



Written by [Veronika Kyrylenko](#) on March 24, 2025

From Siege to Seizure: Israel's Plan for Gaza

The final stage of Israel's war on Gaza is underway. While initially presented as a mission to recover hostages and dismantle Hamas, its underlying objective is now being openly stated: Depopulate Gaza and bring the territory under Israeli control. Recent remarks by Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz, as well as the most recent developments within the enclave, offer perhaps the clearest confirmation yet.

Since Israel shattered the ceasefire early last week, its renewed assault, "[greenlit](#)" by U.S. President Donald Trump, has killed [nearly 600 Palestinians](#). That includes more than 400 women and children, according to health authorities.



AP Images
Palestinian refugees in Gaza

After cutting off the supply of food, electricity, and humanitarian aid in early March, Israel now vows to intensify its campaign on an already devastated population. The message to Gaza's survivors is unmistakable: leave or die.

Katz: Annexing Areas of Gaza

Last Friday, Katz issued an unequivocal statement. According to [The Times of Israel](#):

In a statement, Katz says: "If the Hamas terror organization continues to refuse to release the hostages, I instructed the IDF [Israeli Defense Forces] to capture additional areas, evacuate the population, and expand the security zone around Gaza for the protection of Israeli communities and IDF soldiers, through a permanent hold of the area by Israel."

"As long as Hamas continues its refusal, it will lose more and more land that will be added to Israel," Katz says.

Hamas currently holds 59 hostages; Israel believes 24 are still alive.

The group, in turn, insists it will not free the remaining captives unless Israel agrees to a permanent ceasefire and a complete withdrawal from the territory, quoting the ceasefire agreement signed in January.

Katz also invoked U.S. support for population removal, stating Israel would use "all military and civilian pressure, including evacuation of the Gaza population south and implementing US President Trump's voluntary migration plan for Gaza residents."

Trump's Vision

Trump's so-called "voluntary" migration plan referenced by Katz is neither voluntary nor humanitarian. [Announced](#) in early February, it envisions the permanent relocation of over 2 million Palestinian



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residents to neighboring countries, with the goal of transforming the territory into a “Riviera” “owned” by the United States.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has [endorsed](#) the proposal, describing it as a “bold” and “fresh” strategy that could lead to the reconstruction of Gaza. Katz has [instructed](#) the IDF to prepare plans facilitating the departure of Gaza residents.

However, the plan has faced [widespread criticism](#) and rejection from various quarters. Egypt and Jordan have firmly opposed the proposal, citing concerns over forced displacement and potential violations of international law. Human rights organizations and international legal experts have condemned the plan as a form of ethnic cleansing.

Despite the controversy, Trump has continued to push for the initiative. In February, he [confirmed](#) Palestinians would have “no right” to return.

Military Occupation

Israel no longer hides its intention to take full control of Gaza. A [Sunday report](#) from *The Times of Israel* confirmed that Israeli officials are now actively discussing a plan for full military occupation of the Gaza Strip with U.S. counterparts. Strategic Affairs Minister Ron Dermer is leading the delegation in Washington.

The plan, as described by one Israeli official, includes placing the IDF in charge of “humanitarian aid operations” inside Gaza. Dermer is joined by senior representatives from Mossad, the Foreign Ministry, and the Israel Atomic Energy Agency. That indicates the plan’s strategic and long-term scope.

As *The Times of Israel* summarized, citing *The Washington Post*:

Israel has until now avoided pushing for military rule of the Gaza Strip, but with a new IDF chief of staff and defense minister — not to mention a new president in the White House — Israel’s thinking appears to have changed.

That change is already taking shape on the ground. According to officials, the upcoming escalation will involve “targeting Hamas’s civilian leadership,” while forcibly “evacuating women, children, and vetted noncombatants to ‘humanitarian bubbles.’” The remaining population — mostly men — will be treated as enemy fighters and systematically eliminated.

Expulsions

Another [Sunday report](#) confirmed the establishment of Israel’s new office within the Defense Ministry, tasked explicitly with facilitating the “voluntary departure” of Palestinians from Gaza.

Katz said the office will work to “prepare for and enable safe and controlled passage” for those fleeing. That would include passages by land, sea, and air. He stressed adherence to Trump’s plan:

We are working with all means to implement the US president’s vision, and we will allow any Gaza resident who wants to move to a third state to do so.

The office was planned in coordination with Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich. Earlier this month, [he said](#) Israel could expel up to 5,000 Palestinians per day. As a result, Gaza could be “cleansed” within



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just a year.

The practical problem, for now, is where to send the refugees. According to multiple reports, Israel and the U.S. have approached Somalia, Somaliland, Sudan, and Syria to accept Gazans — so far, without success.

Still, the policy now has a home, a budget, and an office sign. The machinery of expulsion is no longer theoretical. It's operational.

Death and Ruins

As of Sunday, Gaza's Health Ministry [reported](#) over 50,000 Palestinians killed since October 7, 2023 — including 14,500 children. Israeli intelligence deems the data from the source "[generally accurate](#)."

But the true toll may be far higher. *The Lancet* estimated that between the beginning of war and late June 2024, "up to 186,000 or even more deaths could be attributable to the current conflict in Gaza." The study accounts for those trapped under rubble or killed by starvation, disease, and lack of medical care. Another [Lancet study](#) found Gaza's life expectancy has collapsed — from 75.5 years to just over 40.

Upon taking office, Trump [called](#) Gaza "a phenomenal location" turned into "a massive demolition site." Indeed, in the first nine months of war, Israel dropped [70,000 tons of bombs](#). That leveled entire neighborhoods and displaced over 90 percent of the population. The [latest estimates](#) suggest that nearly 70 percent of all structures have been destroyed or damaged. That includes 92 percent of all housing units.

Last Friday, Israel flattened Gaza's [only cancer center](#). Two days later, it [bombed](#) the emergency unit at Nasser Medical Complex, claiming the attack killed one Hamas leader.

The aim appears clear: Make Gaza unlivable, drive its people out, and pave the way for annexation — turning the depopulated land into beachfront property.

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[Trump: U.S. to "Own" and Rebuild Gaza, Displace Its People](#)

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