu](#) by his side. The president who made his name as a New York real estate developer added: "We'll make sure that it's done world-class. It'll be wonderful for the people — Palestinians, Palestinians mostly, we're talking about."

Trump outlined his thinking as he [held talks](#) with Netanyahu at the White House, where the two leaders also discussed the fragile ceasefire and hostage deal in the Israeli-Hamas conflict and shared concerns about Iran.

Trump said the U.S. would redevelop the territory after Palestinians are resettled elsewhere and turn the territory into a place where the "world's people"—including Palestinians—would live. He offered no detail about what authority the U.S. would use to take the land and develop it.

Allies reject the idea

Egypt, Jordan and other U.S. allies in the Mideast have [cautioned Trump](#) that relocating Palestinians from Gaza would threaten Mideast stability, risk expanding the conflict and undermine a decades-long push by the U.S. and allies for a two-state solution.

Saudi Arabia's foreign ministry issued a sharply worded reaction to Trump, noting their long call for an independent Palestinian state was a "firm, steadfast and unwavering position." Saudi Arabia has been in negotiations with the U.S. over a deal to diplomatically recognize Israel in exchange for a security pact and other terms.

"The duty of the international community today is to work to alleviate the severe human suffering endured by the Palestinian people, who will remain committed to their land and will not budge from it," the Saudi statement said.

Still, Trump insists the Palestinians "have no alternative" but to leave the "big pile of rubble" that is Gaza. He spoke out as his top aides stressed that a three-to-five-year timeline for reconstruction of the war-torn territory, as laid out in a temporary truce agreement, is not viable.

Last week, both Egyptian President [Abdel Fattah el-Sissi](#) and Jordanian King Abdullah II dismissed Trump's calls to resettle Palestinians in Gaza.

But Trump said he believes Egypt and Jordan — as well as other countries, which he did not name — will ultimately agree to take in Palestinians.

"You look over the decades, it's all death in Gaza," Trump said. "This has been happening for years. It's all death. If we can get a beautiful area to resettle people, permanently, in nice homes where they can be happy and not be shot and not be killed and not be knifed to death like what's happening in Gaza."

Trump also said he isn't ruling out deploying U.S. troops to support reconstruction of Gaza. He envisions "long-term" U.S. ownership of a redevelopment of the territory.

The president's proposal was greeted with alarm by Democrats and a measure of skepticism by his Republican allies.

"He's completely lost it," said Sen. Chris Murphy, D-Conn. "He wants a U.S. invasion of Gaza, which would cost thousands of American lives and set the Middle East on fire for 20 years? It's sick."

"We'll see what our Arab friends say about that," said Sen. Lindsey Graham, a South Carolina Republican and a Trump ally. "And I think most South Carolinians are probably not excited about sending Americans to take over Gaza. I think that might be problematic, but I'll keep an open mind."

A fragile ceasefire

The White House's focus on the future of Gaza comes as the nascent truce between Israel and Hamas

hangs in the balance.

Netanyahu is facing competing pressure from his right-wing coalition to end a temporary truce against Hamas militants in Gaza and from war-weary Israelis who want the remaining hostages home and for the [15-month conflict](#) to end.

Trump may be betting he can persuade Egypt and Jordan to come around to accept displaced Palestinians because of the significant aid that the U.S. provides Cairo and Amman. Hard-line right-wing members of Netanyahu's government have embraced the call to move displaced Palestinians out of Gaza.

"To me, it is unfair to explain to Palestinians that they might be back in five years," Trump's Mideast envoy, Steve Witkoff, said. "That's just preposterous."

Trump also signaled that he may be reconsidering an independent Palestinian state as part of a broader two-state solution to the decades-long Israel-Palestinian conflict.

"Well, a lot of plans change with time," he told reporters when asked if he was still committed to a plan like the one he laid out in 2020 that called for a Palestinian state. "A lot of death has occurred since I left and now came back."

Netanyahu's arrival in Washington for the first foreign leader visit of Trump's second term coincides with the prime minister's popular support [sagging](#).

The prime minister is in the middle of weekslong testimony in an [ongoing corruption trial](#) that centers on allegations he exchanged favors with media moguls and wealthy associates. He has decried the accusations and said he is the victim of a "witch hunt."

Being seen with Trump, who is popular in Israel, could help distract the public from the trial and boost Netanyahu's standing.

"We have the right leader of Israel who's done a great job," Trump said of Netanyahu.

Netanyahu praised Trump's leadership in getting the hostage and ceasefire deal. The prime minister also spoke glowingly of Trump thinking outside the box.

"You say things others refuse to say. And after the jaws drop, people scratch their heads and they say, 'You know he's right.'"

Hamas in a statement decried Trump's comments.

"We reject Trump's statements in which he said that the residents of the Gaza Strip have no choice but to leave, and we consider them a recipe for creating chaos and tension in the region," the group said.

Netanyahu met with White House national security adviser Mike Waltz and [Witkoff](#) on Monday to begin the daunting work of brokering [the next phase of a ceasefire agreement](#).

The Israeli leader said he would send a delegation to Qatar to continue indirect talks with Hamas that are being mediated by the Gulf Arab country, the first confirmation that those negotiations would continue. Netanyahu also said he would convene his security Cabinet to discuss Israel's demands for the next phase of the ceasefire when he returns to Israel at the end of the week.

Witkoff, meanwhile, said he plans to meet with Qatar's prime minister, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, in Florida on Thursday to discuss the next phase in the ceasefire. Qatar and Egypt have served as key intermediaries with Hamas throughout the conflict.

Netanyahu is under intense pressure from hard-right members of his governing coalition to abandon the ceasefire and resume fighting in Gaza to eliminate Hamas. Bezalel Smotrich, one of Netanyahu's key partners, vows to topple the government if the war isn't relaunched, a step that could lead to early elections.

Hamas, which [has reasserted control over Gaza](#) since the ceasefire began last month, has said it will not release hostages in the second phase without an end to the war and Israeli forces' full withdrawal. Netanyahu, meanwhile, maintains that Israel is committed to victory over Hamas and the return of all hostages captured in the Oct. 7, 2023, attack that triggered the war.

Goldenberg reported from Tel Aviv, Israel. Associated Press writers Melanie Lidman in Jerusalem, Jon Gambrell in Dubai, and Michelle L. Price, Stephen Groves and Lisa Mascaro contributed reporting.

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