



Hamas's Plan to Turn Gaza Into Another Lebanon

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Hamas seeks to end the war while maintaining its military control over Gaza, mirroring Hezbollah's pre-war dominance in Lebanon. Israel must not allow this to happen, even if Egypt pushes for it.

Hamas's primary goal at this time is to secure a ceasefire in order to survive the war, rebuild its terror army and cement its political control of the Gaza Strip.

To accomplish this, it has signaled its willingness to create a governance model in Gaza similar to Hezbollah's pre-war control of Lebanon: an internationally recognized government providing a façade of authority, while Hamas retains full military-terrorist control on the ground and *de facto* political power.

This would allow the jihadist organization to regroup, rearm, and ultimately restart its war against Israel at a time of its choosing, with the added ability to claim to Palestinians that it was able to launch the worst mass murder of Jews since the Holocaust and live to walk away.

All proposals that have been floated in the region – that of Egypt, which suggests that the Palestinian Authority take political control through a government of technocrats; as well as ideas floated, including in Israel, of a Gaza ruled by a regional coalition – would result in this dangerous Lebanon-like situation. This is because Israel has not yet completed its military campaign against Hamas.

On March 4, during a summit in Cairo held to present an Arab alternative to President Trump's plan for Gaza, Egyptian President Fateh El-Sisi stated, "Egypt

objects to the eviction of Palestinians and supports their right to remain in their land. We will not take part in these plans. Egypt supports a continuation of the ceasefire and the setting up of an independent Palestinian state. Egypt supports setting up an administrative committee based on independent technocrats who will manage the Strip temporarily and supervise the aid – until the return of the Palestinian Authority."

According to a Reuters report on March 3, Egypt has drawn up a roadmap for Gaza that proposes "an interim rule by a coalition of Arab, Muslim and Western states." The plan does not provide details on how Hamas would be sidelined, who would pay for Gaza's reconstruction, or how governance would be structured.

Most notably, Hamas has, according to multiple reports, already claimed that it accepts such arrangements. This is a clear indication that the terror group sees it as a means to maintain its grip on power.

On February 17, Arab media reports said that Hamas had allegedly agreed to transfer control of Gaza to the Palestinian Authority. Sky News Arabia reported that Hamas made this decision under Egyptian pressure, in the context of negotiations over a ceasefire and hostage deal with Israel. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's spokesman Omer Dostri rejected the notion outright, writing on X: "Not going to happen."

Similarly, Anadolu Agency reported on December 5, 2024, that Hamas had "accepted an Egyptian proposal to form a joint Palestinian committee to run the Gaza Strip after the ongoing Israeli war." Hamas stated that it had held talks with Fatah, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), and other Palestinian terror factions to discuss "implementing previously agreed frameworks to achieve Palestinian unity."

Despite these vague formulations, the underlying reality is that Hamas has no intention of relinquishing its control over Gaza, and would obviously waste no time in exploiting fig leaf administrations in Gaza to reassert control and entrench itself militarily once again.

The Hezbollah model: A trap Israel cannot afford

The model for Gaza that Hamas appears willing to adopt is directly inspired by Hezbollah's former status in Lebanon, where the terrorist group maintained absolute military control despite the existence of a nominally sovereign Lebanese government.

Before the current war, Hezbollah dictated Lebanon's security policy, enjoyed *de facto* veto power over Lebanese governmental decisions, operated a shadow state for its Shiite Lebanese base, and was the strongest military force in the country by a wide margin, dwarfing the Lebanese Armed Forces, which it infiltrated via its Shiite officers and soldiers.

Despite the existence of a Lebanese government, Hezbollah operated its own military command structure and stockpiled monstrous quantities of weapons with the backing of Iran - all while the Lebanese government served as a powerless front for international legitimacy.

This arrangement ultimately collapsed when Hezbollah's presence in Lebanon was smashed by Israel in a war that crippled its infrastructure and territorial control. Today, the Lebanese government is showing the first signs of actual sovereignty, confiscating terror-financing money flowing in through Beirut's airport and banning suspicious Iranian flights. It still has a very long way to go.

Hamas would likely seek to replicate Hezbollah's former setup in Gaza. If successful, this would allow it to rebuild its military capabilities while keeping Israel diplomatically constrained from taking decisive action.

Any attempt by Israel to neutralize Hamas in such a scenario would be met with international outcry over violating the sovereignty of the "recognized governing authority" of Gaza - even if that authority had no real power. Any international peacekeeping force would suffer the same fate as UNIFIL in Lebanon, and be reduced to a toothless observer that is used by terrorists as human shields in exchanges of fire with Israel.

The consequences of such an outcome would be disastrous. Hamas would use the time bought by a ceasefire to rearm with weapons from Iran, smuggle in military technology, and likely begin rebuilding its tunnel and rocket system. Under the cover of an internationally approved governing body, Hamas could enhance its military capabilities with impunity. This is precisely what Hezbollah did in Lebanon, amassing a vast arsenal while using the Lebanese government as a shield against Israeli action.

As a result, the only viable path forward is for Israel to, sooner or later, return to combat in Gaza, hold territory this time, and gain full military and political control over the Strip for several months at a minimum. This is necessary to ensure:

1. **The total destruction of Hamas's military and political regime** – Without completely dismantling Hamas's command structure, leadership, and armed forces, any governing arrangement will be meaningless. As long as Hamas retains its weapons and operational capability, it will be the *de facto* ruler of Gaza, and Gazans will never cooperate with any post-Hamas vision.
2. **A long-term Israeli security presence with full operational freedom** – Any future governance arrangement must allow Israel to conduct counterterrorism operations inside Gaza anywhere, at any time, without restriction. This means full security oversight, with the IDF maintaining the ability to both strike Hamas remnants from the ground, air, and sea and prevent the group's rearmament. Gaza must become a version of Area A in Judea and Samaria, where the IDF operates nightly to prevent Iran and Hamas from building a terror army that would threaten central Israel.

Only after these conditions are met can a moderate autonomy – backed by Gulf states and the United States - be considered as a possible governance structure for Gaza. Even then, Israel must retain full security freedom of operation to prevent any resurgence of terrorism.

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