

Palestinian factions have come together to thwart Israeli plans in Gaza, for now

The U.S. appears ready to reassess its tactics in carrying out Donald Trump's plan for Gaza. The news vindicates the strategy Palestinians have used during the ceasefire to avoid the surrender Israel has demanded in exchange for ending the genocide.

By Mitchell Plitnick December 26, 2025 2

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Palestinian militants of the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, the military wing of Hamas, stand guard next to a crowd watching the transfer of released Israeli hostages to the Red Cross in the south of Deir el-Balah in the central Gaza Strip, October 13, 2025. (Photo: Omar Ashtawy/APA Images)

The United States seems to be poised to reevaluate its tactics in implementing President Donald Trump's plan for the Gaza Strip. It seems they are considering installing a Palestinian technocrat government and Palestinian police force before assembling their International Stabilization Force (ISF), which they are finding no country wants to be part of.

While this remains very far from acknowledging the rights of the Palestinian people, and even farther from realizing those rights in practice, it is a real vindication for the strategic decisions that

the assortment of Palestinian factions — not only Hamas — made in the wake of the diminishment of Israel's genocide in October.

According to recent reports, the governments of Egypt, Türkiye, and Qatar have managed to make the Trump administration understand that their push for quick Palestinian disarmament in Gaza and the subsequent occupation of the Strip by an international force that would not include Palestinians is a non-starter.

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Now, Washington is trying to come up with a formula that is more in keeping with what they've heard from their allies and would still be something they can sell to Israel. For its part, Israel has been conspicuously silent about all of this, probably waiting for their prime minister's visit to Washington next week to voice their objections.

On paper, that all seems to amount to a minor victory at best, but digging deeper, we can see it vindicates the strategy the Palestinians have pursued to end Israel's genocide and avoid the total surrender that Israel has pursued as the price for ending that horror.

A Palestinian gamble pays off

It's worth keeping in mind that, while most media portray Hamas as the sole conductor of diplomacy in Gaza, decisions that affect all the people of Gaza and Palestine have actually been reached by a consensus of a wide array of Palestinian factions. This has even included Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah party, although it has been an inconsistent member and has often acted independently, often undermining the loosely unified factions.

That coalition agreed to the first stage of Trump's plan, in which the militant factions, led by Hamas, ceased their offensive operations against Israelis, released all the remaining living hostages, as well as the bodies of those who are deceased (save two, one Israeli and one Thai hostage, who remain buried under rubble).

However, they never agreed to the rest of the plan, neither accepting nor rejecting it outright. In what was a bold but very risky move, the Palestinians insisted on more negotiations to find an accommodation that would allow Hamas to step aside from governance and lay down their arms

without disappearing completely from Palestine or sacrificing the principle that they have the right to resist Israel's violent occupation and apartheid, even with force, as international law provides.

The factions gambled that the Trump administration really wanted the worst of the ceasefire to stop, and that the U.S. would negotiate to maintain the ceasefire, however illusory it may be. And thus the very worst of the genocide was diminished.

It seemed a pyrrhic victory. The United States pressed forward with its efforts to assemble an international force to disarm Hamas and police Gaza, while its "Board of Peace" would govern Gaza with Palestinian technocrats merely operating the administrative, day-to-day tasks. Israel continued its attacks and refused to allow sufficient aid, including material for shelter in the winter months, and Palestinians continued dying and suffering, albeit at a lower rate. Yet the factions held to their bet.

Finally, now, it seems the bet has paid off. The Trump administration seems to have gotten the message that disarming Hamas cannot happen by force or coercion. Israel was unable to accomplish the feat in two years of violence that the Trump administration does not want to return to. The countries the U.S. was trying to recruit for its International Stabilization Force are willing to act as peacekeepers but unwilling to go and fight Israel's battles for it.

That became even more apparent this week when Azerbaijan backed out of the ISF. It had been one of the first countries to indicate willingness to participate in the force, but could not agree to it once it became clear that they would actually have to fight Palestinians. The exclusion of Azerbaijan's ally, Türkiye, whose participation in the ISF was vetoed by Israel, made it clear what the intent of the ISF was, and the Azerbaijanis, were unwilling to take that on.

The same was true of other states. They are unwilling to enter into a force whose mandate is not clear, and which might be used as an occupying force.

Türkiye, Qatar, and Egypt seem to have finally been able to make Washington understand that they were not going to be able to get a foreign army to disarm Hamas.

Implicit in that understanding was the realization that the U.S., much to Israel's chagrin, would have to pursue a diplomatic avenue with Hamas on disarmament. Contrary to widespread misinformation, Hamas, while unwilling to accept terms of surrender that include completely giving up all its weapons, is willing to negotiate terms that would, essentially, see it mothball most of them.

According to Drop Site News — one of the very few news outlets that actually reports directly on what Palestinian factions themselves are saying and discussing — "Hamas has expressed an openness to a deal that would see the weapons of Hamas and Islamic Jihad stored or 'frozen,' a configuration that would come with the endorsement of the Palestinian resistance groups themselves." Such an agreement would be a lot more trustworthy and efficient, even from Israel's point of view, than trying to simply confiscate all of the factions' small weaponry. Israel, of course, would never admit that this is true, but it is. If the goal is to ensure that Hamas won't attack Israel again as it did in October 2023, this would be by far the best way to do that.

The factions are not going to make any public commitments until there is a specific plan they can discuss, and that is sensible. But they bet that, by maintaining ambiguity about Trump's plan and a clear openness to reasonable negotiation, they could get Trump's Arab and Muslim friends to

prevail upon Washington to back away from Israel's maximalist demands that were clearly intended to collapse the so-called "ceasefire" and reignite the genocide.

That bet had long odds, but it paid off.

American reassessment

Last week, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio sounded a very different tone on Hamas disarmament than he had in the past.

Speaking at a press conference in Washington, Rubio said, "You're not going to convince anyone to invest money in Gaza if they believe another war is going to happen in two, three years. So, I would just ask everyone to focus on what are the kind of weaponries and capabilities that Hamas would need in order to threaten or attack Israel—as a baseline for what disarmament would look like."

That is a far cry from the sort of rhetoric we had been hearing. It sounds a lot closer to the tone set by the Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan after his meetings in Washington, when he said the discussions had centered on "arrangements aimed at ensuring that Gaza is administered by the people of Gaza."

Reports are that Qatar's Prime Minister echoed these views at the same meeting. And, of course, it makes sense even on the most pragmatic level.

While news outlets have repeatedly portrayed Hamas as attempting to "reestablish control" over Gaza, the reality is that Hamas fighters have, for the most part, been trying to fill the vacuum in Gaza where there is no police force and rival gangs and thieves are, like the rest of the people of Gaza, at their most desperate. They have also pursued some militias that had aligned themselves with Israel during the genocide, but for the most part, they have simply been trying to fill the void in Gaza until some more structured solution can be agreed to.

Thus, Qatar, Egypt, and Türkiye have been pressing hard to arrange for thousands of Palestinian Authority police officers to be deployed in Gaza. While PA police may not have a great reputation, this is not at all unprecedented. When Hamas took over in Gaza in 2006, PA police simply switched uniforms. A similar situation would occur in Gaza today.

In fact, police in both the West Bank and Gaza are largely functionaries, civil service employees, much like in other places. They aren't really "PA" or "Hamas" police.

The factions have been active in these discussions as well, and they would support such a police force, even to the extent that they would agree that this force would have a monopoly on the use and carrying of firearms, a key component of the kinds of "disarming" they are proposing.

Qatar, Egypt, and Türkiye are keen to see this force coalesce as soon as possible. They are pushing the Trump administration to agree to the idea before Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's visit to Washington next week. Although Netanyahu is expected to try to use the trip primarily to drum up support for a new attack on Iran, the Muslim states are concerned that Netanyahu will influence Trump to also take a harder stand on Gaza. Getting an agreement and starting the process of bringing a Palestinian police force to Gaza would make that more difficult for Netanyahu.

While all of this remains very far from Palestinians governing themselves in Gaza, as any people have a right to do, it still represents tremendous progress compared to Trump's initial, purely colonial plan. That Palestinian success has not gone unnoticed among Washington hawks.

Speaking from Israel after meeting with Netanyahu, the uberhawk Republican Senator Lindsey Graham said that, “Hamas is not disarming. They’re rearming. Hamas is not abandoning power. They’re consolidating power.”

Graham went on to say that the U.S. should “Put [Hamas] on the clock. If they don’t disarm in a credible way, then unleash Israel on ‘em.”

Graham’s voice carries little weight in the Republican Party these days and is not often heard in the White House. But he is as close to Netanyahu as any American official, and his words certainly reflected a message from the Israeli PM.

The effort to dissuade the Trump administration from the course Israel has laid out for it—a course which is intended to lead back to all-out genocide—remains a difficult and fraught one.

However, it has taken a significant step forward this week due to the efforts of a unified Palestinian leadership, albeit one that remains largely outside the spotlight. It is a testament to what Palestinians can accomplish with such unity, and it explains why Israel has worked so tirelessly for decades to block it.